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Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 9 January 2013

Session 4

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 9 January 2013

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

Portfolio Question Time

Infrastructure, Investment and Cities

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Good afternoon. The first item of business is portfolio question time. The first section is on infrastructure, investment and cities. In order to get in as many members as possible, I would be grateful for short and succinct questions and answers to match.

Scottish Water (Flood Prevention)

1. Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what scope there is for capital investment by Scottish Water to prevent flooding to properties that are not included on its internal flood register. (S4O-01649)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Nicola Sturgeon): The Government takes the issue of the flooding of properties by overloaded sewers very seriously. Since 2002, Scottish Water has removed more than 60 per cent of affected properties from its internal flood register. In addition, 300 properties at risk of external sewer flooding have been addressed. In this investment period, we have asked Scottish Water to continue to reduce the numbers of properties on its internal flood register, and it is required to develop a comprehensive register of properties that are at risk of internal or external sewer flooding to support the prioritisation of capital funding in future investment periods.

Jim Eadie: The cabinet secretary will be aware that Shandon in my constituency has had no fewer than four serious flooding incidents in the past 16 years. Does she share my frustration and that of local residents that, despite £42 million being invested in infrastructure improvements over five years, areas such as Shandon will not benefit as things stand? [*Interruption.*] What scope exists to introduce a degree of flexibility to the criteria for inclusion on the internal flood register so that, where people suffer serious and repeated flood damage, we can ensure that there is the investment necessary to safeguard their properties?

Nicola Sturgeon: I am aware of the particular issues in the Shandon area of Jim Eadie's constituency and absolutely appreciate his

frustration and, more important, the frustration of residents in the area.

I understand that Scottish Water has contacted the member to offer a meeting with senior managers to discuss the matter. I urge him to take up that invitation and suggest that the City of Edinburgh Council should be invited to attend as well.

In addition to the particular circumstances that the member has raised, I know that he believes that there is a wider issue at stake. In particular, there is the issue of flexibility in the application of the criteria for inclusion on the register. I would be very happy to meet the member to discuss those issues further if that would be helpful to him.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): I support Jim Eadie's comments. Both of us have worked on incidences of flooding in Shandon. Does the cabinet secretary recognise that, every time it rains in Shandon, the residents fear for their futures and their finances? Can she make a particular intervention in this case? We are looking for a very small change in Shandon. With a little bit of flexibility, we can give those residents a significant amount of relief.

Nicola Sturgeon: I absolutely concur with Kezia Dugdale's comments and assure her that, not least because of the representations that Jim Eadie has made to me, I am very well aware of the frustration and real anxiety that have been caused to people in the area. As I said in response to Jim Eadie's question, Scottish Water senior managers are willing to have a meeting, and I encourage everybody with an interest to take up the offer of that meeting.

On Kezia Dugdale's request to me to take a personal interest in the matter, I will ask Scottish Water to report back to me on the meeting. Based on experience, I have every confidence that Jim Eadie will continue to represent assiduously the interests of his constituents in the matter.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I would be grateful if members would ensure that their mobile phones are switched off.

Forth Replacement Crossing

2. Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what progress is being made on construction of the Forth replacement crossing. (S4O-01650)

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): The Forth replacement crossing project remains on time and on budget. Following the successful completion of the Fife intelligent transport system contract, which went live on 4 December 2012, we expect the junction 1A contract to be completed within the next month.

Following the good work that was done on the foundations last year, this year we will see the towers of the bridge and the approach viaduct piers begin to emerge from the Firth of Forth.

Annabelle Ewing: I am very pleased to note the excellent progress that is being made on the construction of the Forth replacement crossing. Will the minister provide an update on where matters currently stand on the important issue of naming the bridge?

Keith Brown: As the member will know, the naming process for the new bridge was launched on 27 November and, to date, we have received more than 4,000 different suggestions. We encourage everybody who has a suggestion to submit it via the namethebridge.co.uk website by 31 January, so that it can be considered by the naming committee. In addition, when providing a name or comment on the website, pupils, parents and teachers from Scottish schools can enter their school in a special prize draw for the chance to win a visit to the construction site and attend the bridge opening ceremony as VIP guests of Transport Scotland.

Aberdeen City Council (Infrastructure Investment)

3. Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met Aberdeen City Council to discuss infrastructure investment. (S4O-01651)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Nicola Sturgeon): I met representatives of Aberdeen City Council on 21 November last year to discuss the council's ambitions for the city. In addition, the Scottish ministers have on-going engagement with the city council on a number of individual infrastructure investment projects.

Kevin Stewart: Has Aberdeen City Council had any discussions with the Government regarding tax increment financing—TIF—funding? Can the cabinet secretary confirm that TIF funding for the bid that includes the city garden project is still on the table if Aberdeen City Council chooses to follow the wishes of Aberdonians and proceed with that scheme?

Nicola Sturgeon: I can confirm that TIF funding was specifically discussed at that meeting on 21 November and that the Government remains open to considering a TIF business case from Aberdeen that includes the city garden project, given the scheme's potential to lever in substantial private funding, should Aberdeen City Council wish to review its plans. However, we have been consistently clear that we will not consider a TIF proposal that does not include the city garden project, as the invitation to submit a business case

cannot simply be transferred to another project. Of course, the decision not to proceed with the city garden project was taken by the council's administration and, as the member suggests, was against the express wishes of the people of Aberdeen.

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): Has the cabinet secretary decided that there will be a limit on the duration of the availability of TIF funding? How long is she prepared to wait for a suitable project to come forward?

Nicola Sturgeon: As the member will be aware, ministers have introduced regulations to allow six pilot projects for TIF schemes. In the medium to longer term, once we see what I hope will be the success of the projects that get under way—three have been approved already—the Government will take a decision on extending the use of the TIF funding mechanism. I believe that the mechanism can bring significant benefits, which has been demonstrated in the approach that we have taken so far. I will keep Parliament updated as our thinking on the matter develops.

Investment Zone (Renfrewshire)

4. Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what analysis it has made of the benefits of creating an investment zone in Renfrewshire. (S4O-01652)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Nicola Sturgeon): The Scottish Government has not made any such analysis. However, as the member will be aware, Scottish Enterprise is working closely with Glasgow airport, Renfrewshire Council and Glasgow City Council to define the scale and scope of a potential investment zone centred around Glasgow airport, which we recognise as being a valuable piece of national infrastructure.

Neil Bibby: Does the minister agree that it is unacceptable that 13 people are chasing every job vacancy in Renfrewshire? Will she give a commitment that the Government will consider Renfrewshire's case for investment to help to develop the local economy? What shovel-ready projects is the Scottish Government considering to support the development of the Renfrewshire economy?

Nicola Sturgeon: I agree with Neil Bibby about the importance of the Government continuing to do everything in our power to support job creation. Economic conditions remain incredibly difficult for people across Scotland, and it is vital that we support them in every way that we can. The importance of job creation is one reason why I want this Parliament to have full economic powers, so that we have the full range of levers to get our

economy growing and to create the jobs that people badly need.

On the specific question about Renfrewshire, I am happy to provide the member with full details in writing of the support that the Scottish Government provides for the area that he represents. I underline the commitment of Scottish Enterprise and the Government to the work process that has been set out around the proposal for an enterprise zone. Scottish Enterprise last met with the airport and the two councils that are involved on 13 December. There is a real commitment to work collaboratively to see what progress can be made. I hope that members from across the political spectrum will support that process in the interests of the people who are represented.

Fuel Poverty

5. Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making in tackling fuel poverty. (S4O-01653)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Nicola Sturgeon): The Government is committed to tackling fuel poverty and is spending £0.25 billion during the current spending review period on fuel poverty and energy efficiency. We have allocated a £68 million budget to tackle fuel poverty in 2012-13, and that is having a real impact. Despite 14 per cent fuel price increases in autumn 2011, improved household energy efficiency prevented a further 35,000 households falling into fuel poverty. Statistics that were published in December last year show that 684,000 Scottish households were in fuel poverty in October 2011. That underlines the importance of the Government continuing to work in the area. There is no doubt that high energy prices are the biggest determinant of fuel poverty, and they are a disgrace in an energy-rich nation such as Scotland.

Richard Baker: Given that the latest figures show that fuel poverty has increased, what is the status of the Scottish Government statutory commitment to eradicating fuel poverty by 2016? With organisations such as WWF and Energy Action Scotland calling for further measures to tackle fuel poverty, what progress is the Scottish Government making to secure the funding that ministers have identified for this area, especially given that two thirds of it is to come from the energy companies themselves?

Nicola Sturgeon: We are absolutely committed to fulfilling our statutory obligations. Those obligations are not just statutorily required of us; morally, we are required to ensure that we are doing everything in our power to combat fuel poverty. The budget that Richard Baker talked

about—the £200 million a year—encompasses Government funding but it also includes the money that we want to lever in from the fuel companies. That is in line with the recommendations of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee.

My final point to Richard Baker is that, if we are to make a really credible argument on tackling fuel poverty, people have to be willing to give this Parliament the powers to enable it to do so. The statistics that I mentioned, which show income growth between 2010 and 2011, show that income growth brought fuel poverty down by 2.2 per cent, energy efficiency improvements brought it down by 1.5 per cent, but increases in fuel prices put it up by 4.7 per cent, cancelling out what we were able to achieve. The Parliament needs the full powers that any country should have to tackle this issue much more effectively.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): One area in which we have the ability to make a difference is energy efficiency. However, after years of talking about pilot exercises, in the October just gone the Government announced—guess what?—yes, another round of pilot exercises. When will the national retrofit programme be truly national and apply throughout Scotland?

Nicola Sturgeon: As the member is aware, the national retrofit programme will go live later this year. It is good that we tried to get in ahead of that, by using go-early pilot schemes, so that we were not sitting around waiting for the programme to go live. That is a sign of our commitment and dedication.

Although I do not suggest for a second that it should be the only measure of this Government's commitment, it is worth pointing out that, while the Scottish Government remains committed to £65 million of Government spending a year in the next financial year to tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency, the United Kingdom Government will reduce funding in England to zero. That comparison shows that people should be proud of the work that the Government and the Parliament are doing, and we are determined to continue doing it.

European Structural Funds

6. Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how changes to nomenclature of units for territorial statistics—NUTS for short—boundaries will affect European structural fund allocations. (S4O-01654)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Nicola Sturgeon): The Scottish Government is currently consulting on options for changes to the nomenclature of units for territorial

statistics—as Margaret McDougall said, NUTS for short—regions. No decision has been made on whether to change the boundaries.

Any changes will be applied from 2015 onwards and will therefore have no implications for the allocation of structural funds programmes from 2014 to 2020.

Margaret McDougall: As the cabinet secretary will be aware, the review of the NUTS boundaries closes tomorrow. One of the proposed changes would, for European Union administrative purposes, see the islands of Arran and the Cumbraes moved out of the Highlands and Islands and placed within North Ayrshire. Does the Scottish Government support that move, or does the minister agree that that would be detrimental for those islands, because it would separate them from all the other Scottish islands and impact on their structural funding in the long term?

Nicola Sturgeon: I recognise Margaret McDougall's concern. However, I stress the fact that any potential changes to NUTS boundaries mainly affect statistical reporting to the European Union. They will not affect any funding allocations from 2014 to 2020, and they are likely to have only a marginal impact, or indeed no impact at all, from 2021, as our economy continues to develop.

Any changes will also not affect the boundaries between Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Arran and Cumbrae would continue to benefit from the enhanced community and economic support that Highlands and Islands Enterprise provides to remote and island areas.

Although the possible changes—on which we are still consulting—are designed to affect very few areas of Scotland and will have minimal impact, the concerns that have been raised are being taken seriously and will influence our final response on the matter.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): In the previous parliamentary session, the Scottish Government extended the crofting counties to include the islands of Arran and Cumbrae to right an historic wrong, as it considered those islands part of the Highlands and Islands. This EU proposal runs counter to that.

What benefits—if any—does the cabinet secretary believe will accrue to Arran and Cumbrae from the proposal to remove them from the Highlands and Islands, even if they remain in the Highlands and Islands Enterprise area?

Nicola Sturgeon: I recognise the close interest that Kenny Gibson has taken in the issue and I know that he has raised the matter previously. I stress again the point that I made to Margaret McDougall. Any potential changes here are mainly, though not exclusively, about statistical

reporting. The impact on funding allocations, certainly over the next few years, will be non-existent, and thereafter is likely to be minimal, if indeed there is any impact.

I said earlier that the changes will not affect the boundaries between Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. It is our strong view that Arran and Cumbrae would and should therefore benefit from the enhanced community and economic support provided by Highlands and Islands Enterprise to remote and island areas.

In recognition of the concerns that have been raised in the Parliament today, I am happy to keep members with an interest, particularly Kenny Gibson as the constituency MSP, fully informed on the Scottish Government's representations on this matter.

A9 Speed Limit (Heavy Goods Vehicles)

7. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with the A9 safety group on speed limits for HGVs on the A9. (S4O-01655)

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): The A9 safety group, which is chaired by Transport Scotland, last met on 4 October 2012 and discussed a number of issues, including speed limits for heavy goods vehicles on single carriageway sections of the A9 trunk road.

Murdo Fraser: The minister will know that, on single carriageway sections of the A9, slow-moving HGVs are an issue. Long lines of vehicles build up behind them, leading to driver frustration. In some cases, the issue is the cause of accidents.

Will the minister look seriously at increasing the speed limits for HGVs on the A9, which could help to remove driver frustration and improve the accident rate on one of Scotland's deadliest roads?

Keith Brown: I am looking seriously at the issue. Murdo Fraser has raised in the past, and raises again today, the issue of safety, which must be the primary consideration when looking at this proposal, which has come from not just Mr Fraser, but a number of members. Fergus Ewing, Dave Thompson, Dave Stewart and Iain Gray have expressed interest in the issue, as have the Road Haulage Association and hauliers.

The only predictive evidence that we have so far suggests that the measure might have a marginal disbenefit in safety terms. However, that is the case if the measure is carried out on its own; there may be things that could be done to ameliorate that effect. We will continue to look at that in the

research and, at the same time, we will continue our dialogue with the RHA and hauliers.

Regeneration (Ravenscraig)

8. Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what incentives or help it will provide to companies wishing to invest in the regeneration of Ravenscraig in order to speed up the project. (S4O-01656)

The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess): The Scottish Government provisionally approved the business case for North Lanarkshire Council's Ravenscraig phase 2 tax increment financing project in March 2011. It is expected that the public sector infrastructure investment, worth £73 million, will lever in £425 million in private investment. The Scottish Government looks forward to signing the final agreement with North Lanarkshire Council for the TIF project this year.

Richard Lyle: I know about the TIF project, having served on North Lanarkshire Council previously. Does the minister agree that the project never had a national status? Will the Government give Ravenscraig a national priority status in order to speed up the project?

Margaret Burgess: It is correct to say that Ravenscraig was never accorded a national status by a Labour Administration. The second national planning framework, which was published by the Scottish Government in June 2009, recognises Ravenscraig as a key location for regeneration and renewal. We are giving careful consideration to the representations that we have received on the content of the third national planning framework and any development to which ministers are minded to accord national development status in that framework will be identified in the main issues report, which will be published in spring. I am sure that, with his interest, the member will follow the progress of that report.

Culture and External Affairs

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 1 is in the name of Gil Paterson, but the member is not present.

Historic Scotland (Inventory of Historic Battlefields)

2. Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government what the benefits are of Historic Scotland's inventory of historic battlefields (S4O-01660)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The inventory is a major new resource for enhancing the

understanding of, enjoyment of and engagement with Scotland's historic battlefields, which draw tourists from all over the world and represent a major education resource. Through them, we can learn about key historical events and figures and their role in shaping our culture. The inventory will develop the potential of battlefields as attractions for local and international visitors.

The aim of the inventory is to raise awareness of the significance of these nationally important battlefield sites and to assist in their protection and management for the future.

The inventory aims to support economic growth while raising awareness and encouraging sensitive management of the heritage value of important battlefield landscapes.

Jim Hume: Given the combative nature of our relationship with England in the past, it will come as little surprise to members that many of our historic battlefields are located in the south of Scotland, which I represent.

I welcome the formal recognition given to battle sites such as Prestonpans, Dunbar, Philiphaugh and Ancrum Moor, to name a few. Given the important role that such battles have played in shaping our country, does the cabinet secretary agree that Historic Scotland should go further than it is already going and engage with local authorities to establish educational links with schools near the sites and discuss ways of better promoting the sites as local and national attractions?

Fiona Hyslop: I agree with that proposal, which is why, in my initial answer, I mentioned the importance of providing that educational link. Working with local authorities, we can undoubtedly promote both the tourism and education aspects.

I understand that 10 of the sites are in the South Scotland region. There have been some concerns about our ability to identify the precise geographic location of other important battles. However, whether we are talking about the battle of Pinkie or the battle of Philiphaugh, using a sense of place to help to interpret major and influential battles and Scotland's history in general is a good way of bringing history alive for many young people.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Jamie McGrigor has a supplementary question.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I have not pressed my button.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, but you had pressed your button.

Jamie McGrigor: I pressed it in order to ask a supplementary question after question 1.

Digital Participation Strategy (Midlothian)

3. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how its digital participation strategy will benefit people in Midlothian. (S4O-01661)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government's digital participation strategy highlights the social, economic and cultural benefits that individuals and businesses can get from going online. It is estimated that the average household can save £560 a year by using the internet and the Scottish Government's strategy aims to encourage them to do so by working in partnership with a range of organisations to promote digital skills.

In Midlothian, innovation partnership projects that teach digital skills and familiarise hard-to-reach groups with digital equipment have received £21,919 of Scottish Government funding, with a further £8,281 due to be awarded.

Kezia Dugdale: Is the minister aware that her Government has changed the eligibility criteria for individual learning accounts and that it is no longer possible to use an ILA to access basic IT accounts? Surely she realises that that will have a negative impact on people who are excluded from using IT and that those are the people who most need to make the savings that she mentions. What steps will she commit to making to rectify that situation?

Fiona Hyslop: The funding that I just announced and identified came through my work as the culture minister in helping library activity. ILAs are the responsibility of other ministers, as Kezia Dugdale well knows. I point out that there are other ways of accessing digital learning opportunities. ILAs tend to be used more for skills and training for wider use, not necessarily for the purposes that the member identified.

I am willing to ensure that my education colleagues are aware of the comments that Kezia Dugdale makes, but I encourage people to use other methods and not to consider ILAs as the only method of accessing digital learning and participation.

2014 Commonwealth Games Cultural Legacy (Lothians)

4. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what cultural legacy the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs expects for the Lothians following the 2014 Commonwealth games. (S4O-01662)

The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf): Although the question was directed towards the

cabinet secretary, I have taken responsibility for Glasgow's 2014 Commonwealth games cultural programme.

The Scottish Government is committed to creating a lasting legacy and maximising the benefits for all of Scotland from Glasgow hosting the 2014 Commonwealth games. The cultural programme will play an integral part in creating that meaningful legacy, and partners are working together to deliver a magnificent, nationwide programme of cultural activity for Glasgow 2014, which will be at the heart of the celebrations around the games.

The £4 million Glasgow 2014 cultural programme open fund is now open for applications. I encourage all individual artists, community-led organisations and arts groups in the Lothians and throughout the nation to apply.

I am also pleased to confirm that nine youth legacy ambassadors have been recruited from the Lothians. Their important role is to raise awareness of legacy opportunities available to young people in the area, including, of course, cultural opportunities.

Sarah Boyack: I thank the minister for his answer and the information about the £4 million fund in particular. Will local authorities in the Lothians be able to use that fund to support them in building partnerships with other Commonwealth countries and territories to deliver the second team initiative, or will it be a different fund? Will they be linked or will they be separate funding initiatives?

Humza Yousaf: I will write to Sarah Boyack with clarification about the open fund. I was at one of the information sessions yesterday but had to leave just before the question-and-answer session—otherwise I could perhaps have put that question directly to the organising committee. The information session was in Edinburgh and was absolutely packed. Many members, artists, groups and—I believe—local authorities from the Lothians were there.

I will endeavour to get a more comprehensive answer for the member on her question. The programme is about creating a grass-roots movement. The range of people who were at the information session—individual artists and voluntary arts groups—shows that we are truly creating a grass-roots cultural programme for 2014.

National Performing Companies and Cultural Collections (Support)

5. Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to support national performing companies and cultural collections. (S4O-01663)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government places great importance on supporting our five national performing companies and our national collections. I have managed to protect their budgets over the spending review period, keeping reductions as low as possible.

The Scottish Government's draft 2013-14 budget sets out support of £23.6 million for the national performing companies and £72.9 million for the cultural collections. Within that, I have managed to protect the £350,000 international touring fund to ensure that our performing companies can continue to operate abroad. The Royal Scottish National Orchestra, for example, has just completed a highly successful tour of China, promoting its great music and Scotland.

Stewart Stevenson: The support that the cabinet secretary indicated is welcome, but will she also indicate what provision the Government is making to support repairs and maintenance of existing cultural collections in particular?

Fiona Hyslop: Clearly, repairs and maintenance put pressure on the capital budget. The 2013-14 draft budget that has been set out includes a capital budget of £17 million, which is almost double the £8.7 million that was allocated in the 2011 spending review. Of that, £6.7 million has been allocated to the collections to support capital projects.

As part of John Swinney's announcement on 19 December, I managed to secure a further £4 million in 2013-14 for capital projects for the national collections and performing companies. It is essential that the fabric of our national collections and the provision for them and our companies are in a state that allows us to maintain the high-quality, world-class offering that we have.

Homecoming 2014 (Ancestry and Robert the Bruce)

6. Adam Ingram (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it is developing the ancestry theme for homecoming Scotland 2014 and how it is supporting cultural events that promote and celebrate Robert the Bruce connections. (S4O-01664)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): Ancestry is one of the five key themes that underpin homecoming Scotland 2014. Work is under way with partners including the National Trust for Scotland, Historic Scotland and the ancestral tourism group to ensure that the homecoming Scotland 2014 programme features a range of cultural events and activities that promote and celebrate our country's rich ancestry. For example, the 700th anniversary

of the battle of Bannockburn in 2014 will be a signature event in the homecoming Scotland programme and a centrepiece of the Stirling 2014 celebrations for the year.

Adam Ingram: Is the cabinet secretary aware of the work that the association of South Ayrshire community councils is progressing to develop a Robert the Bruce trail and to create events and activities that are based on the former Earl of Carrick's extensive connections in the land of his birth? What support can the Scottish Government and its agencies offer to help to develop that programme for the 2014 homecoming?

Fiona Hyslop: I am aware of the important work of the association of South Ayrshire community councils. I am not aware of whether it applied to the homecoming fund; the homecoming fund events programme will be announced in the coming months.

The association's idea of bringing together a Bruce trail that links with the Bruce trail in Dumfries and Galloway is important. I understand that, once the trail is in place, VisitScotland will promote it among the things to see and do in the area. With the support of South Ayrshire Council—I am sure that Adam Ingram will promote the idea—it will be important to ensure that the trail is in place in time. The extensive activity of Robert the Bruce and his links with Carrick are an important part of a very important story.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I thank the cabinet secretary for referring to the trail in Dumfries and Galloway. I ask for Dumfries and Galloway not to be overlooked in the homecoming celebrations, given Robert the Bruce's connections as Lord of Annandale and the events at Greyfriars kirk, which began a rebellion all those years ago.

Fiona Hyslop: It is clear from the two members' contributions that knowledge and understanding of Robert the Bruce's connections to a good number of parts of Scotland will be important. In relation to Dumfries and Galloway, I had the opportunity to meet a number of Joan McAlpine's constituents at an event in the Parliament, when they told me about their plans. I encouraged them to apply to the homecoming fund, but I am not sure whether they did so. I remind all members of the opportunity to make partnership applications to support activity in 2014 that will complement the homecoming Scotland 2014 programme.

Museums and Galleries (Registered Charities)

7. Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what support is available for museums and galleries that are registered charities. (S4O-01665)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government provides annual support of £3.2 million for non-national museums and galleries, mainly through Museums Galleries Scotland. That level of funding has been protected from cuts in recent spending reviews. Museums Galleries Scotland offers a range of services to support local museums and galleries, whether or not they are registered charities, including access to funding, advice and training.

Dennis Robertson: Is the cabinet secretary aware of Grampian transport museum, which is in Alford, in my constituency? It does great work and it provides a fantastic community benefit, not just for Alford but for the wider area of Grampian and beyond. The museum is looking to develop a visitor centre to enhance the attraction, because visitor numbers are increasing year on year. What Government funding can it access to complement the self-financing that it already has?

Fiona Hyslop: Again, I direct the member to Museums Galleries Scotland, which provides funding on behalf of the Scottish Government. A range of funding is available, from £5,000 to £40,000. The capital round closes on 14 January, so if the museum has not already applied for that funding, it will need to move quickly to do so. There is also a strategic development fund that offers project funding of up to £30,000, and applications for that close on 6 May. If the museum has not already explored those options, I strongly encourage it to do so.

Scottish Government Priorities (Culture and External Affairs)

8. Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its priorities are for culture and external affairs in 2013. (S4O-01666)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government will continue to prioritise Scotland's economic ambitions both at home and abroad, supporting our artists and cultural and heritage infrastructure, improving the quality of life for Scotland's communities, supporting young people's learning and creativity through engagement with culture and heritage, and promoting, protecting and improving access to Scotland's historic environment. The draft budget, which was published in September 2012, provides more detail of our priorities.

Mark Griffin: The United Kingdom Government will soon be offering high-end television tax relief to attract major production companies to the UK, but there are concerns in the industry that Scotland could lose out due to its lack of facilities compared with England and Wales. Will the

cabinet secretary make it one of her priorities to ensure that facilities are in place to allow major production companies that will be attracted by the tax relief to base their operations—and to film—in Scotland?

Fiona Hyslop: I have had a number of important discussions about the development of production facilities. The member will be aware that we had a debate on the issue in the Parliament just before the recess, in which I announced that Creative Scotland would be looking at a feasibility study to make sure that we can deliver on that.

The opportunities from the tax relief are to be welcomed. We have been supporting skills development in particular, and some of the skills and training facilities are important, but I reiterate that, as I said in that debate, this country needs high-quality production space, particularly in a sound studio, that is on a scale for film production, and I am treating that as a priority.

Creative Scotland (Appointment of Chief Executive)

9. Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when Creative Scotland will appoint a new chief executive. (S4O-01667)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): Creative Scotland's chief executive announced his resignation on 3 December and he will leave at the end of January 2013. The board of Creative Scotland will take forward the recruitment process for a new chief executive as a matter of urgency.

Joan McAlpine: I do not know whether the cabinet secretary is aware of the letter in *The Herald* last month from arts practitioners in Dumfries and Galloway who were actually rather positive about the way in which they had been treated by Creative Scotland and who wanted reassurances that the new management of Creative Scotland will continue to look favourably on areas outside the central belt. Those artistic practitioners believe that, under the old Scottish Arts Council, there was a central belt bias in the awarding of funds.

Fiona Hyslop: The member makes an important point. I am aware of the letter and I recognise the positive impact that Creative Scotland has had throughout Scotland in different partnerships. I know from visiting Dumfries and Galloway that there have been positive responses to the engagement there. It is important that the new management takes forward that all-Scotland approach in ensuring that the support for our cultural infrastructure and indeed for our artists reaches all parts of Scotland.

Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con): It is entirely predictable that a fund distribution body such as Creative Scotland will never find it easy to satisfy potential recipients of funding but, given the very public spat that Creative Scotland generated, will the minister clarify what the main criteria are that Creative Scotland should apply in deciding who receives funding?

Fiona Hyslop: Clearly, that is a matter for Creative Scotland. The Parliament has established the important principle that, as minister, I should not direct the body on what its criteria for artistic excellence should be. Artistic excellence will clearly be one criterion, but there will also be impacts through participation, which is another criterion. Indeed, some of the excellent work that has been taking place in relation to Creative Scotland's work relates to culture and ageing, and encouraging older people's festivals in terms of art and participation. There are also the creative industries—we just heard about film production—and Creative Scotland is actively involved in that regard.

However, it is important that we give the board and the new management the space to advise us as to what the criteria might be. My job is to approve any new corporate plan, which will set out some of the criteria that it wants.

Oil and Gas Sector

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-05310, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on oil and gas—the success and opportunities. The debate is oversubscribed, so I expect members to be succinct and to include interventions within their time limits.

14:40

The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): I welcome the opportunity to pay tribute to and recognise the success of Scotland's oil and gas sector. The sector is one of Scotland's biggest economic successes. It accounts for more than 90 per cent of total United Kingdom oil and gas tax receipts and supports 440,000 jobs across the UK.

Scotland's oil and gas strategy was launched by the First Minister in Aberdeen last year. Its key message is that there is much, much more to come. The strategy's development was led by industry and the oil and gas leadership group, which Melfort Campbell and I co-chair. I am delighted that the UK Government is to put together a similar strategy, to complement Scotland's. I have been particularly pleased to have close and, I think, constructive working relationships with Ed Davey and Charles Hendry and now with John Hayes. As part of that, I attend and play what I hope is a constructive part in PILOT meetings, which take place in London.

Our strategy is aptly entitled "Maximising our Future". It is focused on how we can maximise the value of remaining reserves, to create skilled jobs and prosperity for people throughout Scotland. Of the 440,000 jobs that the North Sea oil and gas industry supports across the UK, nearly 200,000 are in Scotland. The sector is a major source of tax revenue for the UK Exchequer; I believe that revenues have totalled more than £300,000 million over the years.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Will the minister say what the current rate of UK corporation tax is on oil and gas and how much revenue would be lost if a 10 per cent rate were applied?

Fergus Ewing: I do not look at the figures in that way. I will deal with the tax issue in due course.

Since large-scale production commenced in the North Sea in the 1970s, more than 39 billion barrels of oil equivalent have been extracted from the UK continental shelf. This is not a story of decline; significant unharvested reserves remain. Estimates, by definition, vary. Oil & Gas UK estimates that up to 24 billion barrels have yet to

be recovered, and forecasts from Professor Alex Kemp at the University of Aberdeen and others suggest that oil and gas production will continue well into the 2040s. By volume, just under 40 per cent of Scotland's reserves remain in the ground. At current prices a potential £1.5 trillion in reserves are left. That is extraordinary potential—one and a half million million pounds of reserves are still to be returned to these shores. It is imperative, therefore, that we push to maximise recovery of our precious resource.

In the latest round of North Sea oil and gas licensing, the Department of Energy and Climate Change offered 167 new licences, covering 330 North Sea blocks, with a further 61 blocks under environmental assessment. This is an exciting period of new investment and new discoveries. There have been a number of recent investment announcements. On 24 October last year, Talisman announced investment of £1,600 million to prolong North Sea oil fields. Also in October, Shell announced the development of the Fram field, which is one of the biggest Scottish North Sea energy projects of the past decade and will pump 5 per cent of Britain's gas needs at its peak production. In December last year, Dana Petroleum announced a £1 billion development for nine wells in the Harris and Barra fields 100 miles east of Shetland, and it aims to double its production to 100,000 barrels a day by 2016. Just before the Christmas period, Statoil announced a £4.3 billion investment in the North Sea, which will create 700 new jobs—and the Mariner field is expected to produce for 30 years.

Investment on that level is unparalleled in our economy. There is a vibrancy to the sector that we must celebrate and encourage in these challenging economic conditions. That is why I have spent the past 20 months as minister visiting all those companies and many others.

I want to dispel the myth that the oil and gas sector is just an offshore industry. Each of those companies supports a long supply chain offshore and onshore, providing Scottish jobs and commercialising Scottish technological advances. Our offshore industry is the basis for a vibrant economy onshore, and Aberdeen is now established as one of the world's most important energy hubs. It has an enviable reputation throughout the world in the engineering disciplines for its innovation and subsea skills.

Aberdeen is truly an international centre of excellence, but the energy industry stretches far beyond the north-east. There have been new developments—for example, from FMC Technologies, which has located in Bellshill and Dunfermline; Glacier Energy Services, whose new office I opened last year in the Clyde Gateway; Oceaneering in Rosyth; and the Global Energy

Group in Nigg, which has expanded its existing 800 personnel with an announcement before Christmas that it is creating 400 more jobs. The sector is truly a pan-Scotland industry.

In our oil and gas strategy, the Scottish Government seeks to support the industry in all the ways that we can. Our strategy has been developed with—in fact, almost devised by—industry, and sets out a compelling long-term vision for the sector's future.

The most important element of the strategy is its focus on innovation to improve recovery rates. Scotland's historical recovery rate is only 40 per cent on average, while 60 per cent of our precious resource remains in the ground. By contrast, the recovery rate in the Norwegian territory is 48 per cent. Our oil and gas strategy sets an ambition to improve average recovery rates to 50 per cent, so that we take out more than we leave behind.

To put that into perspective, an increase of just one percentage point in our recovery rates would result in a rise in economic output of £89,000 million, and a rise in taxation revenue of £22,000 million. An increase in recovery of one percentage point over the lifetime of fields equals £22,000 million more in taxation, which is money that we would all wish to be used for such things as vital public services.

There are six key themes in the strategy: the domestic supply chain; the international supply chain; innovation; skills; new opportunities; and industry promotion and place. The strategy focuses on technology and innovation within the industry, as well as developing the supply chain internationally.

The focus is now on delivering the strategy with industry, Government, academia and the economic development agencies. Scottish Enterprise has identified £10 million from its existing budget to support industry innovation with a series of calls over three years. The first call was aimed at innovative projects that can improve the integrity and reliability of oil and gas industry assets, and I expect the first awards to be made within the next few months.

Future research and development calls will take place in the spring and autumn of 2013 for proposals to address subsea challenges and improve reservoir imaging. I anticipate a further two calls in 2014, and more beyond if the outputs continue to merit that approach. Scottish Enterprise is working with industry to leverage in additional support and expertise from industry so that we can make the value of those awards even greater.

Here in Scotland and worldwide, hydrocarbons will remain a central element of the energy mix for some time to come. Our draft electricity generation

policy statement gives our clear view on the need for both rapid expansion of renewable electricity throughout Scotland and the underlying requirement for new efficient thermal capacity. Carbon capture and storage is the only technology that is capable of cutting fossil fuel emissions by up to 90 per cent.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Will the minister take an intervention?

Fergus Ewing: Not just yet.

Linking CCS with enhanced oil recovery could accelerate its development and unlock 3 billion barrels of hard-to-reach oil—worth £190 billion—from the North Sea.

The centre for North Sea enhanced oil recovery with CO₂, which was launched in May last year and is based in Edinburgh, will develop understanding of enhanced oil recovery technology. That could create a commercial use for CO₂ that is captured from power plants and industry. The new centre will become a hub for collaboration across the energy sector to help realise CO₂-EOR's true economic potential for Europe.

I recognise industry's view that more work needs to be carried out before EOR is fully commercially viable, but I will continue to push for a partnership of industry and Government to see our CCS ambitions become a reality.

Patrick Harvie: I am sure that the minister will accept that even if CCS technology can be brought to maturity, it has no effective role to play in relation to the carbon emissions that come from the vast majority of our oil consumption, which is in transport and heating, not energy generation.

Is it not a wee bit like putting the cart before the horse to say that we should use the CCS industry as a way of extracting ever more oil and ever more fossil carbon from the ground, which will end up in the atmosphere?

Fergus Ewing: No, I do not agree with that. It will allow huge reserves of oil to be extracted, which will be hugely beneficial. Frankly, I would have thought that the Greens would welcome the application of CCS, because it will allow reductions of 90 per cent in carbon emissions. I thought that that was a good thing.

Furthermore, without CCS, I do not know how the European Union's energy emissions targets can be achieved. Only the application of CCS to power stations can make reductions in emissions of the scale that is necessary to achieve the targets. Those are not my views; they are the views of the International Energy Agency, whose chief executive spoke at the Council of Ministers meeting that I attended in November 2011. I disagree with Mr Harvie.

I turn to ageing infrastructure on the UK carbon shelf. It is estimated that there are resources of up to 27 billion barrels of oil equivalent still to be recovered, but it is possible that around 5 billion will not be extracted due to infrastructure access issues. That equates to approximately £85 billion in lost revenues.

Neil Findlay: Will the minister give way?

Fergus Ewing: I do not think so—I have too much to cover.

We simply cannot afford to lose revenue on that scale, nor can we afford to lose the tax revenues, which I have described, that are linked to that. Irrespective of what our politics may be, no one can afford to forfeit or lose this vital opportunity.

If no action is taken and things continue as they are, the majority of North Sea hubs will not be available after 2035. The current exploration and production activities are forecast to recover around 12 billion to 14 billion barrels of oil equivalent from the 25 billion barrels that are estimated to remain in the UKCS.

The industry recognises that many of the solutions are industry solutions. However, industry and Government will have to work together to resolve the problem of ageing infrastructure and guarantee the long-term future of the UKCS. I am pleased that some progress has been made, including the introduction of a DECC infrastructure stewardship process, incentives to increase exploration and activity, a review/update of licence terms and the establishment of areas of special economic interest around critical hubs.

However, UK oil and gas production has declined by 30 per cent over the past two years. Tavish Scott's amendment, which I should say for clarification's sake that we will accept along with the Labour amendment, recognises the challenge. How we respond to that challenge is the real debate.

Although the industry is confident that it can slow the decline by introducing new technologies and procedures, investors need long-term certainty. More needs to be done and I will continue to work with the UK Government to provide the right package of fiscal and other measures to ensure the longevity and continuity of production on the UKCS.

Presiding Officer, I have foreshortened the remainder of my speech—[*Interruption.*] Well, I will do so just slightly in the light of your direction.

The oil and gas sector is a global business and we want to increase the international impact of our supply chain. Ten years ago, international activity in the industry accounted for 31 per cent of Scotland's supply chain sales; in a decade, that figure has risen to 46.4 per cent. In other words,

nearly one half of the money that the oil and gas sector makes comes from international work. I do not think that that important point is well enough understood. Because of the standards of excellence of so many of its companies and individuals, the industry has become truly international and operates throughout the world.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Minister, you really must draw your remarks to a close.

Fergus Ewing: Ah, well. All I can say is that that figure must increase.

I have not talked about skills, but we are working on the issue as we move towards the announcement of an energy skills academy with a particular focus in Aberdeen on oil and gas.

I look forward to hearing what members have to say in the debate and to working with members from all parties on implementing and delivering our strategy.

It gives me great pleasure to move,

That the Parliament recognises the importance to both the Scottish and the UK economy of the oil and gas sector in Scotland; welcomes that oil and gas extraction will continue in Scotland for decades to come; notes progress in delivering Scotland's first oil and gas strategy; recognises the world-leading capability of the Scottish oil and gas sector and supply chain workforce, and supports close collaboration between the Scottish Government and its agencies, industry and academia to work to meet the future personnel and skills needs of the sector and ensure continuing sector growth.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that I must reiterate that we are very tight for time. I call Rhoda Grant to speak to and move amendment S4M-05310.2 in no more than 10 minutes.

14:55

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I pay tribute to the workers who make the oil and gas industry a success. Many of them work onshore in back-up and planning roles but, given the real personal risk and inconvenience that they undergo, we must especially recognise the contribution of those who work offshore.

We are approaching the 25-year anniversary of the Piper Alpha disaster, in which 167 people lost their lives, with many more directly impacted. The lives of those who survived or who lost loved ones were changed immediately. Since then, much has changed. Safety is now given the highest priority—and rightly so—but that does not mean that dangers do not exist. Indeed, recent helicopter incidents have brought home the risks to us.

I was lucky enough to visit the Elgin-Franklin platform as a guest of Oil & Gas UK and Total—the details of my visit are in my entry in the register of members' interests. The platform

worked with extremely high pressures and, subsequent to my visit, developed a gas leak. Having visited the platform, I can only imagine the real concern that such an incident caused and the grave risks involved.

In preparation for the visit, we had to attend a helicopter safety training course. Although it forms only a small part of the training that personnel usually undertake, I found it a real eye-opener to the risks involved. Being submerged upside-down in a swimming pool and having to find one's way out of the vehicle were pretty challenging, although the training took place in a very safe environment compared with the North Sea itself. One can hardly imagine the reality of ditching, which is why the recent problems with offshore transportation helicopters are extremely worrying.

Constituents have expressed to me concerns about their work. Because of the lack of transportation to rigs, workers have been unable to get to work and are suffering financial hardship. I know that the industry is looking at the problem with helicopters and is exploring alternative forms of transportation, but given the hostile environments in which oil and gas platforms are situated it is difficult to see a safer solution. Nevertheless, the situation emphasises the vulnerability of the workforce to such changes and steps must be taken to ensure that they do not suffer hardship while the safety issues are—rightly—being dealt with.

Wider safety in the oil and gas industry is every worker's business, and the trade unions have pushed safety to the top of the agenda through the utilisation of safety representatives. They have also made sure that safety is a priority for every worker. Research commissioned by OPITO shows that learning enhances employees' commitment to safety. The trade union movement has also promoted training and the development of skills within the workforce. Unfortunately, despite the issue's importance, the oil and gas industry still has a way to go, although Nigg might be bucking the trend by taking the issue of in-house training very seriously.

During the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's recent inquiry into renewable energy, one of the renewables industry's common complaints was that although it was investing in skills the oil and gas industry was not and that because of the skills shortage in the engineering field many of its skilled personnel were being poached by the oil and gas industry where higher wages are available. In its briefing for the debate, Aberdeen city and shire economic future highlights Subsea UK's estimate that the oil and gas sector will require a further 10,000 employees over the next five years, while a PricewaterhouseCoopers report has suggested that Aberdeen might have to

find another 120,000 workers by 2022—regardless of what will be a natural decline in the industry because of finite resources.

We are facing a skills shortage in engineering, and the industry, as well as the Government, has a role to play in addressing the problem. The industry must look at how it accommodates apprentices offshore and grow its own workforce.

The industry has an ageing workforce and needs to act now to ensure that it has adequate skills into the future. It needs to show that it is an ideal career choice for women, too. When I visited the Elgin-Franklin platform, one of the people who showed us around the rig and explained all the processes was a woman. She was proof—if anyone needed it—that that lifestyle suits women.

Oil and gas companies in particular need to reach out to women because they can help to fill the skills shortage in the industry. The Government has a role to play in that regard. As we saw in the Scottish Women's Convention's report into rural issues, women were concerned that their daughters were being discouraged from taking science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects at school. In order to break down gender barriers we need to start at school. We also need to ensure that engineering courses are available. Cuts in college funding are not conducive to that, and neither are caps on the number of students entering degree-level engineering studies.

Skills must be at the forefront as new oil and gas fields provide even more challenges—the industry is moving into more hostile and deeper waters to access fields that are increasingly difficult to reach. Indeed, as the minister acknowledged in his opening speech, it will take new technologies and skills to bring onshore the reserves that are available. We must have highly trained people to ensure that those technologies are robust, given the disasters that can be wrought by oil spillages. We are all more than aware of the problems caused by the Deepwater Horizon and the impact on many communities. We cannot afford to risk the occurrence of similar incidents, especially in our waters. Skills and a stable workforce are crucial to the industry.

The new challenges require fiscal stability. I am glad that the minister acknowledged that, because companies need to plan ahead and develop new fields and technologies—a point that was stressed in Oil & Gas UK's briefing for the debate. It is therefore important that the Scottish Government is clear about its fiscal regime for oil and gas should Scotland leave the UK. While it pursues its goal of independence, the Government must ensure that, during the campaign and this period of uncertainty, the industry has clarity to enable it to develop. For example, it is unclear whether the

Government's proposed oil fund will be top sliced from existing taxation—indeed, it is unclear whether levels of taxation will remain comparable to those in the rest of the UK—or whether a new tax will be levied on the industry.

Decommissioning is another issue. What might be the fiscal regime for decommissioning in an independent Scotland? Would decommissioning relief contracts entered into by the UK Government be honoured in Scotland if it were no longer part of the UK?

Those questions need to be answered as quickly as possible so that the industry's priorities are not skewed. Failure to answer them will cause instability, hinder development and possibly lead to the early decommissioning of fields.

Fergus Ewing: I am happy to assure Rhoda Grant that, as far as decommissioning is concerned, Scotland will honour her responsibilities.

On taxation, we recognise that stability and predictability are absolutely key. Does the member agree that the worst possible thing would be the repetition of the tax hike that the industry faced—without any warning—in 2011, of a 12 per cent supplementary petroleum tax? Does the member agree that that did considerable damage by undermining the confidence of oil investors and companies based throughout the world?

Rhoda Grant: That proves the point about why we need stability and why the industry needs to know what the fiscal regime will be, should Scotland become independent of the UK, and whether contracts that the Government enters into with the UK Government will be honoured. That is an important point because, if we decommission too quickly, we lose out on the benefits of the reserves that are there and we may also lose out on the decommissioning work. I am sure that Tavish Scott will talk about the role that the Shetland Islands will wish to play in decommissioning. The islands are ideally placed for that work—they have a skilled workforce and a history in the oil and gas industry.

I will touch briefly on carbon capture and storage, which the minister spoke about. Although we boast some of the most ambitious carbon reduction targets in the world, I do not believe that we can ignore the reserves of oil and gas that we have, so it is extremely important that we have in place CCS technologies that allow us to mitigate the impacts of what is a carbon-intensive industry. It is wrong to say that we are in a position to ignore our oil and gas reserves, because when it comes to fuel for things such as heating and transportation, we do not have the technology to replace that now. We need to move on apace in delivering such technology so that as well as

meeting our climate change targets, we can loosen our dependence on carbon-intensive forms of fuel.

Oil and gas certainly make a contribution to our economy. We hope that that continues, but we need to have the stability that allows that to happen.

I move amendment S4M-05310.2, to insert at end:

“; notes the challenges to the industry in managing a finite and unpredictable resource; believes that the industry must play a role in encouraging young people to pursue a career in engineering, working with schools, OPITO and the further and higher education sectors, paying particular attention to the encouragement of young women into the industry; recognises the high costs and technical challenges of extracting remaining oil and gas resources from the UK Continental Shelf and the future costs of decommissioning; recognises that attention to safety must be paramount both at work and travelling to and from oil and gas installations, and believes that workplace safety representatives, trade unions and the Health and Safety Executive have key roles to play in ensuring that safety comes first.”

15:06

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I begin by agreeing with the broad tenor of the minister's remarks and thanking Rhoda Grant for her observations on decommissioning, in particular. I agree with her central observations on safety.

In the regular discussions that the minister has with the industry—I am thinking of Dana Petroleum, in particular—perhaps he could have a wee word about geography. He cannot have been the only person who spotted its curious decision to give the Barra and Harris fields, which are 100 miles east of Unst, the names that it did. There are plenty of seabirds that fields have yet to be named after. During one of his many busy days, perhaps the minister could impress on the industry the need—not least for the benefit of his poor colleagues who represent the Western Isles—to get its geography a little more accurate.

I want to make three main points in support of my amendment. First, the offshore installations in the North Sea have now been with us for the best part of three to four decades. Every industry contact whom I meet—including the process engineer from the Forties field whom I met on the train from Aberdeen this morning—says that the most significant requirement is the constant need for re-engineering, reinvestment and the giving of attention to the fabric of oil rigs, gas platforms and every piece of kit out there. That is hardly surprising, given what has gone and what will go in the future.

Huge investment is needed, but it makes sense because, as the minister hinted, some of the major unplanned maintenance shutdowns during 2011,

when production of gas and oil fell considerably—by 21 and 17 per cent respectively—were caused by the fabric challenges that the industry faces. It is in the interests of Government strategy here and in London, which is about enhancing recovery and maintaining the degree of progress that the minister talked about, for such unplanned shutdowns and unplanned maintenance to be limited to a large extent. That strongly supports the point that Rhoda Grant rightly made about safety. I meet plenty of safety reps at home and across Scotland who advocate the case for investment.

The need for such investment represents an enormously positive opportunity for the supply chain, not just in the north-east of Scotland but across Scotland and the rest of the UK. Given the state of the whole economy at the moment, the oil and gas sector is one of the highest growth areas. We should recognise that and support and encourage it. The issue comes down to jobs, businesses and success. We should strongly support investment in the fabric of the industry.

There is also a need for onshore fabric maintenance. Sullom Voe oil terminal was opened in 1978. At the tail end of last year, BP announced a £300 million reinvestment in the terminal, which Arthur Spence—the Shetlander who is in charge of the terminal—said to me on the phone this morning would secure the terminal into the 2040s. That means that it has the same potential lifetime as the one that the minister rightly identified for the entire industry. That is a very important commitment by BP, by the partners to the terminal, and indeed in the UK continental shelf overall.

The islands that I have pleasure in representing in Parliament have taken oil as part of our life for a long time. All my life, oil has been very much part of things. We deal with the risks as well—I could hardly fail to mention that on the 20th anniversary of the Braer. We also take the risks from west of Shetland. I recognise that for some, particularly in the environmental movement, there are huge challenges and they are right. I have been on an exploration drilling rig west of Shetland. The environmental and weather issues that will be confronted out there should not be underestimated. Rhoda Grant rightly mentioned helicopters and it is said that as regards helicopter transfers to Schiehallion and Foinaven the delays are far more than, for example, to an oil rig east of Aberdeen for all the obvious reasons.

In that context, I am disappointed that Chevron's Rosebank gas pipeline option is to bypass Sullom Voe, but we hope to gain business from crude oil shuttle tankers at Sullom Voe. I am sure that the minister takes his role seriously in the context of the overall assessment, analysis and approval of oil and gas recovery plans and that when strategic

decisions are taken about where pipelines are based they are taken on the basis of the best long-term interests of the entire industry.

On field extraction, I agree with the argument already made by members, not least because who would have envisaged a decade ago that horizontal drilling was possible. Now, we can be taken into control rooms and shown 3D maps of how it is done. Technology moves on and I cannot guess where it will go in the next 10 years but it will go further and further.

I thank the minister for his work in relation to decommissioning at Lerwick. It is not just about Lerwick, as Rhoda Grant rightly suggested. It is about every port in Scotland. There is so much work out there over the next 20 to 30 years that it will not just be one port—in that case, happily, in Shetland—that benefits, but many ports across Scotland.

Although decommissioning is moving back because of crude oil prices of \$100 a barrel, there is no question but that it will be an important Scottish business in the future as well.

I move amendment S4M-05310.1, to insert at end:

“; notes the need for constant investment in North Sea oil and gas assets for personnel safety; further notes 43 offshore field transfer deals during 2012 between private and state-owned companies; appreciates the necessity of long-term certainty around the £30 billion decommissioning of oil and gas platforms, and recognises the decline in North Sea production from its peak of 137,099,000 tonnes in 1999 to 51,972,000 tonnes in 2011.”

15:12

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I like to begin with a note of consensus when I can—Alex Johnstone looks sceptical already.

I agree strongly with all three members who have spoken on the point about the safety issues around the industry—we can all agree on the importance of safety as regards people and the marine environment. Despite the fact that we will disagree on the future that we want to see for the industry, I hope that everybody in the chamber would come together in paying tribute to those who work hard to protect the safety of people and of the environment.

I want to give credit where it is due to the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government has a clear focus on its renewable energy targets and I have consistently welcomed that. For the first time last year, we saw a £1 billion investment in renewables in Scotland. There is high confidence that the 100 per cent target for 2020 can be achieved and that there will be big increases for the marine sector after that so that

we can export efficiently to help to decarbonise Europe's electricity production.

However, that is not the whole story in terms of decarbonising our energy system. Renewables cut carbon emissions only if they replace fossil fuels. We need to reduce demand. Not only investment in renewables is necessary if we are serious about climate change, but disinvestment in the high-carbon industries and sadly the current minister seems not to agree with that. Indeed, since he took on the job I have only ever really noticed the fire come into his eyes when he talks about another 40 years of oil and gas extraction in Scotland.

Under the Scottish National Party Government, there has been an increase in opencast coal extraction, a relaxed attitude to unconventional gas, coal-bed methane and fracking potentially, support for deepwater drilling and now an oil and gas strategy that is focused on squeezing out every last drop from the North Sea.

I refer members to the document that I mention in my amendment, the International Energy Agency's "World Energy Outlook 2012", which concludes that

“no more than one third of proven fossil fuel reserves can be consumed”

prior to 2050 if the world is to achieve the goal of constraining climate change to 2°C unless carbon capture and storage technology is widely deployed. As I mentioned earlier, CCS cannot be deployed in relation to uses of fossil fuel for transport and heating, for example, which is where most of our oil goes.

The International Energy Agency is generally a conservative body—it is not where we would look to if we wanted to find an overly alarmist approach. The next Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report seems likely to focus minds on just how much tougher the 2°C target is than was previously thought.

There are three ways of resolving that contradiction. One is to say that domestic production is necessary in order to reduce our reliance on imports. Pretty much every country that has any fossil fuel to extract domestically will use that argument—indeed, they are using it—with the result that nobody budges and we carry on putting more fossil carbon into the global economy and therefore into the atmosphere.

The second option in response to the contradiction is to say that we need to continue our reliance on fossil fuels for a while to bridge the gap before we transition properly to a genuinely low-carbon economy. That argument boils down to saying, “Lord, make me chaste—but not yet.” In fact, it does worse. Increased production will help

tendencies to keep prices down, so it will delay the transition towards the low-carbon economy that everybody says that they want.

The third argument is the one that the minister used. CCS is talked about as the essential technology to take fossil carbon back into the ground after we have consumed fossil fuels. As I have made clear, we cannot apply that approach in relation to the fossil carbon that comes from the oil industry. That is simply not an option.

Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP):

I know that Mr Harvie and I have different opinions on economic growth, but what would be his message to the many constituents whom I represent whose livelihoods and family incomes are entirely dependent on the offshore industry in the oil and gas sector?

Patrick Harvie: My argument would be one of transition, not about ending an industry and putting nothing in its place. It would be about transitioning to the renewables industry, which can create jobs and is already doing so.

If we are remotely serious about the 2°C target for the world to try to meet, as we all said that we were when we passed the world-leading climate change legislation, the bulk of our existing proven reserves of fossil fuels must remain unused, especially those in respect of which CCS cannot play a role. Therefore, it follows that, globally, the oil and gas industry is hugely overvalued. That increases the risk to Scotland from our economic reliance on that overvalued industry.

There is another way: committing not only to a cap on our ultimate extraction of fossil fuels, but to investing the income from that resource into something to replace the revenue from it for the future. The scale of the profits from renewable energy in Scotland—especially from wave and tidal energy—will be astonishing, and we will miss a trick if we do not keep a portion of them in the public sector. I am delighted to welcome the likes of Vattenfall, which is a successful public sector entity, to come and invest in renewables, but I am sad that we do not have a public sector entity like it that is owned by our public sector.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

You must close, please.

Patrick Harvie: The building of a Scottish public renewables company is the best priority that we could set. What a legacy to leave for future generations.

I move amendment S4M-05310.3, to leave out from “welcomes” to end and insert:

“notes the findings of the International Energy Agency’s *World Energy Outlook 2012*, which states that no more than one third of proven fossil fuel reserves can be consumed without losing any hope of constraining climate

change to 2°C; notes also that the fossil fuel industry is largely valued in relation to reserves; considers therefore that the industry is dramatically overvalued and that there is great danger for Scotland in allowing such an overvalued industry to continue to play a central role in the economy; recognises that the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy is urgent but cannot be accomplished overnight, and calls on the Scottish and the UK Government to adopt a long-term approach to fossil fuels that would result in a substantial portion of existing reserves remaining unused, to end the support for exploration for new reserves and to invest much of the remaining revenue from the fossil fuel industries in a public renewable energy business that can generate revenue for the public purse without destroying the life chances of future generations.”

15:18

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I thank the minister, Fergus Ewing, for his measured approach and commend him for his positive and constructive partnership with the Westminster Government. I am sure that the industry, too, will welcome that approach.

I was pleased to hear what Rhoda Grant said, and I support her amendment. However, I noted from the Oil & Gas UK briefing that the safety record in the North Sea is better than that of the retail industry. Therefore, I question some of the points that have been raised.

We are pleased to participate in this debate on oil and gas, and I confirm at the outset that we will support the Government’s motion and the Liberal and Labour amendments. I will leave my very capable colleague Alex Johnstone to deal with the Green amendment. That pleasure is all his.

Given that 200,000 people are employed in the oil and gas industry and that it contributes £32 billion to the United Kingdom balance of payments, it is only right that the Parliament acknowledges and values the excellent work of the sector. As a member for the Highlands and Islands, I acknowledge the sterling work that is being done at the Nigg Skills Academy.

I am old enough to remember when the oil industry started in the north-east. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the predictions were that we would be extracting oil from the North Sea for about 25 to 30 years. We are now 40 years on and we will still be taking oil and gas from the North Sea for some time to come. As Tavish Scott said, we have platforms that were built for the initial period and whose lifetime has been significantly extended. As other members have said, there have been many changes over the period. Technology has changed out of all recognition—for example, we now have horizontal drilling. In 1972, the price of oil was \$3.50 a barrel, or around \$18 in current prices, compared to today’s price of \$111 for Brent crude.

I want to highlight some recent estimates relating to oil and gas in the North Sea. Revenues are undoubtedly difficult to predict because of erratic prices and levels of production. There have been significant recent outages, including the Elgin leak, which has resulted in production falling by more than 12 per cent. According to the centre for public policy for regions, the cumulative fall in production since 1999, which was the peak year, is now well over 60 per cent. The Office for Budget Responsibility's North Sea tax revenue forecasts for the period post 2011-12 have almost halved in the past 18 months, although higher capital investment should help to extend production in future years.

Gas production is set to be 13.7 billion therms in 2017-18, which is a fall of 46 per cent from the 25.5 billion therms that was achieved in 2008-09. Oil and gas projections from the Treasury budget and the autumn statement clearly signal a gradual decline in total tax revenues from 2013 onwards. As a result, the current forecast for North Sea tax revenue from 2012 to 2016 is half the level that was forecast 18 months ago.

Along with the CPPR research and predictions, the work of Professor Alex Kemp at the University of Aberdeen highlights the erratic and unpredictable nature of North Sea oil and gas production. In a recent paper, he highlights the comparison between the peak of revenues of £28 billion in 1984-85 with the low of £1 billion in 1992. In the past 20 years, the average has been about £6 billion per annum. Professor Kemp estimates that there are between 11 billion and 35 billion potential barrels of oil remaining and that future tax revenues in the next decade will be about £5 billion to £10 billion per year. Of course, the £34 billion investment for decommissioning must be brought into the equation, in terms of capital infrastructure and jobs.

It is important to emphasise the figures that leading economists and research organisations have given, particularly in the lead-up to the referendum, when people across Scotland are looking for accurate figures on which to base their decisions. In February last year, the First Minister stated that there were 24 billion barrels of oil left in the North Sea—most people would agree—which he said were worth more than £1 trillion. This month, he stayed with the figure of 24 billion barrels of oil, but the value has now risen to £1.5 trillion, which is a 50 per cent increase in less than a year. I find that rather odd, given that the price of Brent crude in February last year was \$121 and this month it is \$111. The amount of oil in the North Sea still to be extracted remains the same and the price of oil falls by \$10 a barrel over the 11-month period, yet the First Minister claims that last year's £1 trillion-worth of oil is now worth £1.5 trillion.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Yes, it is.

Mary Scanlon: That is the sort of misinformation that the people of Scotland do not want in the lead-up to the referendum.

Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is closing.

Mary Scanlon: If Mr Stevenson would be quiet, I would find it easier to concentrate on my speech, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that you must close, please.

Mary Scanlon: In the lead-up to the referendum, it is worth noting that oil and gas revenues account for 0.7 per cent of UK gross domestic product, compared to 17.7 per cent of Scottish GDP.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate, and I call Maureen Watt to be followed by Lewis Macdonald. We are very tight for time, so you have up to 6 minutes. Less would be more.

15:25

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity presented by today's debate to recognise the contribution of the oil and gas industry to the Scottish and UK economies. I sometimes think that, because the bulk of the oil and gas activity is centred in the north-east of Scotland, which is remote to some, too many people do not appreciate the huge contribution that the industry makes to the economy. Indeed, successive UK Governments have been keen to fill their coffers with tax revenues from oil and gas—£300 billion in the past 40 years—but they have had very little understanding of the industry and its requirements. David Cameron admitted as much in a visit to Aberdeen last year.

That is why I congratulate the minister on the huge amount of time and effort that he has put into understanding the industry. I know that that has been much appreciated. The oil and gas strategy that he mentioned has been well received, and I thank all those in the industry who took the time to input to that strategy.

When I entered Parliament in 2006, too many here and in the other place were content to peddle the myth that the industry was in terminal decline and to discourage youngsters from entering it. Today, the industry is in one of the best boom periods that I have known, and I have seen and worked in the industry in bad times as well as in

good times. I am glad that the current Scottish Government and the industry have done much to turn round that perception and recognise that 24 billion barrels of oil are still to be recovered from the North Sea. They have a value of more than £1 trillion. I do not quite understand what point Mary Scanlon was making, other than to suggest that an independent Scotland could not handle the volatility of the oil price, which is plainly rubbish.

Patrick Harvie: Will the member give way?

Mary Scanlon: Will the member take an intervention?

Maureen Watt: Not at the moment.

I thank ACSEF—Aberdeen city and shire economic future—and other organisations that have given members their briefings. According to ACSEF, the oil and gas industry contributes £7 billion in exports, £13 billion or one quarter of all corporation tax collected in the UK, and £6 billion in corporate and payroll taxes. Oil and gas activity from Aberdeen city and shire accounts for 15 to 16 per cent of gross domestic product, and it is vital that the right conditions are in place for Aberdeen and the north-east of Scotland to continue to be the hub for oil and gas in future, and that, with independence, the whole of Scotland begins to reap the benefit of this resource.

The oil and gas industry supports approximately 450,000 jobs in the UK, half of which are in Scotland. It is therefore important that the expertise that has been developed in the north-east is retained in the north-east and in Scotland. It should be used in the North Sea and overseas, and in other fields such as renewables. Many oil and gas firms are already involved in those other fields.

As Rhoda Grant said, a recent PWC report suggested that the oil and gas industry might have to find another 120,000 workers during the next 10 years. Many oil and gas companies are currently recruiting large numbers of people. I am heartened that our learning institutions in Aberdeen and beyond have embraced the concept of the oil and gas academy and I hope that the whole industry will get involved with that. It is quite unsustainable for companies within the industry to carry on poaching employees from one another, thereby driving up salary costs, rather than taking on apprentices and giving opportunities to highly trained graduates from our universities.

I pay tribute to all the men and women who work in the industry—although there are not nearly enough of the latter—onshore and especially offshore. We should make no mistake about it: those people work in a very risky industry. I know from experience what it is like to travel offshore in a helicopter, and I have seen at first hand the work that is done on the drill floor and derrick. It can be

scary. That is why safety is always at the forefront. Although the current helicopter situation is costing the industry millions, it is vital that all the safety issues surrounding helicopters are resolved so that workers can confidently use that method of transport offshore.

The perception that high salaries and wages are paid in the industry is correct—it is a risky industry. Nonetheless, I highlight one of the unique challenges faced by the industry. Everyone agrees with the introduction of automatic enrolment into pension schemes. It was only in the late 1980s that the company that I worked for introduced a pension scheme. However, the law firm Pinsent Masons recently warned that the nature of the oil and gas industry, which extensively employs contractors, and rotators, which is when employees are sent overseas, while people are brought into the UK on short-term assignments—the UK Border Agency does not comprehend the damage that it is doing in that area—presents particular challenges with pensions. I have written to the Minister for Pensions at Westminster on the issue and I hope that Fergus Ewing might raise it with his UK counterparts when he next meets them. I support the motion.

15:31

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland (Lab): It is right to celebrate successes and opportunities in oil and gas, but it is important also to remember that those successes and opportunities have come at a cost. When we last debated oil and gas, in November 2011, I spoke of the impact of the Piper Alpha disaster 25 years ago, which Rhoda Grant and others have mentioned. Offshore workers have died in the intervening period; indeed, a support vessel crewman died at sea only a few weeks ago. However, there has been a step change in safety since 1988 and the gains that have been made in that time must not be taken for granted.

Before Christmas, the Scottish Parliament cross-party group on oil and gas heard from Terry O'Halloran, who is a safety representative of the offshore workforce that is taking part in the investigation into the causes of the two helicopter ditchings in the North Sea in 2012. He and his colleagues told us about the work that is under way, and they confirmed that the manufacturers and operators have agreed that the helicopters in question should be grounded for as long as it takes for the causes to be found. That is what it means to put safety first; not warm words, but firm actions, even if they come at a cost to business profits and Government revenues, because those financial costs matter less than the human costs of getting it wrong.

I welcome the further development of a Scottish oil and gas strategy. When Parliament first debated oil and gas, in Aberdeen in May 2002, I said that we were only halfway through the life of the industry and that we had a shared priority

“to secure the benefits for enterprise and employment in Scotland of extracting the remaining resources”—[*Official Report*, 29 May 2002; c 9274.]

from the North Sea. That is still true today.

Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce published in November its latest oil and gas survey of its 400 member companies in the sector. Skills gaps and difficulties in recruitment came up time and again. The chamber of commerce highlighted the need for progress with the energy skills academy, with

“appropriate resources from both the private and public sectors.”

That must mean investment by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Higher and Further Education Funding Council in the oil and gas academy of Scotland, which is a new initiative that is being developed by the universities and colleges in and around Aberdeen. Investment in OGAS at this critical time can help to secure the position of Aberdeen city and shire as the leading centre of excellence in oil and gas outwith North America, second only to Houston on the world stage. It would help oil and gas today, and would also help to build a strong platform for development of offshore renewable energy skills and capability in the future.

I welcome Fergus Ewing’s renewed commitment today to working in partnership with the UK Government and industry through PILOT. That is essential to tackling the barriers to maximising production and to maintaining the highest safety and environmental standards.

Last month, Professor Alex Kemp at the University of Aberdeen produced his latest report on potential production of oil and gas. In his view, to extract even half the remaining potential reserves in the UK continental shelf would require a continuing high oil price and increased levels of exploration, enhanced production from existing fields, fewer shutdowns, improved access for new operators to other companies’ pipelines, and investment to extend the life of existing infrastructure.

Those are not simply technical problems for economists and engineers to resolve; they go to the heart of the issues of safe working offshore and potential future production. We can achieve nothing in relation to either if issues including ageing infrastructure are not addressed in good time—as the minister acknowledged and as Tavish Scott emphasised. Although new technology such as horizontal drilling will enable

harder-to-reach oil and gas reserves to get to market, much of it will still find its way onshore via production platforms and pipelines that are now 40 years old. Maintaining that infrastructure and affording the new technology depend on the price of oil and uncertainty about future costs and returns.

With oil at \$111 a barrel, Aberdeen will continue to lead the world in developing new technologies to extract oil and gas in a most hostile environment. However, that innovation is dependent on price and is focused on production. It is vital that safety is not compromised in the extension of the working lives of production platforms and pipelines, which is why the step change in safety must be protected and why the industry’s growing willingness to be open and transparent is so important.

I commend Eurocopter and the helicopter safety steering group on their willingness to put safety first when it comes to journeys to and from workplaces offshore. It is just as important that accidental releases of hydrocarbons are now routinely publicised on Oil & Gas UK’s website and that the industry body’s step change in safety has led it to include elected safety representatives from the offshore workforce. Those changes suggest that the industry recognises what its future priorities have to be and that a safe and sound working environment is the key to greater production, revenue and profits. It knows that untapped reserves will stay beneath the sea bed unless they can be extracted safely, efficiently and in an environmentally responsible way. None of that can be taken for granted.

If people are asked to go to work in such a hostile and hazardous environment—Tavish Scott rightly highlighted the particular challenges that will be associated with the developments west of Shetland—those people should be confident that they have the support of Parliament and all of us in putting their safety first.

15:37

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): We have already heard some statistics relating to the oil and gas industry, but I will go over some of them again because it is vital that everyone in Parliament recognise the importance of our oil and gas industry. It provides 196,000 jobs in Scotland; it makes a £32 billion contribution to the balance of payments; it accounts for £7 billion in exports; it contributes £13 billion pounds in corporation tax—a quarter of the total that is collected in the UK—and £6 billion in corporate and payroll taxes; and there are 24 billion barrels of oil, worth £1.5 trillion, still to be recovered. That shows the importance of the industry.

However, for those of us who come from the north-east—Aberdeen loons like me—it means much more than that, because a great many of our family and friends are employed in the industry. Earlier, when Mr McDonald asked Mr Harvie what he would do with the oil and gas industry, which Mr Harvie seems to be keen to get rid of, Mr Harvie responded, “Transition”. I have to say to Mr Harvie that it would be a huge transition, because according to Aberdeen city and shire economic future, 77 per cent of direct employment in Aberdeen city and shire is attributable to the oil and gas industry.

Patrick Harvie: This is a phenomenally difficult problem, but it is a problem for both of us. The SNP does not imagine that oil and gas resources will last forever. Where does Kevin Stewart think Scotland’s income will come from after Fergus Ewing’s 40 years of oil and gas extraction have finally come to an end?

Kevin Stewart: A 40-year period is a huge amount of time in which to achieve a transition, and we are undergoing that transition. It will take a long while to get renewables on stream, and the skills that we are discussing are transferable, as Rhoda Grant has said.

Scotland has a huge part to play in the industry—not only in the next 40 years, but beyond that, in terms of the expertise that we can give to other places in the world. At this moment, my brother is working in Indonesia, my father works in the supply chain in Aberdeen and my brother-in-law works to the west of Shetland. I could go on and on and list a huge number of family and friends. That shows how important oil and gas are to the north-east of Scotland and beyond.

I agree completely with the comments that Rhoda Grant, Lewis Macdonald and Maureen Watt made about safety. Like thousands of others throughout the country, the first thing that I did when I heard about the recent ditchings that took place was phone home to ensure that my own kith and kin were not involved. Lewis Macdonald was absolutely right to say that safety comes first in dealing with the helicopter situation. I am really glad that the industry is working with the health and safety representatives in trade unions and has taken a responsible attitude in that regard. I am sure that that will continue. It is right to highlight the importance of the step changes that have been made. The industry, the unions and the health and safety representatives are to be applauded for it.

I cannot agree with Rhoda Grant on the tax regime. The greatest danger to the oil and gas industry is the recent United Kingdom tax regime. As has been pointed out, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced without consultation a tax

hike on oil and gas production; the supplementary charge went from 20 to 32 per cent. There has been a welcome U-turn on that, but it was all really cack-handed.

Rhoda Grant: Will Kevin Stewart give way?

Kevin Stewart: I do not have any time. I am sorry.

The Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce oil and gas survey that was published in late 2012 noted:

“confidence in the stability of the UK tax regime remains low.”

I am sure that the tax regime in an independent Scotland will recognise the value of the industry to our country and will create the stable tax regime that is required.

We have a huge amount of competition from elsewhere in the world—Houston, Abu Dhabi, Kuala Lumpur and Perth, to name but a few places. We must ensure that investment in the industry continues and that the skills gap is filled. That is why I am so pleased that we will have an energy skills academy. I am sure that the institutions in the north-east of Scotland will play a vital part in it.

15:43

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I will pick up on what my colleague just said. Banff and Buchan College, which is based in Fraserburgh and elsewhere and is part of the energy skills academy, is a welcome addition in employment and in supporting what the industry needs in the way of skills.

The energetica corridor extends from Aberdeen up to Peterhead in my constituency. It will be an important axis for the next generation of energy, just as it has been in the exploitation of oil and gas resources off our coasts over the past decades. That axis has largely insulated the north-east of Scotland from the economic downturn. If members go to Aberdeen, they will see an environment that is different from almost all the rest of Scotland, so we value the industry highly.

Hydrocarbons, about which we have been talking and of which we have many decades yet to come, are not only used to generate electricity and to power transport but are important as a chemical feedstock. One of the things that we will see over the period of our exploitation of that natural, but limited, resource is a move away from using it for transportation and generating electricity.

Patrick Harvie: Does Stewart Stevenson worry—as I do—that the MSPs who stand here to debate such issues in the 2050s will curse us for

burning the hydrocarbons that they will consider too valuable to burn?

Stewart Stevenson: We must map our transition not just in Scotland but across Europe and the world. A huge economic and environmental opportunity comes from the development of carbon capture and storage not simply for us, but as an exportable technology and a technology that we can use our engineers to support.

I have discussed that subject on a couple of occasions—for example, with ministers in the Polish Government. In Poland, 90 to 95 per cent of the electricity comes from coal or lignite, which is not just CO₂ polluting but is hugely sulphurous. We could play a key role in helping countries such as Poland to address their issues, because their transition to a different world will be much lengthier and more difficult. That is not simply a matter of economic imperative; it also has an environmental benefit.

We have heard a bit about the need for certainty, about which I will say a few words. The chief corporate officer of Iberdrola, Keith Anderson—he also heads ScottishPower Renewables, so an intimate link across the energy sector exists—captured the issue for the industry when he said:

“Give the clarity now and let us understand the mechanism and you will see the investment come through in an orderly fashion.”

That was in the context of the Energy Bill, because the industry is uncomfortable about what it sees—it wants such certainty.

Another interesting aspect is whether the way forward depends on fracking. I particularly took note of Charles Hendry, who was the UK energy minister—I know that our minister knows him well. Charles Hendry pointed out that shale gas is very unlikely to play a significant role in the UK. The reasons for that are partly environmental and partly economic. Shale gas just will not make sense in the UK, so there will be a fundamental and continuing role for renewable energy and huge economic opportunities for us.

Rhoda Grant raised proper questions about the transition to an independent Scotland. I popped out of the chamber, Presiding Officer, to get the factual information that I knew that I had online. Since 1946, the UK Government has passed 23 acts of independence, so it is quite experienced in that. All the acts are short—the longest is eight pages long. The legal transfer is almost invariably expressed in the following terms:

“Subject to the provisions of this section, the existing laws shall, notwithstanding the revocation of the existing Orders or the establishment of a Republic”—

I am quoting the legislation for Kiribati—

“continue in force on and after Independence Day”.

Legal certainty is available at that level.

The question was posed: what happens to contracts? It is worth saying that legislation by Parliaments trumps contracts but, in any event, contracts in the commercial world are rarely without a provision for novation, which is about the transfer of the purchaser or the supplier to another party. That applies in commercial terms.

There is no difficulty about the mechanics of the transfer. The issue is whether, post-independence, the Scottish Government would be motivated to maintain the certainty and an environment that would be internationally competitive for the investments that we need and which would enable the industry to have a long-term future with us. When we look at the economic benefits that we derive in our communities in north-east Scotland and elsewhere, beyond peradventure the answer is yes.

15:49

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): I very much welcome the chance to debate the oil and gas industry's role in Scotland and I endorse the minister's motion. The debate is useful. As several members have said, those of us who represent the north-east are, of course, keenly aware of the industry's central role in Scotland, not only in giving Aberdeen its status as the energy capital of Europe but in being the key driver of the wider Scottish economy. Its future is vital to us, and Parliament's role must be to ensure that the industry plays a central role in our economy for many years to come.

Of course, there will be debate today about where the levers of power should lie in forming policy for the industry, but the fact is that in the crucial issues for its future—ensuring that we have the skilled workforce that the industry needs and, in doing so, promoting a culture of safety; encouraging more of our young people to pursue careers in oil and gas and the energy sector more widely; and developing an infrastructure in Scotland and the north-east to support the long-term future of the industry—Parliament already has the key role. That is increasingly realised in the industry as well—particularly through the work of the Scottish Parliament cross-party group on oil and gas and at events at which we have had the chance to engage with the industry.

Taxation is certainly a key issue when we discuss the prospects of oil and gas businesses. On the other side of the argument, Neil Findlay raised the impact of a cut in corporation tax—which is the Scottish Government's policy—on

revenue from the industry. However, the other major concern that we all hear again and again from the industry is that we need to ensure that we have the skilled workforce that the industry needs in the long term—both in the oil and gas sector, as Lewis Macdonald said, and in our energy sector more widely, including renewables.

That issue is also highlighted in the excellent briefing that we received for today's debate from Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce. Too often, we hear that firms cannot get people with the skills that they need, which not only threatens the ability of oil and gas businesses to maximise their economic impact in the North Sea, but represents an opportunity cost, especially for the young people who could be taking up excellent career opportunities.

I am sure that the minister is aware that good work is being done to tackle those issues by organisations such as OPITO and in our schools by the your future in energy initiative, which is running a programme of events at Northfield academy next week.

It is regrettable, however, that some of the Scottish Government's actions run counter to tackling the problem. The further education cuts are outwith the minister's bailiwick, but they are certainly affecting our local colleges in the north-east and will make the goals more difficult to achieve. The announcement by ministers that an energy academy is to be established is welcome, although we are still to get clarity on what the long-term funding arrangements for the academy will be and where it will be based. Particularly for all of us who represent the north-east, it is a no-brainer that, although the academy's work will involve institutions across Scotland, the sensible place to base its leadership is in Aberdeen, because it is Europe's energy capital and an industry hub, and because our four local academic institutions have joined together to develop exciting plans for the work of the academy. I hope that we will soon have more clarity from ministers on the north-east's role in what is a positive and important development for the industry.

I, too, will touch on the inevitability of Scotland's oil and gas resources being part of the constitutional debate. There is no disagreement on the importance of a strong future for our oil and gas sector—although the Green Party may demur—nor is there disagreement that we have left on the UK continental shelf decades of oil production, which is of huge benefit to Scotland's economy. We can all be confident and positive about the future of the industry in Scotland and our role in helping to secure it.

Nevertheless, that does not lead members in this part of the chamber to believe that it is sensible to rely so much on one industry to

balance the books. Oil prices are strong now, but we know that they fluctuate. The north-east economy is now strong in comparison with the rest of Scotland because of oil and gas, but there have been times when that has not been the case. In 1999, one newspaper article reported thousands of job losses in the industry and reflected that, from 1985 to 1988, when the rest of the country saw economic growth, the oil industry was in the doldrums and house prices in Aberdeen were falling by 10 per cent a year. Aberdeen has weathered the storm. The city now thrives and the outlook is bright, but its past shows that it would be folly indeed to pin to the price of a barrel of oil our economic fortunes as a nation.

Maureen Watt: When I entered the industry quite a long time ago, the price of a barrel of oil was \$20 and the recovery cost was \$8 dollars. It is the difference that decides whether the industry explores or not.

Richard Baker: Costs in both areas have gone up. My point about fluctuation still stands. Indeed, Mary Scanlon mentioned differences in price over just the past few months.

We know that with decades of oil production remaining in the North Sea, the industry will be vital to Scotland for many years to come. The previous Scottish Executive and Lewis Macdonald, when he was a minister with responsibility for enterprise, ensured that Parliament played a full role in developing policies and planning ahead, through the PILOT initiative. I am pleased that the Scottish Government is continuing that approach to developing strategy in order to ensure that we have the policies that we need for a successful oil and gas industry in the future. I welcome this chance to discuss such important issues.

15:55

Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): The economy of the north-east does not depend solely on the export of oil. In my constituency, in particular in Montrose, we have the opportunity to export technology and hardware around the globe in ways that will be dependent on the oil price but which will have nothing to do with how many barrels are coming through the pipes in Aberdeen.

A few days ago, I spent a wee while looking at a large hole. Politicians periodically spend their time looking down holes, but no election is due and I was looking at a sand hole. Thousands of tonnes of sand have been removed from Montrose. Why? GE Oil & Gas is about to build a big box in the hole, to push the sand to the sides. It will end up by having a deep swimming pool in which to test the trees that it will manufacture for oil sites around the world.

That is precisely the kind of activity that will fuel the economy of my constituency and Scotland, regardless of where exports are going, and which is an important part of what our industry has to give us. I must say that it is serious engineering—it is not just big stuff; the components are machined to one thousandth of an inch, and anyone who has used a lathe will know that they would rather leave that to an expert.

We have a lot of industry that puts clever stuff down pipes into the rock beneath. I also talked to Halliburton, also in Montrose, which puts all kinds of valves, filters, liner hangers and so on well below sea level, to enable what is going on down there to work, to be measured, to be filtered and to be switched off when necessary.

Of course, many people in my constituency do not work in the oil industry, but what I have seen of the oil industry in my constituency tells me that we have an export business that will last for a very long time, which is very innovative and technically extremely competent. From talking to the industries, I know that they are committed to our part of the world. They are not doubling the size of their workshops for any reason other than because they are committed to Montrose. They are putting in machine tools that cost millions, which demonstrates their commitment.

Members talked about the training that is going on. I pay tribute to the businesses and others who are taking on apprentices. I think that the industry recognises that it might have a bit of catching up to do and that in previous years it did not take on enough apprentices. Angus College and Angus Training Group—and similar organisations in Aberdeen—are seriously involved in training. Apprentices are coming in, whether they are welders, machine operators or general mechanical engineers. There is a huge amount of activity and I get the impression that there could be more. If there is one thing that I want to encourage the Government to do, it is to believe that more training could be done.

The Maritime Rescue Institute in Stonehaven, which was recently battered by storms and was mentioned in the Parliament, is training people in offshore techniques and survival in and rescue from the water. The kinds of activity that I have described are an important part of Scotland's economy and are present in my constituency.

Members often mention the need to get youngsters interested in science, technology, engineering and maths—those hard STEM subjects—at school. Although—as has been suggested—that issue is not currently within Fergus Ewing's bailiwick, we really must work on it. STEM subjects start at school; they may even start at home. I tend towards the view that we cannot have too many engineers, as they can do a

lot of things. We cannot have too many people who understand mathematics, and they will do other things. We need to encourage our education system and our teachers to produce youngsters who have STEM subject skills and generate some enthusiasm for that type of thing. That will benefit not only the oil and gas industry but our whole society.

16:00

Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I am struck by the thought that Opposition members in the chamber this afternoon seem to have come down with a very dismal dose of January blues. First, Rhoda Grant was wringing her hands about health and safety issues, when in reality the health and safety record of the oil and gas industry is better than that of construction, farming and fishing, and—as we have heard in the chamber—better than that of retail. When we consider the hazardous nature of what the industry does, that is a terrific record, so Rhoda Grant ought to congratulate the industry rather than complain about health and safety.

Rhoda Grant: Will the member give way?

Mike MacKenzie: I have ground to cover.

Rhoda Grant: The member mentioned my point, so he should give way to me.

Lewis Macdonald: He should.

Mike MacKenzie: Okay.

Rhoda Grant: Mike MacKenzie totally misrepresents my point, which was that the industry is a hazardous area in which to work because of the geographical challenges of where the oil and gas rigs are. When an accident happens, it has very serious consequences, and travelling to and from work is a dangerous thing. It is to the credit of the industry—and indeed of the workers and the trade unions—that there are fewer accidents and that safety is taken so seriously. That was the point that I was trying to make.

Mike MacKenzie: Yes—and as good as the safety record is, we should of course all strive to improve it.

We also heard from Mary Scanlon about when she was a slip of a lass and oil was \$3 a barrel; it is now \$100—or well over \$100—a barrel. I am afraid that I just cannot follow the logic of the assumption that, somehow or other, oil prices will drop away and be as unreliable as she seems to suggest.

Mary Scanlon: Will the member give way?

Mike MacKenzie: Certainly.

Mary Scanlon: I am not sure whether the member was fully awake at the time, but I took that figure from a Scottish Government press release by Alex Salmond, in which he pointed out the erratic volatility of the oil industry. I never made any implication or assumption that prices would fall to \$3.50. If the member wishes to represent me, he should please do so accurately.

Mike MacKenzie: I did not say that Mary Scanlon was suggesting that. The point that she made very well and eloquently was that oil prices are rising steeply and have been doing so, and that that is the long-term trend. I am old enough to remember—just like Mary Scanlon—the discovery of oil and gas in the North Sea. We were told that there really was not very much oil there at all, and I am old enough to remember that we were told that it was somehow the wrong sort of oil. If it is the wrong sort, it is wrong in the sense that it seems to be a special type of oil that is always running out almost before it has been discovered.

Every year seems to bring another scare story that talks down Scotland's oil. The reality has been, and is, quite different. More than £300 billion in oil revenues has been sent to the Treasury, and Scotland's oil has been one big fat golden goose that has somehow survived the abuse of considerable fiscal uncertainty as successive Westminster Administrations have seen how much it can be squeezed with a sometimes careless abandon with regard to the wellbeing of industry or its future. I was therefore shocked, but not at all surprised, at the eventual publication of Gavin McCrone's report in 2005. It was immediately evident on reading that report why it had been buried in secrecy for so long.

So much for the past, but what about the future? I am sure that the Presiding Officer and all the members in the chamber are as happy as I am to have heard in today's debate that the future of Scotland's oil and gas sector looks very bright indeed, with the prospect of 24 billion barrels of oil still to come and a wholesale value of £1.5 trillion. So much for Scotland's oil running out. That equates to about 40 per cent of oil by volume still to come, and at least 50 per cent of oil by value. By any measure, that is still a considerable resource indeed. It is a good-news story that all Scotland's politicians should be talking up, and for more than one reason.

Recessions are mainly about the loss of confidence and, although the current one was precipitated by the banking crisis, nevertheless it continues only because of a loss of confidence. At some point in the economic cycle, confidence always returns, so there is a sense in which we can literally talk ourselves out of recession. For ideological reasons it may suit the Tory agenda to

talk up our economic difficulties, but that is the opposite of what we should be doing.

Scotland's oil and gas industry deserves to be talked up for yet another reason.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): You are in your last minute.

Mike MacKenzie: In these days of unemployment—and, especially, youth unemployment—we hear of significant skills shortages in oil and gas, yet we also hear that young people are reluctant to embark on careers in the industry, despite the prospect of rewarding employment. One good reason for that is that we continually see scaremongering in the press and media about uncertainty in the industry. No wonder young people are reluctant to contemplate careers in oil and gas.

It is not oil resources that are unpredictable so much as it is UK Government policy. As far as Scotland is concerned, let us hope that the UK management of those resources comes to an end soon. Scotland's oil and gas reserves certainly deserve to be talked up as being a valuable economic resource—all the more so with the exciting development of carbon capture and storage just around the corner.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must conclude.

Mike MacKenzie: I will finish immediately.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much.

16:06

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): Although I agree with previous speakers that the oil and gas industry has been of tremendous economic benefit to Scotland and the UK as a whole, members perhaps will not be surprised that, in my capacity as shadow minister for the environment and climate change, I would like to draw attention to the detrimental impacts fossil fuels have had and will continue to have on the global environment and to pose some questions about long-term strategy.

The oil and gas industry will continue to play a significant role in providing employment and attracting investment in Scotland, but one cannot help but recognise that it is a finite resource—in spite of members' points today. As we are continuously told by the Scottish Government, Scotland is a world leader in renewables technology, and I certainly would not wish to dispute or undermine that claim. That being the case, it seems that we should concentrate more on moving transferable skills to the renewables industry from the oil and gas industry to ensure the

long-term health of the Scottish and British economies. As Stewart Stevenson said, we have to map our transition, and I would like to hear more from the minister about that transition and what the plans are for it.

Does the Scottish Government's "Oil & Gas Strategy 2012-2020" sit well with the Scottish Government's commitment to a low-carbon economy? I am pleased to see that the strategy contains provisions to create opportunities for supply chain companies in the offshore and carbon capture and storage sectors.

The increase in oil recovery is very welcome, as the minister highlighted. In the context of climate change, the UK CCS demonstration projects are deeply significant, as highlighted by my colleague Rhoda Grant and others. It is disappointing that the UK Government is cutting funding to those demonstration projects and it might be helpful if the minister could update us on that, especially as one of the projects is to be in the gas sector.

One of the more striking elements of the oil and gas strategy is the intention to help expand the oil and gas industry abroad, with Brazil, west Africa and others being cited as recipients of support from Scottish Development International.

I believe that the Scottish Government—though no doubt with good intentions—has missed the central point: that we work with other countries to reduce emissions rather than increase them. Indeed, when I spoke to our Minister for Environment and Climate Change on his recent return from the international climate change negotiations at Doha, I was pleased to hear his thoughts on the progress of negotiations and his continuing commitment to reduce carbon emissions in Scotland, so as to set an example to the wider world. How does that ambition sit with increases in oil production in the longer term?

Indeed, members will be only too aware that this very chamber recently passed legislation committing the Government to emissions reduction targets under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. Now that we have unfortunately failed to meet the first annual targets for decreasing emissions, I am concerned about the oil and gas industry's impact on the next annual targets. The contradictory nature of these competing aims must have occurred to the Scottish Government; strengthening the oil industry in the long term and reducing carbon emissions surely cannot sit comfortably together. The Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee will soon be scrutinising the draft second report on policies and proposals, and many share the view that we need to shift transport modes away from oil and that, as well as cutting fuel poverty and the high demand for oil and gas in house heating, energy efficiency

measures will be key to cutting our emissions. In Rhoda Grant's words, we need to loosen our dependence on carbon in the long term.

On the future of fracking, a range of legitimate concerns have been expressed about the expansion of this industry in Scotland and my colleague Claire Baker has lodged a motion that highlights concerns about fracking's impact on the environment. The extraction process uses a great deal of water, which is not plentiful in some parts of Scotland—not that we would believe it sometimes—or in Britain. Moreover, the UK Government report on fracking failed to consider the potential for groundwater contamination. As things stand, there is a distinct lack of clear guidance for councils on dealing with applications from private companies. The current regulatory regime is cluttered and confusing and communities find it extremely difficult to get represented. As a result, I have backed my colleague Claire Baker's call for the Scottish Government to introduce national guidelines to provide clarity and to stop the potential for the industry's rapid expansion without proper scrutiny. I ask the minister to clarify today whether such guidance will be forthcoming for local authorities and, if so, when.

16:12

Brian Adam (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): I am pleased to say that the universities and colleges in Scotland are going to step up to the plate with regard to skills. That is particularly true of those in Aberdeen and the north-east. I am also aware of recent mergers and acquisitions. Such moves can sometimes be controversial, but they show a measure of confidence in the industry.

There is also international momentum. The minister referred to Talisman, which recently concluded an agreement with a company owned by the Chinese Government. Both companies are international, and I have to say that it is a sorry state of affairs when, despite that kind of international confidence in the industry's future, we have doomsayers who want us to say no to such developments.

It is interesting, too, that Scotland's international supply chain is continuing to invest in the future. I am delighted to see that there is confidence going forward. It is also interesting that there has been such interest in the recent release of fields for exploration. That kind of development displays further confidence. I think that we are as much at risk from timidity and doomsayers as from anything else, and we should be very careful in that respect.

I would like to make a particular reference to carbon capture and storage. We should not be left

behind. Others are trying it, and it will be applied in the North Sea, so why should we not benefit from research? Mr Harvie would like us to say “No more oil and gas”, but we cannot do that, so I do not agree with him.

16:15

Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP):

I am aware that time is tight and the length of speeches for final speakers has been reduced, so it is not my intention to take interventions.

I should first declare my interests in the subject. My brother is employed in offshore health and safety, and my father owns and operates a business in the supply chain in the north-east.

I start with the supply chain and indirect employment. We often focus on those who work offshore or who are directly employed by oil companies, but there is a vast network of companies, businesses and jobs in the north-east that are dependent on the industry. It is not as simple as looking only at the companies that directly supply the industry; members need to consider, for example, the shops, hotels and other facilities within the area that depend on the industry for their income and their survival.

My colleague Kevin Stewart made the point that the transition needs to take time in order for it to bed in. I say to Patrick Harvie that that is a valid point because so much of the infrastructure is dependent on the sector and it is not just a simple case of making the transition quickly.

Having said that, I agree that the skills are transferable between the oil and gas and renewables sectors. Indeed, from the discussions that I have had with oil and gas sector representatives, it is clear that they are aware of the transferable opportunities and what those could realise for their businesses. They recognise that they operate within a sector that will not be around for ever due to the finite nature of the resource, but they also recognise that their businesses, companies and expertise can be around for ever if they diversify and take advantage of the transferable opportunities.

We have an extremely good and strong safety regime in the North Sea. Unfortunately, it has too often been shaped by tragedy. It has often been the case that the reaction to tragedies, such as those related to Piper Alpha or helicopter ditching, has resulted in good work being done by the industry and the unions to ensure that the health and safety of those working in the sector is paramount.

On the economic argument of the value of oil and gas, I noted the comments made by Kenny Paton, oil and gas partner at Bond Pearce, in the

Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce report:

“With a grim economic picture elsewhere in the UK Aberdeen is bucking the national trend. It is a beacon of activity attracting all sorts of professions seeking exposure to this market from accountants to IT and, of course, legal as well as those more readily associated with the industry.”

The fact that Aberdeen was the only part of the UK that grew during the recession demonstrates how important the sector is not only to the north-east but to the wider national economy.

I was interested in Mary Scanlon’s comparison of the value of oil and gas revenues and her statement that they account for only 0.7 per cent of UK gross domestic product. In that case, the UK will not miss them after 2014.

Skills shortages exist in the oil and gas industry, and the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce is doing work to address them. The skills survey identified that 68 per cent of contractors and 75 per cent of operators reported experiencing problems in recruiting suitable employees in particular occupations.

In my discussions I have noticed that there is a significant recruitment gap. A number of people are due to retire and, although there are significant numbers of new entrants into the workforce, there is a gap in the middle that needs to be filled. The difficulties faced relate to the existing immigration rules and controls that the UK Government is putting in place and which make it difficult to import skilled workers from elsewhere to come and work in the north-east and rest of Scotland. It is vital that those difficulties are addressed appropriately.

When I attended the recent your future in energy event in the north-east, at which young people from schools were given the opportunity to learn more about the oil and gas sector, I found it interesting how few of them understood the sector, even when they had parents and family members who worked in it. That spoke of an industry in which people do not share their experiences to a large enough extent.

That takes us back to the skills shortage argument. In the past, many have been put off a career in oil and gas as a result of unfortunate scare stories and tales of woe about the industry and its future viability. We finally have a consensus on the future viability of the oil and gas industry such that young people know that they can enter the industry when they leave school and have a full career in it if they wish to do so. If those truths had been told back in the 70s and 80s, we might not have been facing the skills shortages that we face now and our nation might have seen much more economic benefit as a result.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the winding-up speeches.

16:21

Patrick Harvie: Members will appreciate that, from my point of view, the debate has been full of contradictions. The industry is one that is full of contradictions: it is an industry in which the recovery of a resource means the burning of that resource and in which managing a resource means consuming it as quickly as possible. This is a debate in which we can recognise the vital role that a particular source of income has for the public purse, but in which most members agree that they want to get through that as quickly as possible, as though there is no tomorrow. It is also a debate in which rhetoric about world-leading climate change legislation goes right alongside "It's Scotland's oil" rhetoric.

The central contradiction that I sought to highlight in my opening speech and in my amendment is between the 2°C target that we have set to give our world a reasonable chance of having a sustainable future and all the consideration of how many jobs and how much money can be made from burning through the fossil carbon as quickly as possible. It is the contradiction between the low-carbon economy that we have all said that we want and the ever-increasing supply of fossil fuels and therefore the ever-increasing release of fossil carbon into the atmosphere.

In answer to those contradictions, Fergus Ewing talked about CCS, but he did so as a means of achieving ever more oil extraction through enhanced oil recovery—which basically means extracting fossil carbon for power generation, getting some of that carbon back through carbon capture and then using it to extract even more fossil carbon to put into the global economy in industries that cannot be served by CCS. All of that amounts to a continued emphasis on dumping ever more carbon into the atmosphere.

Fergus Ewing: Could Mr Harvie clarify whether the Greens are against carbon capture and storage? I genuinely do not know the answer.

Patrick Harvie: We have not been against research to see whether it can work, but it has a limited transitional role to play. It cannot be something that we can rely on to take the carbon out of what the oil industry produces and put it back under the ground.

Rhoda Grant mentioned CCS and called for investment in new technologies to replace a reliance on fossil fuels in those industries in which CCS cannot play a role, but we are already failing to achieve our carbon targets. That is why demand

reduction in, for example, transport—especially aviation—is so important.

Mary Scanlon has promised that I will get a response to my arguments from Alex Johnstone, and I look forward to that. She and Maureen Watt had an interesting exchange—a dispute—on the economic value of oil and gas, but even the SNP accepts that we are talking about a resource that will not last for ever.

I mention in passing to my SNP colleagues something that will be relevant for the next couple of years: I want Scotland to be independent for more than 40 years and to have a viable economy for more than just one generation. The SNP seems to be in denial about the long-term future. For the life of me, I cannot understand why there is an argument against having a publicly owned renewables company, which would ensure that at least a proportion of the profit from Scotland's long-term energy resource serves the common good. What is not to like about that?

Maureen Watt: Will the member take an intervention?

Patrick Harvie: I will give way one more time.

Maureen Watt: Is that not precisely why we need independence, so that we can set up an oil fund like Norway's? The income from that fund is now more than the income from oil and gas in that country.

Patrick Harvie: That depends on what that fund would be used for. We will disagree across the chamber about the need to keep our fossil carbon, or at least a proportion of it, in the ground or under the sea. However, I ask all members, after they have voted down my amendment this evening, to consider the long term. The climate cannot wait 40 years for us to act, but even if climate change was not happening Scotland would need an economy after oil.

The building of a Scottish public renewables company would take many years. We could begin right now—this is in answer to Maureen Watt's comment—by empowering and even expecting local authorities to use their own borrowing powers to set up local energy companies. I have continually pressed the minister to do that, but he seems unenthusiastic. We could build on that approach with the current powers that we have at local level and complete the task with the revenue and borrowing powers at national level that come with independence.

Mike MacKenzie: Will the member take an intervention?

Patrick Harvie: I am afraid that I do not have time to take a further intervention.

Surely that is the legacy that we should be aiming to leave for future generations—a source of income for those future generations to replace the fossil fuel income that we all know will disappear, although we may disagree about when. That legacy would be not only income for future generations but a source of energy that will not destroy the prospects for Scotland's future. It would be a legacy that would last as long as the waves and tides themselves, not one that will last only one generation.

That is the opportunity that we should be seeking to exploit. If it means exploiting a proportion of our fossil fuels to that end and leaving another proportion where they are—where the fossil carbon belongs and ought to stay—that is the opportunity that we should be looking to for the future.

16:27

Tavish Scott: I used to think that there would be a few challenges in holding together all the parties that believe in keeping the United Kingdom together but, after that speech and the attacks on Mr Harvie by his “colleagues” in the SNP, I think that it will be a piece of cake.

We were doing quite well on the constitution until all the back benchers got going on it. Stewart Stevenson said most about it, and I will deal with his arguments because he made the legal argument—he got his researcher to dig out some piece of legal paper that shows that various islands in the far Pacific are now independent.

If Mr Stevenson wants to have a legal argument about oil and gas, I commend to him the report by UK Economics Focus that was published last night, which says about oil and gas that there are potential complications here. For example, a significant proportion of Scottish oil lies in waters surrounding Shetland, which would put the latter in a strong position in the event of independence negotiations between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom. Indeed, secession by Scotland could encourage similar aspirations by Shetland.

If Mr Stevenson thinks that it is his oil, I assure him that it is *wir* oil first.

Stewart Stevenson: Is the member aware of the Vienna convention on successor states, which has a population *de minimis* that would exclude Shetland from the rights to that oil?

Tavish Scott: Mr Stevenson has just excluded Shetland. I cannot wait to get my press release out on that one—SNP policy now to exclude Shetland.

More seriously, I understand that the SNP back benchers all have to attack the UK Government, no matter what the debate or what the subject is, but I found the argument that everything is awful

and it is all London's fault a bit puzzling, not least because of the commendable list that Mr Ewing, the minister, read out at the start of his speech. He pointed out, amongst other investments, that Statoil is investing £4.3 billion in the Mariner field and that Dana Petroleum is investing £1 billion in the Western Isles field. I do not think that he mentioned JX Nippon but I am sure that he would recognise the point that JX Nippon, a Japanese company, is buying Eni's stakes in 20 fields on the UK continental shelf.

Mark McDonald: Will the member give way?

Tavish Scott: I will just make these points—actually, Mr McDonald did not choose to take any interventions in his speech so I will just leave him in his place.

TAQA and SSE plc have bought £1 billion of North Sea assets from BP, so if it is all the UK Government's fault—and it was of course every Government's fault from 19-oatcake on—why is all that investment taking place?

Maureen Watt gave the game away, although she comes from the north-east and therefore genuinely reflects a strong sense of how important the oil and gas industry is—a view that I share. She said, however, in the context of talking about tax resources, that we look forward to “recouping the benefits” of that resource. I hope that I have quoted her correctly; I am sure that I can check the *Official Report* tomorrow. In the context of an independent Scotland—if that were to happen—the central belt would not do anything other than use the oil and gas industry as a cash cow.

Mike MacKenzie: Will the member take an intervention?

Tavish Scott: No, thank you. Judging by his contribution, Mr MacKenzie has the disadvantage of having written his speech before he came to the chamber.

I will move on to the rather more positive issues that many members have mentioned, rather than all that constitutional stuff. No wonder the oil industry simply yawns at that debate.

A number of colleagues have mentioned the ownership of fields. Something quite important is going on in that respect, not just in the North Sea, but worldwide in oil and gas. Even on our continental shelf, there have been 43 changes of ownership. Many of those changes have been small and less significant, but Chinese state-owned companies and a number of other companies—from the middle east, for example—are buying more and more North Sea assets and taking stakes in west of Shetland developments. That pattern is happening across the world, not least in the tar sands of Canada.

It is important to look at that in the context of what would happen if some of the left-wing ideas that Mr Harvie put forward on public ownership of the oil industry or the renewables industry were implemented. I am not quite clear how that would happen. Where the argument absolutely fell down was that some in the environmental movement who make that case never put any details behind what they describe as the transition over the next 40 years. We should be rather more optimistic about what is happening on renewables, not least because the development of power sources for cars, buses, boats and other forms of transport will change the high—indeed, leading—level of emissions from that particular source. Patrick Harvie rightly highlighted that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are in your final minute.

Tavish Scott: To say that nothing is happening is unfortunate and simply wrong.

I want to pick up on the safety points that Lewis Macdonald made in respect of Piper Alpha. I seem to recall that Mr Macdonald opened the debate in Aberdeen back in 2002—I believe that he was the minister at the time, to spare his blushes on that—and that Brian Adam spoke very knowledgeably in it. The two helicopter ditching incidents are possibly the most important issue that the industry is currently dealing with in the context of the safety of men and women who work offshore, not least because, as it explained in the cross-party group on oil and gas, getting that right involves a fix that has the confidence of the industry and of the men and women who use helicopters into and out of Aberdeen on a daily basis. The most important message should be that that fix needs to happen.

16:33

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): I welcome the opportunity to talk about the oil and gas industry and to ensure that my party shares the consistent, across-the-board approach that most parties that are represented in the chamber have demonstrated, perhaps with the exception of one, to which I may return if I have time.

Most members in the chamber understand the nature of the oil and gas industry, but perhaps that is a very well-kept secret. The truth is that the scale of the North Sea oil and gas industry and the oil service industry that has been built up around it in the north-east of Scotland is incalculable and not understood by a great many people, even from other parts of Scotland. We need to tell the world that the industry is buoyant and that, despite reduced production, it continues to grow substantially. The fact that the service industry now operates across the entire world to the extent that the economic value of that industry to

Scotland is now almost 50 per cent generated outside the North Sea basin is a tribute to those who have developed businesses in the north-east of Scotland and to the expertise, knowledge and application of those who are involved in it.

Unfortunately, however, as we have heard, the industry is in terminal decline. It is our job, at this and every other level, to ensure that the decline is as slow and constructive as possible, while we continue to act as the base for a growing service industry that has the world as its market.

During the debate, we have occasionally centred too much on the idea that we need the resource that comes from the North Sea. Over time, as production falls, its value will increase to compensate. It is unfortunate that basic assumptions have been made in the debate that fail to take into account the options that the oil and gas industry has for the future. I do not agree with the idea that it is all about burning that resource. One or two members, including Stewart Stevenson, highlighted the fact that the resource that the industry produces has a value beyond that of simply burning it.

In developing a hydrogen economy for the future, it is inevitable that the North Sea oil and gas sector will be a source of raw material. We have talked about carbon capture and storage as a post-combustion option, but it is open to us to use carbon capture and storage as a pre-combustion option by producing hydrogen for another market. The technology to do that already exists and there are proposals to bring that forward. That is a transitional technology that will deliver against the green agenda that we heard about from Patrick Harvie.

As I said, we will support the Labour Party's amendment. It is the nature of the Labour Party that some of its amendments sound a bit lefty in character, but I will not let that stand in the way, because its amendment today is accurate and true and deserves the Conservatives' support. We can be proud of the safety regime in the North Sea, although many lives have been lost in transport and in production. All members of the Parliament must highlight the need to support that regime.

I am significantly concerned about the requirement to expand the workforce in the North Sea. Many members have spoken about the fact that surprisingly few young Scots today see the oil and gas industry as their future employer. We need to get round that prejudice and ensure that, in future, there is more confidence.

We must also ensure that we do not just provide jobs for the young people of the north-east of Scotland, because Scotland has a requirement for high-quality jobs for people from other geographical areas. We should encourage people

to take the opportunity to gain qualifications and move to the north-east to take up jobs. I do not support the idea that immigration to the north-east comes exclusively from outside Scotland or the UK. We need to encourage labour mobility within the marketplace and provide high-quality young Scots for the industry in future.

I will finish by talking about the political argument that a few members have mentioned and the idea that oil will become a key issue during the build-up to the 2014 referendum, although I do not want to say too much. That is inevitable, so we need to keep the process constructive. For that reason, at this point, I do not intend to go into too much detail on my position. However, as I travel between here and Aberdeen on the east coast main line trains, I often talk to men who are travelling back to their homes in places such as Newcastle, Middlesbrough and Sunderland. From the very bottom of my heart, I find it hard to understand how those in the south-west of Scotland can claim their justifiable right to benefit from the wealth of the North Sea, but can then say that the people of the north-east of England cannot do that. Do not tell me that—I will not believe it.

16:39

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): The debate has been enjoyable. The clear message that we in the Labour Party want to send out—and which most parties in the chamber have united around—is that the Parliament values the oil and gas industry and recognises its importance to Scotland and the UK.

It is a simple message, but it is important to say it because political discussion of the oil and gas industry is often framed around the political debate about separation. The discovery of North Sea oil and the rise of Scottish nationalism have gone hand-in-hand. While resisting the arguments about independence, the Labour Party wants to make it clear that we see the industry as having a viable future and staying a key part of the Scottish and UK economies.

It is also an important message because the industry needs whatever certainty we can supply. That theme was developed by several members, including the minister. In fact, I found myself agreeing with virtually everything that the minister said, which was very pleasant, for me if not for him. I am intrigued to see whether the minister uses the same tone when he is winding up, but the conclusion to his opening remarks was that we need long-term certainty and we want to continue to work with the UK Government to support the industry. The Labour Party can certainly agree with that sentiment. Whether it is in the waters around the UK or in international waters, oil and

gas often suffers from breaks in production, from political disruption across the globe, and from wide variations in price. In an unpredictable world, political reassurance is of importance and value to the industry.

It is also an important message because it is clear that the industry itself does not enjoy the most favourable public profile. On the whole, oil companies are viewed with suspicion and many of us deeply resent the rising prices we constantly have to cope with, whether at the petrol pump or when paying our domestic heating bills. If we add to that mix the recognition that we will have to move away from carbon-based sources of energy if we are to protect and preserve our global environment, the overall impression can be one that often comes across as quite hostile to the industry. In its briefing for today's debate, Oil & Gas UK made the point that one of the problems it foresees for the future is:

“Poor public and political perception of the continuing importance of the industry and of oil and gas in the UK energy mix”

Of course, I do not expect many people to shed tears for Chevron, BP, Esso, Shell, or whoever.

I certainly do not wish to diminish the importance of the move to renewables, but even if we are to expand our use of renewable energy sources, as I hope that we will, we will still have to rely to a huge extent on carbon-based fuels. At the moment, the industry estimates that oil and gas provides more than 70 per cent of our primary energy needs and in 10 years' time that will still be the case. Whatever sympathy members might have had with Patrick Harvie's case, many of us feel that he took his argument too far. Most members were far more realistic about the challenges that are facing us and what we need to do in response. That point was made by Rhoda Grant, Claudia Beamish, and the minister himself when they talked about the importance of developing CCS technology.

Patrick Harvie: To pacify me and encourage me not to go so far, will the member explain to me how maximising the extraction of oil and gas is compatible with reducing carbon emissions?

Ken Macintosh: It is interesting to note that, in his amendment, Mr Harvie talked about the warnings from the International Energy Agency but he did not finish the quotation. He finished it in his speech when he talked about making sure that we do not go beyond the 2°C rise in temperature

“unless carbon capture and storage technology is widely deployed”.

It is interesting that that quotation was missing from his amendment but was in his speech. That is very important. Most members emphasised our

important role in helping to develop CCS technology.

I return to the importance of the industry. Many members repeated the key facts about the industry. I did not agree with everything that Maureen Watt and Kevin Stewart said, but I agreed when they highlighted the fact that the oil and gas industry is the single most important industrial sector in this country, employing more than 400,000 people, 200,000 of whom are based here in Scotland. Despite the fact that production has declined in recent years, there are still confident expectations that the industry will continue to produce substantial volumes of oil for many years to come. The minister talked about much of the welcome investment, and I echo his comments about the vibrancy of the sector during these challenging times.

I would also add a caveat—which Lewis Macdonald did very well when he quoted Professor Alex Kemp—about the challenges and obstacles facing us in ensuring that we make the most of the industry in future years. We have an ageing infrastructure and exploration is important. That relies on a high oil price.

Despite the successes of the industry, it faces major challenges, health and safety perhaps being the most obvious. With the exception of Mike MacKenzie, there was unity throughout the chamber on that point. Lewis Macdonald and Maureen Watt made the point very well that although the helicopter ditchings and the suspension of flights have cost the industry millions, there is a commitment within the industry to ensure that, before the flights resume, we resolve the issue successfully.

Historically, the oil and gas industry has suffered from a reputation for being a macho as well as a dangerous and high-risk place to work. Many in the management and the workforce have worked hard through trade union representatives to overturn that attitude. I hope that the industry is right when it claims to be on course to establish the UK as the safest place in the worldwide oil industry.

Despite the industry's success, a further challenge lies in skills and training—an issue raised by many members today. Although the industry has a record of innovation, entrepreneurial spirit and discovery, it still suffers from skills shortages. That is another reason why the industry needs to take the lead, not just in selling itself as an occupation of the future but specifically in recruiting more women, breaking down gender stereotyping—Nigel Don and Rhoda Grant both made that point—and challenging its macho image.

Richard Baker made a particularly important point, which was that while we welcome the energy academy, we need greater clarity on its location and long-term funding.

A similar challenge lies in decommissioning. I was intrigued to hear what Fergus Ewing would say today on decommissioning, given his difficulties before the House of Commons recently. However, I found myself agreeing with his remarks on decommissioning and the challenges that face us.

Tavish Scott made an important point that decommissioning itself is a business opportunity, of which many, including those in Lerwick, can take advantage.

We will vote for the Government's motion today, and we hope that most parties, if not all, similarly support our amendment. We purposefully did not mention the independence argument in our amendment, although it was raised by many on the back benches.

I end simply with the observation to my nationalist colleagues that, just as resting our nation's future on one finite commodity seems remarkably short-sighted, to rest their political hopes on such a fragile argument also seems risky. I particularly enjoyed Mary Scanlon's speech, when she highlighted that, despite price fluctuations and declining reserves, the First Minister's optimism knows no inflationary bounds.

I do not wish to end on that note. This is not about the neverendum, but a vital UK industry, which, although facing many challenges, has a clear and important future at the heart of our economy. I hope that the Parliament can send it a message of some certainty.

16:48

Fergus Ewing: I have enjoyed the debate. I particularly enjoyed Ken Macintosh's speech at the end. In fact, were it not for just two sentences that he obtruded at the very end of his speech, I would have said that he displayed the velvet vocabulary that we would expect from a Kofi Annan or a diplomat. Perhaps a future career beckons for him.

I, too, will not dwell on the debates about Scotland's independence—something I believe in with all my heart and soul—suffice to say that we will be back debating these issues directly, head on, in due course. That is the correct thing to do.

Something has been achieved today that I do not think has been achieved before in the history of the oil and gas industry. Perhaps I am borrowing some of the First Minister's undoubted optimism, but I do not think that there has been a debate about oil and gas in which there has been

an endorsement from all the main parties participating in the debate recognising, first, the enormous value of the industry and, secondly, the fact that it has a secure and long-term future. I do not recall those two statements having been accepted across the board. Hitherto they have been the subject of claim and counterclaim. The fact that, today, both those statements have been accepted by both of the main parties is a step forward. Moreover, it will be seen as a step forward by the industry and its representative bodies.

Members will be aware that Maureen Watt is kindly hosting a reception this evening in the garden lobby that will be attended by leading figures from the oil and gas industry. I hope that all members will come along. Crawford Gillies, the chairman of Scottish Enterprise, will be there, denoting his recognition of the importance of the industry to Scotland, and Melfort Campbell, with whom I co-chair the industry leadership group, will be speaking, as will I. I am delighted that Melfort Campbell has recently been appointed to the board of Scottish Enterprise, which further strengthens the contribution of the oil and gas industry's expertise and knowledge to Scottish Enterprise. Those are all good things.

Lewis Macdonald: I welcome the minister's approach and tone. However, it is my recollection of the debate in Aberdeen 11 years ago—which I believe he attended—that all the major parties acknowledged the long-term future and importance of the oil and gas industry at that time, and they have done so since.

Fergus Ewing: I am happy that that is the case now and I hope that it was the case in the past.

Almost all members spoke about the imperative importance of health and safety. Rhoda Grant spoke quite movingly about the 25th anniversary of the Piper Alpha disaster, and I especially want to note the speech of Kevin Stewart, who spoke about the members of his family who work in the industry. Similarly, I know that Lewis Macdonald's brother reports on the oil and gas industry, and I hope that he does so for many years to come.

Many members—particularly those from Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire—spoke of the industry movingly and with great knowledge of their families, because the oil and gas industry is part of the warp and weft of life in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. I was only sorry that I did not hear the dulcet tones of Dennis Robertson because, whenever I think of Westhill, his name flashes through my cranial area.

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): I am delighted that the minister has recognised, once and for all, that Aberdeen and

Aberdeenshire are the capital of Europe's oil and gas industry.

Fergus Ewing: I thank Dennis Robertson for that contribution. We are all relieved that he did not accept the career opportunity as a night watchman that he was offered at school.

I come, logically and sequentially, to careers advice. Many members mentioned that participation in the industry starts at school. Maureen Watt and others mentioned the importance of the STEM topics. The importance of taking the right subjects is key, but there is more to the issue than that. The industry, Government and academia must ensure that children understand the huge range of opportunities that exists in oil and gas. It is far greater now than it was 10 or 15 years ago. There is a huge range of skills and expertise, and it is important that young people maintain STEM subjects so that they do not deny themselves the opportunity of taking up careers of which they cannot be expected to be aware at the age of 14 or 15. That is why initiatives such as the Glasgow Science Centre's offer to have all children come along to see what happens there are terrific. I would love such opportunities to be spread all around Scotland.

The provision of energy skills is a wide-ranging matter. From my fairly extensive engagement with the industry, I know that the industry expects Government to make a substantial contribution, and we do. Stewart Stevenson mentioned Banff and Buchan College. There is also Aberdeen College, Robert Gordon University and the University of Aberdeen. Last month, I met Professor Diamond and others, and I have had six or seven meetings about developing an energy skills academy. I want to ensure that there is one plan that unites the academic world, the Government and industry. That is key. We need to avoid duplication and go forward in a way that meets the needs and interests of all.

However, it is important to understand also that the industry's needs are wider than the provision of graduates, important though they are. It looks to recruit from the armed forces. It seeks more relations with schools. It certainly looks for far more to be done to make it clear that there are massive opportunities for females as well as men in the industry. Many members picked up on that point and were right to do so.

Companies such as the Wood Group have led the way on what is called transformation training. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can we have order for the minister, please?

Fergus Ewing: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Transformation training means transferring skills and being retrained from, for example, the automotive industry into the oil and gas industry. With many sectors, particularly the construction industry, facing grave difficulty, it is logical and desirable that we do everything we can to enable people who find themselves redundant or simply wish to change career to have the opportunity to retrain.

That is why initiatives such as the energy skills academy at Nigg are important. I was delighted that, just before Christmas, Roy MacGregor—a proud highlander, as Mary Scanlon mentioned—announced another 400 jobs in addition to the existing 800 jobs there.

Not only that, but avid readers of *The Press and Journal*, such as myself, not to mention readers of *The Inverness Courier*, will have picked up the fact that, as well as Global Energy Group's energy skills academy, there is a crane operator school—as far as I know, the only one in the UK—at Nigg. Dougie McGilvray set that up, and I am told that his company, Weldex, is now the 11th or 13th largest crane company in the world. The only place to learn those skills in that way, as far as I know, is in Nigg.

The skills issue is wide ranging. There is no single solution. It involves an array of answers. The industry has recognised that it needs to do far more on that front and makes no bones about that. I am working with Oil & Gas UK, Subsea UK, OPITO and the universities and colleges in the area to develop solutions to the problems.

Claudia Beamish said that we were not pursuing opportunities in Brazil. I am delighted to tell her that I am going to Brazil. *[Interruption.]* Members ask whether I am coming back. I am happy to lead a trade mission to Brazil in March precisely because of the large number of companies that are operating successfully not simply to extract oil from the North Sea west of Shetland but to replicate their skills, expertise and excellence all over the world. The opportunities in Brazil are enormous, so I look forward to my visit and am sure that I will enjoy it.

There is a consensus. We value the industry and what it can provide to Scotland, but I do not think that we yet fully appreciate its range and scope. A huge number of companies are involved in it. It is centred in Aberdeen, which is an international centre of excellence, as Nigel Don mentioned. For example, the GE Group is designing fields off the shore of Australia. Rod Christie, the president of that company, told me that that work is being done in Scotland because we have the best people in the world. That is why the industry is so important to Scotland.

That is why I recognise that the key challenges that are ahead of us are to meet the skills challenge in our skills strategy, address the problems of ageing infrastructure—if we do not address those problems, it could lead to the loss of £85 billion—and advance the maximisation of recovery of our assets, even if only by one percentage point, because every 1 per cent of oil and gas that we recover brings in an additional £22 billion.

The members who said that that was not a good idea—I think there was only one—will be in a small minority today. I am delighted that the Parliament will back and support the industry not only now but for generations to come.

Business Motions

17:00

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-05312, 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 15 January 2013

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Planning Reform, Next Steps

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 16 January 2013

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Education and Lifelong Learning

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Freedom of Information (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 17 January 2013

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 Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee Debate: Biodiversity

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 22 January 2013

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 23 January 2013

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 24 January 2013

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-05313, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a stage 1 timetable for the Forth Road Bridge Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Forth Road Bridge Bill at stage 1 be completed by 29 March 2013.—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-05314, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a stage 2 timetable for the Water Resources (Scotland) Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Water Resources (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 1 February 2013.—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

17:01

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S4M-05310.2, in the name of Rhoda Grant, which seeks to amend motion S4M-05310, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on oil and gas, the success and opportunities, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-05310.1, in the name of Tavish Scott, which seeks to amend motion S4M-05310, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on oil and gas, the success and opportunities, as amended, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-05310.3, in the name of Patrick Harvie, which seeks to amend motion S4M-05310, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on oil and gas, the success and opportunities, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)

Against

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)

Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)

Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Walker, Bill (Dunfermline) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 2, Against 118, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-05310, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on oil and gas, the success and opportunities, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)

Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Walker, Bill (Dunfermline) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Against

Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 118, Against 2, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises the importance to both the Scottish and the UK economy of the oil and gas sector in Scotland; welcomes that oil and gas extraction will continue in Scotland for decades to come; notes progress in delivering Scotland's first oil and gas strategy; recognises the world-leading capability of the Scottish oil and gas sector and supply chain workforce; supports close collaboration between the Scottish Government and its agencies, industry and academia to work to meet the future personnel and skills needs of the sector and ensure continuing sector growth; notes the challenges to the industry in managing a finite and unpredictable resource; believes that the industry must play a role in encouraging young people to pursue a career in engineering, working with schools, OPITO and the further and higher education sectors, paying particular attention to the encouragement of young women into the industry; recognises the high costs and technical challenges of extracting remaining oil and gas resources from the UK Continental Shelf and the future costs of decommissioning; recognises that attention to safety must be paramount both at work and travelling to and from oil and gas installations; believes that workplace safety representatives, trade unions and the Health and Safety Executive have key roles to play in ensuring that safety comes first; notes the need for constant investment in North Sea oil and gas assets for personnel safety; further notes 43 offshore field transfer deals during 2012 between private and state-owned companies; appreciates the necessity of long-term certainty around the £30 billion decommissioning of oil and gas platforms, and recognises the decline in North Sea production from its peak of 137,099,000 tonnes in 1999 to 51,972,000 tonnes in 2011.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time. I ask members who are leaving the chamber to do so quietly, please.

Zero Tolerance Campaigns

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-04794, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on 20 years of zero tolerance campaigns. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament congratulates Zero Tolerance on 20 years of campaigning to change attitudes to violence against women (VAW) by men; believes that the pioneering zero tolerance campaigns, which began in Edinburgh in 1992, were among the first to raise awareness of the prevalence, nature and reality of domestic and sexual abuse; understands that VAW is still a significant social problem in Scotland today; notes the cross-party consensus toward dealing with it; is concerned that much more work needs to be done to tackle VAW in all its forms, including commercial sexual exploitation, which, it understands, is still widely tolerated, despite being defined by the Scottish Government as a form of violence against women, and believes that continued support is needed for VAW prevention campaigns and activity, which aim to bring about a zero tolerance culture in Scotland.

17:06

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): It is a great privilege for me to pay tribute to Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust's enormous contribution to the primary prevention of violence against women since its groundbreaking billboard campaign was launched in this city almost exactly 20 years ago. Zero Tolerance has always challenged male attitudes in relation to domestic abuse, rape and sexual abuse and is now extending that challenge to encompass what some people regard as being more acceptable forms of violence against women, including pornography, prostitution and commercial sexual exploitation more generally.

I come first, however, to what seemed like a revolutionary moment in the winter of 1992-93, when I vividly recall graphic messages about the prevalence and causes of violence against women appearing all along Princes Street and in other locations such as Easter Road football stadium:

"Male abuse of power is a crime."

"No man has the right."

"From 3 to 93—women are raped."

"End the male protection racket."

"She lives with a successful businessman, loving father and respected member of the community. Last week he hospitalised her."

The campaign shone a light on what had been in the dark for a very long time. It told us not just of the shocking prevalence of violence against women but of the way in which it affects all sections of society, contrary to some stereotypes

of that time. Crucially, it related all that to gender inequality in society and saw violence against women as a profound societal and cultural problem that is rooted in unequal power relations between women and men.

As far as I know, that campaign was also the first to target and challenge men. Before this evening's debate, I re-read a speech about zero tolerance that I gave in the House of Commons 20 years ago, in which I referred to a current—at the time—Scottish Office campaign that targeted women and told them how to act so as to avoid suffering violence. The zero tolerance campaign was groundbreaking in many different ways.

I pay tribute in particular to Evelyn Gillan and Franki Raffles, who so tragically died in 1994, because they were the two women who were the drivers of the campaign, although they incorporated the support of Margaret McGregor as chair of the City of Edinburgh Council's women's committee at the time, which was also important.

Finally, I pay tribute to the *Evening News*, because it, particularly through the journalists Nicola Barry and Jean West, covered the campaign in a sustained, sympathetic and comprehensive way, which as well as the billboard campaign had a big effect on me. The campaign led to similar campaigns all over the country and, indeed, the world, but Zero Tolerance here in Edinburgh moved on to develop many more primary prevention materials and to engage in many more campaigns on violence against women.

I do not have time to describe all that work, but I note the emphasis that Zero Tolerance has for some time been putting on early intervention. In that regard, the respect materials that Zero Tolerance developed for schools some time ago are particularly important, although the organisation is starting to plan action in the pre-school period. I was glad to hear that respect will be relaunched in a few weeks' time and I hope that the materials will be taken up more widely by schools than they have been hitherto.

I will mention one more campaign, because I attended its launch a year ago. The campaign is called the employers' PACT—policy, action, communication, training—and it provides a package of materials for the workplace on violence against women. Zero Tolerance has run many campaigns and produced many materials, and is still doing so.

I move swiftly on to the present, because zero tolerance has become more challenging than ever. We all know, I hope, that violence against women is a continuum on which there are various forms of violence. It is unfortunate that, for some people, some forms are more socially acceptable than

others, such as pornography, prostitution, lap dancing and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

Pornography is clearly about the abuse and exploitation of women and is a central part of the violence against women culture. I recently attended a lecture on rape-prone societies by Professor Miranda Horvath, from London, who is a well-known expert in the area. She gave the audience a little test. We were given a series of quotations, some of which were from men who had been convicted of rape and some of which were from lads' magazines. We had to say which was which. I found that difficult, but the professor who was sitting next to me said that she found it totally impossible—and she is perhaps the number 1 academic expert on rape in Scotland. I am therefore pleased that Zero Tolerance has the porcupine campaign, which involves 16 to 19-year-old young men and women, who have targeted the porn industry through a Facebook campaign and in other ways.

Prostitution and lap dancing will be discussed in Parliament this year. I pay tribute to Rhoda Grant and Sandra White for raising those issues, which are clearly also forms of abuse and exploitation. We should remember that nine out of 10 women in prostitution want to exit it, and that many—if not most—of them have suffered abuse. As well as remembering that prostitution is on the violence against women spectrum, I hope that over the course of the year we will look carefully at the evidence, particularly from Sweden, where the purchase of sex by men was criminalised in 1999, and from Norway, where that was done more recently, in 2009. I hope that members will look at the difference that criminalisation has made, because I think that the more we look at the evidence and understand the nature of prostitution, the more we will support Rhoda Grant's proposals.

This debate is about primary prevention, but I am sure that Zero Tolerance will not object if I use my final minute to highlight the funding crisis that faces the Edinburgh Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre. The centre faces a minimum loss of 50 per cent of its annual income as a result of the end of key funding streams. They are not Government funding streams, I hasten to add. The centre is one of the busiest rape crisis services in Scotland and the need for its services is significant. It has a nine-month waiting list and—tragically—demand continues to increase each year. Last year it cost the centre £330,000 to deliver support, and most of the money funds front-line staff. Currently, the centre has secure funding of £100,000 beyond May. If it is unable to raise sufficient funds, it faces losing 75 per cent of its specialist counsellors and support staff, and it is extremely concerned that that would leave women

in Edinburgh and the Lothians who experience sexual violence and abuse without the support that they need and deserve.

The figures that I have given highlight a continuing problem. Zero Tolerance would be the first to admit that, notwithstanding all the work that has gone into primary prevention, the problem is not going away. We have heard a lot about rape in India, which is absolutely appalling, but we should focus on rape in Scotland. We have a serious problem, so let us support organisations, such as Rape Crisis Scotland and Scottish Women's Aid, that provide services and continue to invest in the primary prevention work of Zero Tolerance and others, which is clearly needed more than ever.

17:14

Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): I thank Malcolm Chisholm for bringing the debate to Parliament and pay homage to the words and sentiments that he used, for which I am very grateful.

I declare an interest as a board member of the Central Scotland Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre. In December, I spoke in a members' debate—led by my colleague Jamie Hepburn—on the white ribbon campaign, which aims to involve men in tackling the scourge of men's violence against women and children. The campaign was started a short while ago, and is supported by a number of organisations including Women's Aid, Rape Crisis Scotland and Amnesty International.

Zero Tolerance is also significantly involved in that campaign. I believe that, if it was not for the groundbreaking work of Zero Tolerance over 20 years ago, campaigns such as white ribbon would not have even been thought of, never mind put into full operation. It is only right that we praise those organisations and bring attention to the important work that they carry out to prevent violence towards women. I have been involved with this serious issue for a good number of years, and I have seen at first hand the vital work that has been carried out. From raising awareness of the issue across society as a whole in order to prevent violence, to dealing with the aftermath of that violence and comforting the victims, the work of those organisations should be commended.

Prior to the start of the zero tolerance campaign in 1992, there seemed almost to be reluctant acceptance of violence against women. Few men in Scotland were involved in any of the campaigns to prevent that violence, and it was left to a small number of committed women to fight for a woman's right to be protected from abusive men.

Since then, there has been a marked change in society towards the crime, although—as the motion rightly points out—we have still not

eradicated it. Although I am of the opinion that incidents of violence against women and children are not on the increase, I believe that the hard work that organisations such as Zero Tolerance carry out has given many women the confidence to act and come forward to report attacks, and has brought the issue into the public domain and to the public's attention. That has been achieved through the provision of secure advice along with meaningful support, which has been a hallmark of Zero Tolerance since its inception.

I believe that the fact that the debate—in which I am pleased to speak—has been led by a man, Malcolm Chisholm, sends out a strong message, and I praise the number of male colleagues who have contributed to such debates over the years.

There is, however, still a lot of work to be done to bring about a zero tolerance culture in this country. As a man, I have a moral obligation to do that, and I can try to raise awareness among male-dominated forums and institutions. Although the Scottish Government and its predecessors have taken a number of steps to tackle the scourge, it should not be left to the Government or to Zero Tolerance alone. We all have a responsibility, not only as parliamentarians but as human beings, to tackle the problem. Organisations such as Zero Tolerance have an important role to play in that regard, and I commit to supporting fully their actions and future campaigns.

17:19

Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab): Violence against women is too often a hidden problem in Scottish society, and the work of campaigns to promote zero tolerance of domestic, sexual and physical abuse is invaluable in the wider effort to tackle sexism and promote a fairer and safer society.

I thank Malcolm Chisholm for bringing the debate to the chamber to celebrate the progress that has been made as a result of 20 years of zero tolerance campaigning, and for the opportunity to highlight the needless suffering of women throughout Scotland who continue to face intimidation, violence and isolation on a daily basis.

In Glasgow's Drumchapel area, the first Scottish Women's Aid centre to be based within a residential scheme was established to assist women and families who suffer from domestic abuse. It is the only such service in Scotland that operates 24-7 and it currently provides crucial support to more than 40 families every year. That resource, with the support of volunteers and community activists, provides women and children with a safe place in which to secure long-term

accommodation, receive medical treatment, and build better lives away from abusive partners and destructive relationships.

Every woman in Scotland should have access to the standard of services and the quality of resources that are provided by Women's Aid in Drumchapel, and after 20 years of zero tolerance campaigning it is not acceptable for abuse victims to be subject to a postcode lottery of crisis services that are dependent only on the resourcing of domestic abuse services in their area.

The work of the domestic abuse court in Glasgow has also improved the circumstances of many women who are in the process of exiting abusive relationships by speeding up the process of bringing justice to the perpetrators of abuse. The specialised process results in a conviction rate of about 85 per cent, compared to only 50 per cent for cases that are dealt with through the ordinary procedure of the sheriff court. That is due in part to the work of the ASSIST—advocacy, support, safety, information services together—project, which works with abused women across Scotland to ensure that they are informed and supported through the criminal justice process. The service is operated by Glasgow City Council and is independent of the criminal process, and works with victims before, during and after the criminal trial.

Sadly, many of the organisations and projects that support the work of Scottish Women's Aid centres across Scotland are already under threat of closure and cannot rely on having consistent funding from local Government, following severe budget cuts. Glasgow City Council alone will absorb a £153 million reduction to its budget over the next two years, which means that community organisations that were established to support victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault are at risk of cuts to resources, which will result in poorer services for the victims with whom they work.

Only through proper resourcing and unqualified support of grass-roots advocacy organisations can we make the zero tolerance campaigns truly effective, and show that Scotland does not and will not tolerate physical, sexual or psychological abuse against women.

17:22

Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con): I, too, thank Malcolm Chisholm for bringing such an important issue to the chamber for debate.

When the first ever zero tolerance campaign was launched in Edinburgh in November 1992 it was a watershed moment, as Malcolm Chisholm so eloquently described. Yet 20 years on from those pioneering campaigns, regrettably violence

against women is still with us and it remains high on the political agenda.

Violence against women is a pervasive social problem that affects every neighbourhood throughout Scotland; it can be found in every social background. Against that bleak backdrop, Zero Tolerance is a torchbearer that works to tackle the causes of men's violence against women. It works with individuals, communities, women's organisations, schools, the media and others to address the causes of violence against women and bring about change. Starting the new year with this debate, just over a month since Jamie Hepburn's members' business debate on the white ribbon campaign, is a good way to drive forward that change.

We need to reassure victims that abusive behaviour is not normal. It is repugnant, disgusting and unacceptable, and victims must be supported in understanding that they are not to blame. We need to send an uncompromising message to the perpetrators of abuse—the cowardly bullies who frighten, threaten and hurt—that they will be exposed, their names will become public and their squalid little secret will be out.

In the December debate, I said:

“Violence against women is unacceptable and abhorrent, and it has no place in Scotland.”

I referred to the statistics, which are very depressing:

“In Scotland, nearly 60,000 incidents of domestic abuse were recorded by the police in 2011-12, which is a 7 per cent increase on the 2010-11 figures. Since 2002-03, there has been a 67 per cent increase in recorded incidents of domestic abuse, and there are currently 163 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police each day.”—[*Official Report*, 4 December 2012; c 14293.]

The greatest protection available to the perpetrators of that misery is silence. That silence is malign, which is why domestic abuse must be reported and, when reported, tackled.

As it is vital to make help available to women who are fleeing violence, we should, as other members have pointed out, recognise the valuable work of many voluntary groups in that regard. I recently visited organisations in my area that carry out excellent work to support and protect women and their children suffering from domestic abuse. My most recent visits were to Renfrewshire Women's Aid and Inverclyde Women's Aid, which provide fantastic support to women and their families.

We must never forget that children can also be victims; for example, they might be present when incidents of abuse occur or might themselves be subjected to direct violence. I was heartened to hear, as I think Malcolm Chisholm mentioned, that the Zero Tolerance Scotland website contains a

link to a website for younger people, safe hub Scotland, which provides information and guidance to younger people who have experienced domestic abuse. I was also interested to learn that this invaluable tool was designed for young people by young people who have experienced such abuse. In this age of technology and social media, we have a huge opportunity to inform, reassure, share information with and give guidance and advice to victims.

Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): Does the member agree that portrayals in the media, particularly in television and film, of the perpetration of violence against women should be outlawed in Scotland and that the Government should introduce measures in that regard? After all, such things encourage people to justify their own violence against women.

Annabel Goldie: The member makes a valid point and any measures that can be taken to discourage and deter the portrayal of violence as something that is routine or, in the minds of some, acceptable—obviously, the chamber itself would condemn it—would be worth while.

I know that the cabinet secretary's colleague Mike Russell has become the first MSP with an application that can be downloaded but I wonder whether the Scottish Government might consider having an app specifically for children who are living in a situation of abuse. It could provide help and information, could be accessed discreetly and would prove to be an enormous support.

In conclusion, I pay tribute to excellent organisations such as Zero Tolerance and Scottish Women's Aid. Clearly the united will of Parliament is to keep violence against women at the forefront of our agenda, to keep talking about it and to keep providing encouragement and support. I congratulate those organisations, which work so tirelessly to support those who are so desperately in need of their help.

17:27

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Malcolm Chisholm on securing this debate, because it is important to celebrate Zero Tolerance's 20 years of work. There have been achievements. Mr Chisholm's motion is right to point out that the early days of campaigning were "pioneering", because violence against women simply was not seen as a political issue and had to be forced on to the agenda. Women activists such as Margaret McGregor, who chaired the City of Edinburgh Council's women's committee, campaigned to put violence against women on the agenda and, crucially, supported investment for organisations such as Rape Crisis Scotland to ensure that women had support.

Women's committees across the country were vital in ensuring that our councils acted and Zero Tolerance's work in promoting awareness, carrying out research and issuing campaigning literature—particularly the hard-hitting campaigns that Malcolm Chisholm quoted—were hugely important in challenging outdated sexist attitudes. Indeed, for the past 20 years, women have been campaigning to change outdated sexist views on issues such as rape, domestic abuse and sexual violence. However, those issues must still be brought to the fore and, in this debate, we should not only celebrate the hard work of these women but sympathise with the women who have experienced abuse or intimidation. Most of us cannot even begin to imagine how their lives have been scarred.

We must also debate the progress that has been made in, for example, the legislation that this Parliament has passed. The Parliament's first ever committee act, which was promoted and driven by our former colleague Maureen McMillan, was the Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Act 2001, which gave protection to victims of domestic violence in unmarried relationships and, in more recent times, we have had the Forced Marriage (Protection and Jurisdiction) (Scotland) Act 2011. No matter whether we are talking about our Parliament or our councils, women's voices in our political institutions have to be heard and given legitimacy.

The Zero Tolerance briefing makes it clear that far too many women in Scotland experience high levels of violence. In 2011-12, reported rapes rose by 19 per cent and, as Annabel Goldie mentioned, domestic abuse reported to the police rose by 7 per cent. Those figures are unacceptable; we need to add our voices to opposing that violence.

The bills proposed by Rhoda Grant and Sandra White pose some hard questions for the Parliament about the purchase of sex and the impact on women of the attitudes towards women that are promoted by lap dancing. We must seize those bills to promote a wide debate across Scotland and modernise attitudes. We must do everything that we can, whether through legislation or policy, to transform the inequality that women experience because the evidence is that we live in an unequal society.

The campaign also needs the support of men, whether it is support from Gil Paterson and Malcolm Chisholm in the chamber, or the work of Graeme Pearson—who is sitting beside me—when he was a senior police officer to ensure the provision of police support. We need the support of men, too.

All of us are needed to tackle domestic and sexual violence and the intimidation that women experience. Our challenge is to tackle inequality and the outdated sexist attitudes that objectify and

tolerate violence against women, however it comes at them.

I hope that the minister, when summing up, will focus on what the Scottish Government is committed to do to ensure that, in these times of austerity, the issue of violence against women is not put on the back burner. The Government will have support across the chamber. Anne McTaggart was right to highlight that local authorities face huge financial pressures. That must not lead to the downgrading of support for the preventative work that is done by groups such as Zero Tolerance, the community campaigns that Anne McTaggart referred to, and the vital work of our rape crisis centres. That work must continue; it needs our support. I hope that Malcolm Chisholm's debate will focus future action and support.

17:32

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): I add my congratulations to Malcolm Chisholm on securing the debate. I commend him for the long, unstinting and committed support that he has given to the issue. He referred to a speech that he delivered at Westminster, which shows how long he has been involved.

I should declare an interest: I am the co-convenor of the men's violence against women and children cross-party group. I have the great honour of being the co-convenor alongside Malcolm Chisholm. I have learned a lot from him in the past year.

We all know and understand that violence against women is a significant problem, and we have heard many stories about that today. One thing that members should commend themselves on—we do not often do that—is the cross-party support on the issue. That is a credit to the Parliament and to everyone in Scottish politics who has supported and progressed the issue over the years.

We know that work needs to be done. We must continue to tackle the problem in all its forms, a number of which we have heard about during the debate. I am interested in human trafficking; another cross-party group is pushing that issue. We should take that seriously, too.

We should remember that violence against women is a worldwide issue. That has an impact on our focus in Scotland and how we can lead the way in the rest of the world. Although we should focus more on Scotland's problems than on those worldwide, we should not forget that if we can change attitudes in Scotland, we can perhaps change attitudes worldwide. That might mean that

we do not experience again the horrific scenes that we are seeing from India.

As Malcolm Chisholm said, the original zero tolerance campaign was a six-month campaign with billboards. It then moved to a poster campaign for workplaces. At the time, I was a young Unison steward, who was tasked, as part of the women's committee, with putting up the posters in my workplace. I was faced with those who wanted to tear down the posters because they were seen to be too hard hitting, nasty and scary. Let me refresh members' memories about the posters. The first poster, which dealt with child sexual abuse, said:

"By the time they reach 18, one of them will have been subjected to sexual abuse."

That was a hard image to look at and a hard message to understand, but it was a message that we needed to put across. I put that poster up, but it was torn down. I put it back up.

The second poster dealt with rape and was very close to the bone. It was a black-and-white poster that said, "From three to ninety three—women are raped." It was another extremely hard-hitting poster that some of my colleagues said should be taken down because it was too scary. When they went away, I put it back up. There is a theme to how I dealt with the situation as a young Unison steward. The strapline of that poster was, "Husband, father, stranger—male abuse of power is a crime." It is and always has been a crime, and we should ensure that its absolute rejection by society as a whole continues to be a focus.

The third poster dealt with domestic violence and challenged the widely accepted myth that domestic violence occurs only in working-class households. We definitely dealt with that myth. The strapline for that poster was:

"She lives with a successful businessman, loving father and respected member of the community. Last week he hospitalised her."

It was extremely concerning.

I am a bit worried about my time, Presiding Officer, because the clock did not change.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Your time is really up.

Christina McKelvie: Okay.

Those were powerful images that sent powerful messages.

We were delighted to host an event in the Parliament on 6 December at which all parties spoke. We need to continue to change attitudes. We should commend the work of Jenny Kemp, Franki Raffles and Evelyn Gillan, and of the Scottish Government, because the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 provides for the

automatic referral to a children's panel of a child who is in a household in which they are likely to be the subject of sexual or domestic violence. We should impress on the Government the need to continue that work.

I congratulate Zero Tolerance and everyone who has been involved in the debate.

17:36

Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab):

Thank you, Presiding Officer, for allowing me to contribute to the debate. I commend Malcolm Chisholm for bringing these matters to the chamber and support his call to address the continuing abuse of women, whether by the use of new technology and other new means, or by the sex trade or whatever.

I also thank Sarah Boyack for acknowledging the work that has been done in the decades since the setting up of Zero Tolerance, particularly by the police service in Scotland. Despite that work, more than 1,000 women are victims of domestic abuse. As we debate the issue, somewhere in Scotland a woman is probably being abused in her home—the place where she should feel safe and should feel that she can be as she should be.

My commitment on such matters dates back nearly 40 years. My first attendance at a murder inquiry as a detective officer involved going to a dwelling house on the north side of Glasgow. I believed that I would be involved in an interesting investigation to discover who some miscreant was, only to find myself—the week before Christmas—in a tenement building in which a woman had been kicked to death all round the house. Not a single room in the house did not contain her blood, her hair and other tissue. As far as her partner was concerned, her crime was that she had taken the benefit cheque and spent it on food and Christmas presents for the children. Her partner, who had been out at the bookie's during the day and had imbibed at tea time, had come home and felt aggrieved about the fact that the woman in his life had taken the decision to spend his cash in that manner.

The abuse of women has nothing to do with sex. Abuse in its real sense is entirely about power, control and gratification. That murder has never left me. Over the succeeding months and years, I attended many places in the aftermath of sexual abuse, rape and murder, when women were abused by the people they should have trusted most—the men in their lives—but who let them down repeatedly. Hence my commitment to Zero Tolerance and to changing attitudes in Scottish society: I want to ensure that such things no longer occur.

There have been many successes and there is no doubt that Zero Tolerance has played a major part in the changes that have taken place, but relationships between men and women need to change. Women need to find a way of playing their full part in our society and receiving due respect for what they are—human beings. We need to take forward the zero tolerance campaign. It cannot be put on the shelf as work that has been completed.

We can feel good about what we have done in the past but there is much more to be done in the future. There are new trends and strains in terms of abuse. We have young people who are using mobile phones and the internet to debase and undermine girls and women. I hope that the minister will bear in mind those new developments and take advice on how we might deal with such matters.

This chamber should not take its eye off the ball: domestic abuse is still a major problem in Scotland. There were 59,847 cases in the past year. Children are being abused in such circumstances and children are learning to abuse in the future. We need to put an end to that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Due to the number of members who wish to speak in the debate I am minded to accept a motion 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.—[*Malcolm Chisholm.*]

Motion agreed to.

17:41

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I am grateful that the debate has been extended so that we can all make a contribution to it. I thank Malcolm Chisholm and congratulate him on securing the debate. I also congratulate Zero Tolerance and the many other groups that have worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the truly horrific crime of domestic and sexual abuse.

The speeches have been excellent, although they have raised harrowing issues. As others, including Annabel Goldie, have said, it is not just the victims of domestic abuse—the women—who suffer; it is also the children who witness the abuse. I hope that the criminal justice bill, with its emphasis on the issue of corroboration, will be a positive move towards convictions for those horrific crimes.

I want to concentrate on one particular part of the motion—Malcolm Chisholm mentioned lap dancing clubs and adult entertainment—basically, the commercial side of sexual exploitation. It is something that I and others have worked to

address for many years and I am grateful that other members have mentioned the bill that I tried to put through. Many of the members who are in the chamber will remember that before the 2011 elections I tried to put forward legislation that would enable councils to say that when it came to any form of sexual exploitation such as lap dancing clubs, pole dancing, adult entertainment venues and strip clubs, even one was too many. The councils would have the power to say that they did not want such clubs in their areas. I thought that it was a perfectly good piece of legislation. Unfortunately, as members will recollect, when it was put forward with Government support, the Opposition voted it down.

I am sorry about that, but I take heart from tonight's speeches. It is a positive sign for the bill that I am proposing and also for the bill that has been proposed by Rhoda Grant. We should look at my bill and debate it and I hope that it will have cross-party support. I look forward to the debate on those members' bills.

I have been looking at the internet in relation to this topic and people have been sending me various newsworthy items as well. In the city of Aberdeen, there was a recent application for a new strip club. If it had been approved, Aberdeen would have had eight strip clubs—fortunately the application was thrown out. That would have been the largest number of such clubs in any city in Scotland. It would have been the same number as in central London.

I am reminded of the South Ayrshire application for a pole dancing club. The applicant was not going to apply but took heart from a change in council and also from the fact that Glasgow City Council was not allowed to stop such a club in Glasgow. The application was put forward and it was approved. Now we are looking at possibly four or five such clubs in the South Ayrshire area—not in a city. It is incumbent on us to say that legislation comes from the Parliament. It should be handed down to councils and they should have the right to say whether the local people want such a club.

As Malcolm Chisholm and others have mentioned, thoughts of sexual abuse and sexual violence start somewhere. Where do people see that? Graeme Pearson mentioned the internet and Hanzala Malik mentioned the television. Women are looked upon as objects and not human beings. That is where things start from. It is also about education, and we should consider that.

I am grateful for being allowed to speak in the debate and hope that people will support the legislation that will come through.

17:45

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): Kofi Annan, the former secretary general of the United Nations, said:

"Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and it is perhaps the most pervasive ... As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality".

Last autumn, there was global condemnation of and revulsion at the attempted murder of Malala Yousafzai, who is an incredible 15-year-old girl. She was targeted for campaigning for education—which is a basic human right—for girls in Afghanistan. More recently, we learned about the brutal rape and death of a young Indian woman, who was a medical student. She was attacked by six men while simply travelling on a bus. Such extreme examples of violence against women and children have drawn global attention to the issue and strengthened the demand for change.

When I first became involved in politics, I listened with interest to those who discussed whether there was a need to take action for gender balance in politics and beyond. After 13 years in politics and more than 30 years in sport, I am convinced that action is needed.

At the local government level, it is less likely that travel away from home will be regularly required, so we might think that that would make involvement in local politics more accessible and appealing to women with young children or women with other caring responsibilities. However, only one in five councillors is a woman. That is a great shame, because councils make many decisions that impact on women's daily lives.

As I have said before, when I was on the City of Edinburgh Council, two highly regarded nurseries were closed. All those whom I met who campaigned against closure were women. That is not surprising, because women are still much more likely to be involved with nurseries on a day-to-day basis and much less likely to be involved in the decision-making process. When leisure budgets were tight, one of the first things to be cut was crèche provision. Women campaigned hard, but they were not listened to. Subsequently, access to leisure and fitness was made more challenging.

Why are there so few women in representative politics? Does the occasional hostile manner of debate put women off? In my first-ever formal full council meeting, a colleague in another party was described as a fishwife. I was astonished, but not an eye was batted by more experienced councillors. It was clearly not a big deal; rather, it was the cultural norm. Is that because council meetings take place in the evenings, when women

might be dealing with food and family—with bath and bedtime, perhaps?

Representation of women is better in our national Parliament, but at about a third, it is simply not good enough. Conversely, male primary school teachers are a rarity, although male headteachers are not.

What does any of that matter? It matters because violence against women happens in a context. As Zero Tolerance has stated, violence against women is more than domestic abuse.

During the Olympic games, we rejoiced when women succeeded, but that coverage was short term. I recently tweeted my excitement at finding a woman on the sports pages of a national newspaper, but that excitement was short lived, as she was pictured only because she was someone's girlfriend.

The long-running quiz "A Question of Sport" may be chaired by Sue Barker, but in common with panel shows such as "QI" and "Have I Got News for You" and many news discussion programmes that I am sure that we all watch, women are consistently underrepresented on it. Indeed, the Leveson inquiry raised concerns about the way in which women are portrayed in the media.

Why are women so often portrayed in swimwear, frequently with a critical headline about their dismal failure to banish cellulite? Seriously, that is not what concerns the women I know. It leads to the objectification of women. We must challenge the objectification of women and the obsession with how we look. We need strong messages about what women do, what they have achieved and women succeeding in the professions, sport, art and teaching. Such women should be highly visible.

All forms of violence against women happen in a cultural context. As we debate the future of Scotland, we must include debates about the prevalence of abuse and persistent and deep-rooted gender inequalities, because if we can change the culture—and we must do so—violence against women is preventable.

I thank Malcolm Chisholm for bringing this important debate to the chamber and Zero Tolerance for its ground-breaking and on-going work.

17:50

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): As other members have done, I congratulate Malcolm Chisholm on bringing this members' business debate to the chamber. I thank him and Christina McKelvie for their work as conveners of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on men's

violence against women and children. As a new deputy convener of the group, I hope that I can make a contribution in future. I take the issue extremely seriously, as do all members.

I want to take a sideways look at the issue, having just returned from a trip to Thailand. As I was driven through rubber plantations to meet my new in-laws, I recalled a tale that my grandmother told of her niece Jessie from Aberdeen, who married a rubber planter and then returned to his plantation with him to find her life intolerable. She left him and returned to Scotland, only to be told by her relatives here that she should have stayed and made the best of it. How far we have come from those attitudes in Scotland today. I decided to light a candle in Jessie's memory in the Lana Ram Buddhist temple that we visited on new year's day with my new son-in-law. I did so to try to shine a light on relationships the world over that are wrongly based on men's abuse of power over women.

The film by Lyndsay Mann that was commissioned by Zero Tolerance to mark 20 years since the first Z campaign in Edinburgh looks at the current focus of Zero Tolerance's work, which is to effect positive social change here in Scotland. In the film, Evelyn Gillan, a previous director of Zero Tolerance, says:

"the value of any legacy is the extent to which people pick up the baton and carry on with it."

It is important that, as members have highlighted, Zero Tolerance is now working in new ways.

With my sideways look across the world, I ask myself how much we can share the zero tolerance campaign across the globe in these times of connectivity. On a recent fact-finding visit to Gaza, John Finnie and I heard from a community mental health programme about the high incidence of domestic violence as a result of men turning their anger and frustration at their powerlessness in society on to their families. Support for women and children is essential and yet resources are few. With the support of the Council for European Palestinian Relations, we intend to arrange a visit of young women from Gaza, and we hope to arrange for them to meet young people from the zero tolerance campaign so that links can be made.

There is a clear opportunity to support women elsewhere, so we should always look for chances to pick up that baton. We should also have the confidence to speak out about the broader oppression of women by men around the world. We should not be afraid—because of cultural relativism—to say that women have the right to fulfil themselves outside the home through education and in the world of work if they so

choose. In my view, the stifling of opportunity for women is also an abuse by males.

Alison Johnstone highlighted the case of Malala Yousafzai, the 15-year-old girl who was shot in the head after campaigning for women's education. That case has had a positive outcome, in that she has recovered, but the recent gang rape of a young paramedic, which Alison Johnstone also highlighted, had a tragic ending. She was left on a road for dead and, after 13 days in hospital, during which she gave accounts of the attack, she died. One Indian professional has called the case the "clash of centuries". After many years of Government promotion of girls' education and young women entering the world of work, many men, who have been raised with a sense of entitlement simply because they are male, still believe that women should be restricted to roles as wives and mothers.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I regret to say that you should be drawing to a close, please.

Claudia Beamish: Recently in India, tens of thousands of people carried the baton on the streets, and the Indian Government has now acknowledged that violence against women is a national challenge.

I ask all members not only to work in Scotland but to find ways in which we can work to support women across the world to have equal rights, today and from now on.

17:54

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): This has been a very good debate indeed and, like everyone else, I pay tribute to Malcolm Chisholm for securing the debate and for his lifelong commitment to this mission. Many members who have spoken tonight from all sides of the chamber are also committed to the subject and have spoken about it on numerous occasions in Parliament.

I also take the opportunity to say something about Zero Tolerance and congratulate that organisation on its anniversary. Members have already recalled the days when Zero Tolerance was formed. As Malcolm Chisholm said, many of the founder members and people who did so much work 20 years ago to get that organisation up and running, and to begin to change attitudes, which was more important than the organisation itself, are no longer with us. They should be remembered for their contribution, particularly Franki Raffles who, as Malcolm Chisholm said, died in 1994.

I am pleased to note that Scotland leads the rest of the UK and countries further afield in many aspects of the zero tolerance campaign and

related issues. In my first ministerial appointment a few years ago, I was happy to introduce legislation to outlaw forced marriage in Scotland.

Graeme Pearson and Annabel Goldie mentioned technology. Graeme Pearson talked about how technology is being used to abuse young girls and women, as well as older women. Annabel Goldie talked about the possibility of developing an app for children who are under threat of domestic violence or living in a situation in which there is domestic violence or abuse. As chair of the Scottish Government's group on domestic abuse and violence, I can say that we are already looking at working with the police and others to develop an app so that women who are under threat can quickly get the assistance that they require. I will also take up Annabel Goldie's suggestion about developing an app specifically for children. That kind of technology could be very helpful in preventing particular situations and ensuring that the relevant services can get to a situation much more quickly than would be the case otherwise. We will take up Graeme Pearson's point about how technology can be used to abuse and see what we can do on that front, because such abuse is clearly unacceptable.

It is important for us to stay ahead of developments, including technological developments, to prevent domestic abuse and violence while, at the same time, using technology to intercept those who are trying to use texts or other types of technology to spread their evil ways by abusing women or young girls.

The zero tolerance campaign that was started 20 years ago has informed much of the work of my predecessors in this job, including Malcolm Chisholm, as well as the current Scottish Government's domestic abuse and violence against women agenda and strategy. It is important to record the fact that, since we have started recording the incidence of domestic abuse in Scotland, with the exception of one year, the numbers have increased steadily. As has been said, almost 60,000 incidents were reported last year, about 47,000 of which were domestic abuse against women.

One of the many reasons for last year's 7 per cent increase and the previous increases is that, fortunately, more people are now prepared to come forward and report incidents of domestic abuse. I am not saying that that entirely accounts for the increase in numbers; clearly, it is difficult to determine why the numbers have increased. However, as a result of all the work that has been done and the campaigning by Zero Tolerance and others, people, particularly women of a certain age, are much more prepared to come forward than they would have been 20 or 30 years ago.

The cultural changes that the campaigning and legislation have brought about mean that there is no longer the level of tolerance among abused women that there was 20, 30 or 40 years ago. They do not accept that that is their lot, as women did all those years ago. Fortunately, many more are prepared to come forward nowadays.

I hear the point about funding. We have maintained the level of funding for the current spending period. It is one of the budgets that were protected because of the importance of continuing to give the loud and clear message that we are doing what we can and funding the organisations that we can fund with the money available to deal with domestic abuse and violence.

I pay tribute to organisations such as Rape Crisis Scotland and the tremendous work that they do nationally and in their local areas to help women who have been the subject of rape or attempted rape.

A welcome recent development, announced by the Lord Advocate a few months ago, is that the number of successful prosecutions for rape is increasing as a percentage. It is still not high enough, but we are making progress in that area. Although the Lord Advocate is not here this evening, I commend him and his predecessor for their commitment to taking the issue very seriously from a Crown Office point of view. Some success has been recorded in that respect.

This is an area in which the Parliament is totally united. It is important not only that the Parliament sends a clear, loud and united message every time we have a debate about the issue but that we send that message more regularly, to demonstrate that we are committed to dealing with the issue.

I look forward to the day when the incidence of domestic abuse begins seriously to drop. The police have introduced important initiatives. In particular, I commend the action that has been taken by Strathclyde Police around old firm games. The police visit the perpetrators of domestic abuse before and often after the game and warn them about their behaviour. A similar strategy was adopted during the recent festive period. In the time that the initiative has been running, there has been something like a 30 per cent decline in the incidence of domestic abuse before and after old firm games and during festive periods.

There are areas in which we are making progress. It is not fast enough, though, and we need to do more. The Scottish Government, along with everyone else in the Parliament, is totally committed to ensuring that we rid ourselves of this terrible blight on our society.

Meeting closed at 18:03.

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