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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 20 June 2013

Session 4

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 20 June 2013

[The Deputy Presiding Officer *opened the meeting at 11:40*]

Business Motion

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Good morning. The first item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-07089, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the suspension and variation of standing orders.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Rule 12.3.3A of Standing Orders be suspended for the purpose of allowing the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing to meet from 1.00 pm until 2.10 pm on Thursday 27 June 2013.—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Motion agreed to.

General Question Time

11:40

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): The next item of business this morning is general questions. In order to call as many members as possible, I would prefer short and succinct questions, with answers to match, please.

Prisoners (Voting Rights)

1. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government whether it considers that the prohibition of convicted prisoners from voting in elections is compatible with its commitment to incorporate the European convention on human rights into an independent Scotland's written constitution. (S4O-02282)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): The Scottish Government's policy is that convicted prisoners should not be able to vote while they are in prison. As the member is aware, that is the approach that has been taken in the Scottish Independence Referendum (Franchise) Bill for the referendum on independence. The franchise for elections is currently reserved.

Patrick Harvie: I am sorry that the cabinet secretary has chosen not to answer the question that I asked, which was about elections rather than the referendum. Having discussed the issue at length with the Deputy First Minister in the Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee, I am still at a loss to know whether there is some principle by which the Scottish Government considers that the blanket prohibition on convicted prisoners voting is now legal under ECHR. Is there some principle that suggests that a referendum should be conducted in a fundamentally different way from elections?

Kenny MacAskill: No. We have made it quite clear that elections are currently reserved to the United Kingdom, and we seek to vary that. We recognise the Scoppola judgment in May 2012. Equally, we are aware that the Supreme Court is currently hearing two cases on whether European Union law gives convicted prisoners the right to vote in local, national and, indeed, European Parliament elections. We await the outcome with interest. Any future independent Parliament would require to comply with ECHR in terms of legislation and its interpretation. That will be a matter for a future Scottish Parliament.

Haddington Hospital

2. Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making on delivering the new Haddington hospital. (S4O-02283)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): NHS Lothian is progressing the re-provision of the hospital, and Hub South East Scotland—a hubco—has been appointed as the development partner. Work is under way to determine the size of facility required for the current and future needs of the East Lothian population and for the services that are provided to the whole of Lothian. It is expected that the first stage of the business case—the initial agreement—will be completed in September 2013. It is anticipated that construction could start in 2015, with completion in 2017.

Iain Gray: The new Haddington hospital has been disappearing from in front of our eyes for some years now. In 2007, it was promised that the new hospital would open in 2012. In 2008, the business case was promised in 2010. Since 2009–10, we have heard nothing of it except that it would be delivered through the non-profit-distributing programme. If the cabinet secretary is now telling us that the new hospital will be completed in 2017, what guarantee can he give to my constituents that the project will not be pushed to the back of the queue yet again?

Alex Neil: I am absolutely committed to the timetable, and we will do everything that we possibly can to ensure that it is adhered to. We recognise the importance of the project to East Lothian's health provision and local economy. It is very much our intention to adhere to the timetable that I have outlined this morning.

Employment (People with Mental Health Issues)

3. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to help people with mental health issues remain in employment. (S4O-02284)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): Our new mental health strategy commits us to publishing guidance that promotes the evidence base and good practice for what works in employability for those with mental illness. That work is under way and when published will encourage redesign in health systems and the wider employability system to refocus practice on more effective approaches and realise mental healthcare savings.

Mary Scanlon: The current work is very welcome. However, 45 per cent of people on benefits in Scotland have a mental health problem and find the journey back into work very long and hard. Is it not better to pursue a positive policy of helping people to remain in work—I welcome what the cabinet secretary said on that issue—rather than allow their conditions to become chronic, severe and enduring? Will the Government commit to ensuring that that research is carried

out, given that some companies have found that every £1 spent on workplace health promotion and wellbeing has generated nearly £10 of savings from reduced sickness absence and presenteeism?

Alex Neil: I absolutely agree with the sentiments expressed by Mary Scanlon. People in work with mental health problems should be given every support, opportunity and facilitation to retain their employment while dealing with their illness. I am happy to meet Mary Scanlon—perhaps with Billy Watson, chair of the Scottish Association for Mental Health, who is chairing the sub-group on this matter—to discuss the way forward.

“Scottish Planning Policy” (Housing for Older People)

4. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government which policies in the draft “Scottish Planning Policy” will inform local authority development plans in relation to housing needs for older people. (S4O-02285)

The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess): The draft “Scottish Planning Policy” is currently out for consultation until 23 July 2013. The subject policy on enabling the delivery of new homes proposes that plans should be informed by robust housing need and demand assessments and that those assessments should consider the needs of housing for older people. When a need is identified, planning authorities should prepare policies to support the delivery of appropriate housing and consider the allocation of specific sites.

Sarah Boyack: Given the projected significant increase in the number of older people over the short and, particularly, medium term, has the minister any plans to review the process by which analysis should be carried out to do that forward planning for older people in our communities? In years to come, we will be looking not only at specialist housing, as the general numbers of older people will mean that some will need mainstream housing, so we need to rethink our approach. Given that the guidance was last reviewed in 2008, does the minister have any plans to look at the issue?

Margaret Burgess: We are always looking at the issue of housing for older people. The housing need demand assessment makes it very clear that local authorities should consider it. The five-year supply is looked at initially, but local authorities should look 20 years ahead with regard to land for housing and the housing need for their areas. They should identify trends in people's increasing longevity. We expect that any requirements for an increase in specialist housing needs will be identified through that process.

Funfair Licensing

5. Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of interests, as I am the chair of the cross-party group on the Scottish Showmen's Guild.

To ask the Scottish Government what action it can take regarding restrictions imposed on funfair licences by local authorities. (S4O-02286)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): Licensing is a local matter. It is for local licensing authorities to look at the facts of individual applications and make decisions in light of local priorities and circumstances. The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 makes it clear that any conditions attached to a licence shall be reasonable.

Richard Lyle: West Lothian Council is currently imposing conditions on funfair licences that are not covered by any act of law—namely, the erection of fencing around the entire funfair—and which make the fair uneconomic. The council is therefore causing the cancellation of several funfairs at local gala days in its area. What can the Parliament do to encourage councils not to impose unrealistic conditions and allow their constituents to enjoy all the fun of the fair?

Kenny MacAskill: It is right that local licensing authorities should protect their communities by ensuring that funfairs are operated safely and cause minimal nuisance. It is correct that such matters should be set and dealt with locally, but the approach should be proportionate and there should not be measures that are perhaps unnecessary.

It might be best for the member to speak initially to the clerk of the relevant council committee and perhaps the local divisional commander because, from the briefing that I have, it appears that there might be room for discussion on what is necessary. Ultimately, such matters should be dealt with locally, although there should be an element of proportionality and, indeed, common sense.

General Practitioners (Rural Areas)

6. Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making on attracting general practitioners to rural practices. (S4O-02287)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): I am grateful to the member, NHS Highland, the Dewar group, the Royal College of General Practitioners and others for their invaluable advice on the key issue of recruiting GPs in remote and rural areas.

The Government has promoted a range of initiatives on additional skills to support GPs who work in remote and rural areas. Those include the remote and rural fellowship scheme for newly qualified GPs and the remote and rural healthcare educational alliance.

Delivering safe and sustainable services in remote and rural areas, including island communities, is challenging. During my visit to Ardnamurchan on 28 January 2013, I announced that NHS Highland had been commissioned to develop a proposal, which will be relevant to all remote areas of Scotland, for new models of integrated healthcare delivery, in line with the healthcare quality strategy and working towards achieving the 2020 vision.

I am glad to say that the proposal is currently being finalised. Once that happens, I will consider the advice carefully in light of the recognised needs for alternative models of sustainable healthcare delivery in remote, rural and island communities.

Dave Thompson: I thank the cabinet secretary for coming along to Ardnamurchan to visit the communities there—that was very useful. For the pilot that he mentions, a local doctor, Dr Gartshore, is working to create a much larger practice to replace a number of individual single-GP practices. Can the cabinet secretary give me any further information on the timescale for implementation of the new pilot project?

Alex Neil: On the project, a team of eight doctors will work in two sub-teams, one based in Mallaig and the other in Acharacle. NHS Highland is working on the recruitment of suitable applicants to ensure the continuation of out-of-hours services as well as the full range of routine care and treatment. That is in addition to the investment that we are making in telecare services in remote and rural areas specifically and across the wider health service network.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The pilot is of course welcome, but will the cabinet secretary consider the policy of increased use of salaried GPs in remote, rural and island communities?

Alex Neil: Absolutely. We are already considering whether there are areas where it would be more appropriate to provide an opportunity for salaried GPs, because it is particularly difficult to recruit GPs to independent practices. Clearly, every option has to be explored, because we need to ensure that our remote, rural and island communities are as comprehensively covered by GP primary care services as our urban communities are.

Police Scotland (Local Policing)

7. Margo MacDonald (Lothian) (Ind): To ask the Scottish Government whether it considers that recent actions by Police Scotland reflect a change in emphasis in local policing. (S4O-02288)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): The new single police service provides an opportunity to adopt a national strategic approach while recognising local circumstances. At the heart of that is a focus on keeping people safe and meeting the priorities of local communities. That commitment is shaped and delivered through engagement with partners and local people and is subject to scrutiny by local representatives to ensure that Police Scotland adopts the right approach to address the priority issues in each local community.

The police have always taken enforcement action, working with partners in local authorities and other agencies, against those who are involved in criminality. Recent actions do not reflect a change in emphasis or approach; they demonstrate a cohesive response to eradicating criminality and protecting communities across Scotland.

Margo MacDonald: I noted the cabinet secretary's replies to Richard Lyle on the importance of local licensing. I want an assurance from him, if that is possible, that emphasis will be placed on continuing what was considered to be a successful policy in managing prostitution in the Lothian and Borders and Grampian regions, in comparison with the relative failure of zero tolerance in Strathclyde.

Kenny MacAskill: I think that everyone, certainly in the east of Scotland, is aware that there have been fewer deaths in relation to prostitution. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on particular recent matters, especially matters that are sub judice and have been dealt with. Suffice it to say that when the police obtain intelligence of criminality, whether that relates to trafficking, sexual exploitation, drugs, money laundering or other matters, it is important that the intelligence is acted on.

Having met Assistant Chief Constable Malcolm Graham and Chief Superintendent Ruth Gilfillan, who is in charge of the trafficking unit, I can give the member an assurance that local matters will continue to prevail. There will be matters in relation to which the police quite correctly and understandably act on intelligence.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I advise the cabinet secretary and Margo MacDonald that the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing should be dealing with the impact of the single force on local

policing after the recess, when members will be able to raise issues with the committee.

Kenny MacAskill: I welcome that—it is why the committee was established and it is quite appropriate.

Golf Tourism

8. Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP): I should point out that I am a member of the cross-party group on golf.

To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to encourage golf tourism and what impact this will have on the west of Scotland economy. (S4O-02289)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): The Scottish Government is determined to maximise tourism growth and draw more visitors to Scotland. Scottish Government public bodies are working closely with the golf tourism industry to support the work of the golf tourism development group.

The open in Muirfield in 2013 and Scotland's staging of the Ryder cup in 2014 will reinforce Scotland's status as the home of golf and the perfect stage for events. VisitScotland is capitalising on that unique opportunity with a specific programme of marketing activity, which is designed to encourage more visitors—international and domestic—to come to Scotland and take advantage of nearly 600 golf courses across Scotland.

In the west of Scotland, Scottish Enterprise is working with the Ayrshire and Arran golf partnership and all three Ayrshire councils in the run-up to the open at Royal Troon, to build on the area's successful offering and to ensure that the potential for golf is highlighted for all businesses in the area during the run-up to the event in 2016 and beyond.

Stewart Maxwell: The west of Scotland is well placed to capitalise on a boost in golf tourism, given its array of excellent golf facilities, including courses on Arran and in East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Dunbartonshire, as well as the neighbouring world-class courses at Turnberry, Prestwick and Royal Troon.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that it is essential that responsibility for air passenger duty be devolved to the Scottish Parliament if we are to help to secure more direct air links to Scotland and encourage golf enthusiasts from international markets to visit the home of golf?

John Swinney: Mr Maxwell made a strong point, in recognising the connection between international travel and connectivity through air links, to bring visitors to Scotland to appreciate the

significant opportunities that are afforded by the range of golf courses in Scotland.

Devolution of air passenger duty was set out in the recommendations of the Calman Commission on Scottish Devolution in June 2009. Ministers remain frustrated that the United Kingdom Government has not implemented the recommendation, despite such an approach having been taken in Northern Ireland, which represents a recognition by the UK Government that a one-size-fits-all policy simply does not work.

I encourage the UK Government to respond to the very broad representations that have been made in Scotland, including from the four main airports, Scottish Chambers of Commerce, the Scottish Council for Development and Industry, individual companies and the Scottish Government, to ask that the power be devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): The cabinet secretary will be aware that the loss of flights between Prestwick and Gothenburg has had an adverse effect on golf tourism in the west of Scotland. He will also be aware of the commitment of the Minister for Transport and Veterans, Keith Brown, to bring forward soon a European Union-compatible successor scheme to route development funding. When will the successor scheme be put in place? When the scheme is in place, will he ensure that consideration is given to re-establishing the link between Scotland and Scandinavia through Prestwick, to support our golf tourism in the west of Scotland?

John Swinney: Work is under way on the preparation of the scheme to which Mr Scott referred. Priority is given to enhancing connectivity through air routes in and out of Scotland, and provision at Prestwick is important in that respect.

Our efforts would be assisted if Mr Scott could use his formidable powers of persuasion to get his colleagues in the United Kingdom Government to respond positively to my reasonable request on air passenger duty.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before we come to the next item of business, members will wish to join me in welcoming to the gallery the Vice-President of the Senate and the first Vice-President of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Bolivia, Néilda Sifuentes and Lucio Marca Mamani. [*Applause.*]

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Engagements

1. Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what engagements he has planned for the rest of the day. (S4F-01477)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Engagements to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland.

Johann Lamont: Excellent. In private, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, John Swinney, in a paper to Cabinet—we remember that rigorous piece of work—questioned the affordability of the state pension in a separate Scotland. This week, in public, John Swinney promised not only a state pension, but one guaranteed to go up by at least 2.5 per cent a year—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Order.

Johann Lamont: It is easy to say that, but he said nothing about the age of retirement. How did John Swinney get from questioning the affordability of pensions to that new policy? What is the cost of that policy? How will the costs be met?

The First Minister: I point out—and this is a key matter for the Government—that welfare spending in Scotland is less as a proportion of our national economy than it is for the United Kingdom. That should tell Johann Lamont that the welfare budget in Scotland is more affordable than some people regard it as being across the UK.

Given the Labour Party's wholesale desertion in recent weeks of the cause of universal benefits and welfare policy and the shadow chancellor's acceptance of the Tory plans, this is the last subject on which Johann Lamont should be commenting.

The triple-lock guarantee, which John Swinney has put forward for an independent Scotland, is an excellent idea that gives reassurance. Its whole basis is that it is exactly that—a guarantee that pensioners will get the best deal possible, which is what the Scottish National Party is committed to.

Johann Lamont: If the First Minister wants to be credible, he could at least make an effort and answer the question. He says that this is the last question that I should be asking, but it is the first question that many pensioners and others across the country are asking.

I remember that, when I was studying my O grade maths, I had to do the sums and show the

workings before I reached the answer. This week, John Swinney simply ditched what he had said before and gave an answer with no credible workings at all. Whatever the real cost of the Government's pension policy, we know that it has cost the credibility not only of John Swinney, but of the Government.

We live in the real world. In private, the Cabinet doubts the affordability of the state pension. If its public words are to have any credibility, surely it must be able to tell us—today—how it can be afforded. I ask again: how did the Government move from questioning the affordability of the state pension to the new policy of guaranteed rises for all, and what will that cost?

The First Minister: Perhaps this time, Johann Lamont will appreciate the significance of the information that the Government has published, demonstrating that the welfare budget as a proportion of Scotland's national wealth is less than the welfare budget as a proportion of the UK's national wealth. That makes welfare more affordable in Scotland. Given that the triple-lock guarantee is current policy—until the Labour Party revises that, too—then of course we can put that forward for the security of old-age pensioners in Scotland.

Johann Lamont says that this is the first question that pensioners are asking, but the first question that pensioners are asking in Scotland is whether their bus pass will be safe should the Labour Party return to power. They are asking about free personal care. That is because Johann Lamont, like Ed Balls, is not only unable to commit to the current welfare budget, accepting the plans of the Tories, but is challenging the basic fabric of the achievements of devolution and the great gains for pensioners across Scotland.

Johann Lamont: On the bus pass, it helps to have a bus to go with it.

There are people across the country who believe that next year we will have a serious debate about the future of Scotland. From that showing, the First Minister is incapable of convincing anyone that as he has even remotely thought about the things that really matter to families across the country.

We know why the First Minister can be so relaxed about pensions. By my reckoning, he has five, and they are all backed by the UK Government. He has his civil service pension, his MP's pension, his MSP's pension, his First Minister's pension, and we should not forget—*[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Johann Lamont: I am very grateful for my pension, but we should not forget that the First

Minister presumably has his Royal Bank of Scotland pension. He should thank Gordon Brown for saving that one.

We know that the First Minister will be all right, but he is prepared to put everyone else at risk. If pensioners now and in future are to believe that the Scottish National Party is suddenly so certain that the state pension is affordable, will the First Minister tell us now how much money he will have to raise to fund it and where it will come from? Show us the workings and not just the answer.

The First Minister: First, for pensioners watching this broadcast, the mention of Gordon Brown, whose raid on pensions destroyed the pensions of people across this country, indicates the insensitivity of the Labour Party.

Let me try this again for Johann Lamont. It is now accepted, because of the workings that the Scottish Government has produced, that the welfare budget as a share of Scotland's national wealth is less and therefore more affordable than welfare's share of the budget across the UK. Therefore, if the triple lock is affordable in the UK, it is more affordable in Scotland. The triple lock is an essential part of society's contract with pensioners, but there are other essential parts of that as well. I take it from Johann Lamont's question that the bus pass is in danger from the Labour Party, so let us hear loud and clear what the Labour Party said when it set up the cuts commission:

"There is nothing off the table."

People should hear that loud and clear—it is not just the bus pass, free personal care and tuition fees but the whole social contract of devolution that is now under threat from the party that once cared about working people. It is no longer about working people or pensioners or anyone, but is hot foot in pursuit of its alliance with the Tory party.

Johann Lamont: Well, my goodness. We have asked a simple question. The First Minister says that this is evident, so share with us what it will cost. I think that any pensioner or any family worried about their children's future who looks at today's broadcast—as he calls it—will wonder how it is possible for a First Minister to offer a future that is no more than a leap in the dark on the fundamental issues that they face.

It is no wonder that not even his SNP candidate in Aberdeen Donside believes that there is a chance of the First Minister winning the referendum. Not even his own economic advisers find the First Minister credible. His Nobel laureate Joe Stiglitz says that he is wrong on corporation tax. Only last night, Professor John Kay laid out why the First Minister has his policy on the currency wrong. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland says that there is a £170

billion hole in the First Minister's plans for private pensions. The First Minister simply cannot tell us how he will afford the state pension. It is an absolute failure of office to be unable to answer those most basic questions.

The reality is that the First Minister has no credibility—[*Interruption.*] I am glad that members have something to laugh about because, for the rest of us, this is far from funny—[*Interruption.*].

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Johann Lamont: If politics was about slogans and shouting, the First Minister would do fine. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Johann Lamont: The fact of the matter is—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Johann Lamont: The fact of the matter is that on something as fundamental as the future of this country, the First Minister has no credibility, no detail and no facts. Is not the truth that the only way to protect people's pensions is to pension off Alex Salmond next September?

The First Minister: Dear oh dear. I guess that Johann Lamont did not hear what was said properly. On her claim to have done O level maths, somebody merely suggested that it should have been higher maths—that was all.

I will try this again. In Scotland, the amount that is spent on welfare is less of a percentage of the total wealth of Scotland—the total product of Scotland—than the percentage of the total wealth of the UK that is spent on welfare. Is that correct, thus far? Yes, that is correct and accepted. Therefore, the affordability of that welfare budget—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please, Mr Johnstone.

The First Minister: Therefore, that welfare budget, the dominant part of which is pensions, is more affordable in Scotland than it is across the United Kingdom as a whole. That seems to be a reasonable position and I think that most higher grade maths students would probably manage to get to it.

On the pension black holes, I return to Mr Brown. The pension black holes that afflict the UK were created by Gordon Brown in his raid on pensioners. On policies for pensioners, pensioners are looking for guarantees on the bus pass and on free personal care. This party gives those guarantees; with Labour, everything is up for grabs.

As far as Aberdeen Donside is concerned, it is not perhaps the Labour Party's strongest suit, because today the parents in Middleton Park and Bramble Brae in Aberdeen Donside will be voting to keep their schools open.

Prime Minister (Meetings)

2. Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister. (S4F-01472)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I have no plans to meet him in the near future.

Ruth Davidson: Yesterday, bereaved parents courageously came to the Parliament to look for support for a public inquiry into what happened to the remains of their babies and why. What started as a scandal in a single crematorium in Mortonhall in Edinburgh has spread to crematoria in Glasgow and Aberdeen—and they are the ones that we knew about. We have now learned that a number of families who used a facility in Falkirk have been affected, as have families using a private—not local authority—crematorium.

The Government's response has been overtaken by events. Does the First Minister recognise that neither the Angiolini investigation nor Lord Bonomy's review will give the answers that the parents who came to the Parliament yesterday need?

The First Minister: Let us accept that everyone in the Parliament—like people across the country, I suspect—has great sympathy and empathy for the parents in such circumstances.

My mother had a stillborn child, which is a common experience for many families. If we add to that the extremity of not knowing about the disposal of a child's ashes, every person—every human—will understand how parents feel in such circumstances or at least have the empathy to try to understand how parents feel. That is shared across the entire Parliament. The question is how best to proceed to get parents the answers that they need and of course, importantly, to change the policy that has prevailed—in the past, perhaps, but nonetheless it has prevailed—certainly in Edinburgh and in Glasgow and perhaps in other areas to a significant degree across Scotland.

With the backing of his commission, Lord Bonomy indicated just last week that he is confident that he can make proper recommendations by the end of this year. If that is the case—and he says that it is—that will be a huge step forward. The advantage in that is that we would be able to legislate next year to ensure that such cases never happen again. In contrast, the average length in Scotland of a public inquiry, for example, is three and a half years. Two

inquiries that we have sanctioned have not even finished at this stage.

Getting the recommendations by the end of the year would be an asset. If that was not to be the case and that could not happen, I would not hesitate to take other measures, which include considering a public inquiry if Lord Bonomy's confidence is not to be justified by events.

On Elish Angiolini's investigations, I have a letter that was sent to Michael Matheson from Elish Angiolini this week. The question was raised whether her inquiries have been hampered in any way by the status of her independent investigation. She says:

"my enquiries have not been hampered by the absence of powers of compulsion. I have not received any indication, to date, that there will be any such issue."

If Elish Angiolini can get the answers to satisfy—I hope—the vast majority of the Mortonhall parents, the same sort of investigation, as set out by Lord Bonomy in his letter to local authorities last week, could apply to other areas of Scotland. If that is not possible, and if our former Lord Advocate encounters obstacles and cannot get to the truth, I will be the first person—as with the Bonomy commission—to reconsider the issue and decide whether further steps must be taken.

Let us try to answer the anguish of the parents in a way that accepts that every single member in the chamber feels empathy for and understands the parents' circumstances and plight.

Ruth Davidson: I welcome the First Minister's empathy, sympathy and understanding. However, he knows that Lord Bonomy's commission is not looking at individual cases and will not give answers to what happened historically to parents in different parts of the country who are in such a situation. The Angiolini investigation might do so in Edinburgh, but that does not address what is happening elsewhere.

The idea that the Angiolini investigation in Edinburgh could in some way be looked at or replicated in other local authority areas was skewered this week by George Black, Glasgow City Council's chief executive. He wrote to the head of the Glasgow ashes group to say:

"We believe that in order to find out the truth of what happened in individual cases, it would be better for there to be a nationwide inquiry, rather than a host of individual local inquiries".

The First Minister has repeatedly sidestepped calls for a public inquiry. Two weeks ago, he told me that the priority was for Lord Bonomy to put the new procedures in place, and three weeks ago, he said that it was right that local authorities should look at the issue individually.

However, the scandal has now spread from one crematorium in one part of Scotland to multiple sites—including private and public crematoria—in at least four local authority areas. The parents, who know how long an inquiry would take, are still calling for an inquiry to find out what happened to their babies' remains. The head of Scotland's largest local authority is now saying that the current approach is not enough and that he wants more.

I have repeatedly said that this is not a party-political issue, and it should not be. However, there is no getting away from the fact that the only party that is not supporting the parents' calls for an inquiry is the Scottish National Party. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Ruth Davidson: I do not think that the parents out there would particularly like to hear catcalls in the chamber.

The parents do not understand the SNP's stance and neither do I. The SNP demanded a full public inquiry into the Dunoon ferry. Why, First Minister, is the case of the bereaved parents less deserving?

The First Minister: Let me try again. The four public inquiries that the Government has sanctioned since we took office are the ICL inquiry, the fingerprint inquiry, the Penrose inquiry and the Vale of Leven inquiry. None of those concerns trivial issues, and we are certainly not having a public inquiry into the Dunoon ferry. Thompsons Solicitors, which represents some of the parents, is advocating four additional public inquiries in Scotland: a baby ashes inquiry, a transvaginal mesh inquiry, a legionnaire's disease inquiry and a PIP implants inquiry.

If, on a major public issue, only a public inquiry could get the answers and give people the justice that they deserve, I would not hesitate to sanction such an inquiry. However, in this instance, we have hope and belief in Lord Bonomy—who, incidentally, wrote this week to the local authorities around Scotland, including George Black at Glasgow City Council, to set out how a local authority can sanction an inquiry and to advise on guidance.

The guidance includes the need to ensure that any investigations are conducted transparently, independently and objectively, and with respect for and sensitivity to the concerns of affected families. If that is possible for the Angiolini inquiry in Edinburgh, why on earth would it not be possible for an inquiry in Glasgow? I do not understand why something can be done in Edinburgh but not in Glasgow.

The Bonomy commission, which will look at cases and is open to submissions, is there to

provide the guidance and regulations that we can introduce to stop such a situation happening again. That could be provided by the end of the year. Lord Bonomy is confident that he can report by the end of the year—with the commission that he has and the expertise, including the two charities representing the bereaved in campaigns—to put forward his recommendations. If that can be done, it will be a great advance. If Elish Angiolini can, to parents' satisfaction, get to the bottom of the individual cases that involve Mortonhall, why on earth can that not be done elsewhere as well?

If Lord Bonomy cannot come up with recommendations that we can endorse as a Parliament to stop the situation happening again and if Elish Angiolini at some stage encounters obstacles in her inquiries into individual cases and cannot command the confidence of a majority of the parents, I will be the first person to say that we will have to go for a public inquiry or some other recourse. However, I fully expect at present that Bonomy will give us the recommendations that we can put into legislation next year to ensure that what happened will not happen again and that Elish Angiolini, as a former Lord Advocate, should command the confidence of everyone when she says that she can conduct her investigation independently in Edinburgh. If that can be done in Edinburgh, it most certainly can be done elsewhere in Scotland.

Cabinet (Meetings)

3. Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):

To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Cabinet. (S4F-01478)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Issues of importance to the people of Scotland.

Willie Rennie: Four years ago, I joined families in the little settlement of Kinneddar Park in west Fife who were against proposals to extract coal from the neighbouring fields. We lost, and permission was granted. The residents were assured by developers that the industry had learned lessons from past failures and that, after extraction, the land would be converted into a local environmental resource. Operations have now ceased, leaving a huge hole and spoil heaps dwarfing the area. The families at Kinneddar Park have been let down, and thousands of families across Scotland, from Ayrshire through Lanarkshire and Midlothian to Fife, are suffering similarly.

Mining companies were supposed to buy insurance bonds to pay for land restoration, but there is a huge deficit and insufficient funds are available to restore all the eyesores. Given the

scale of the problem, will the First Minister order an independent inquiry into this failure?

The First Minister: The first task and job to be done is what Fergus Ewing is doing at present. He is doing everything that he can to preserve employment in the opencast industry and to secure, with the support of local authorities, the necessary environmental clean-up.

I say to Willie Rennie that, yes, it is true that bonds were meant to be provided for, and I agree with his description of them. I hope and believe that, when we have legislative control over such matters in this Parliament, we will make sure that such things are enforced. Surely part and parcel of what we should do in this Parliament is ensuring that not just jobs but communities are protected.

Willie Rennie: I welcome the First Minister's understanding of the situation, but local authorities have the powers now to enforce appropriate restoration bonds. It is not as if they are deprived of the powers that would suddenly resolve the problem.

The First Minister referred to the work of Fergus Ewing, whom I commend for the work that he is doing in the coal task force. However, that is primarily looking at the needs of the business side. The proposed restoration trust has no real bite and is, in fact, a more convenient alternative to restoration bonds for the industry, which would risk further environmental problems in the future.

While some companies have made millions, communities have been left environmentally bankrupt. The industry is now seeking to dump opencast sites for other people to clean up—Kinneddar Park is one of them. Communities have endured years of noise, dust and heavy transport, and they now fear a legacy of derelict sites, polluted water and scarred landscapes. I encourage and urge the First Minister to set up an independent inquiry, as communities were promised that the mistakes of the past would not be repeated, but they were. For the sake of the families at Kinneddar Park and many others, will the First Minister act?

The First Minister: First, I am extremely sympathetic on the issue, but let us just consider Willie Rennie's statement about what local authorities can and cannot do. The environmental powers of local authorities mean very little if the company concerned has gone out of business. There are no assets to chase in that position, which is exactly why the provisions about posting bonds and having that fund available are of such great significance—those are the powers that I was referring to. I do not think that any reasonable person could blame East Ayrshire Council or Fife Council for not being in a position to chase money that is no longer there.

Secondly, on the restoration fund that Fergus Ewing has pioneered, it is simply untrue to say that he has been solely concerned with jobs in the industry—which are, incidentally, a legitimate concern. He has also been concerned, through the restoration fund, to try to help the situation.

I say to Willie Rennie that he makes the case that I would make. If we are going to pursue an industry that could leave people with such environmental damage, we must have an environmental framework that makes sure that the funds to restore sites are independent of the corporate entity. I look forward to the member and me drafting such legislation when this Parliament has the powers to do it.

Security (Prestwick Airport)

4. Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what discussions the Scottish Government has had with the security services regarding the emergency landing at Prestwick airport on 15 June 2013. (S4F-01474)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I am pleased to say that Police Scotland kept the Scottish Government fully informed of the developments following the diversion to Prestwick airport of EgyptAir flight MS 985. Police Scotland met the plane on arrival at Prestwick airport and 100 officers from the specialist crime division undertook a controlled disembarkation of the plane, searched the plane and interviewed all the passengers and crew before the flight continued to New York.

Among other things, the incident highlights the strategic importance of Prestwick as an airport that has the necessary facilities to receive high-risk flights that involve the potential for hijacking or terrorism. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice has therefore written to the United Kingdom Home Secretary this week to highlight the huge and vital role that Prestwick played in the latest incident, and to commend, as we all should, the multi-agency response that was led by Police Scotland.

Chic Brodie: I thank the First Minister for his comprehensive answer. As he said, the incident highlights the importance of Prestwick airport to Scotland and to the aerospace industry—not just as a travel, maintenance, repair and overhaul airport, but as a resilience airport for military and antiterrorist purposes.

However, Prestwick would, along with other Scottish airports, be neglected because of the London coalition's £50 billion plus obsession with a new airport for the south-east of England. Does the First Minister agree that we should have a comprehensive and independent air and airport strategy for Scotland, that would include more international direct flights to Scotland, and which

would start to take effect post independence day in 2016?

The First Minister: The obsession of the Westminster Government that is causing the most damage to Prestwick and other airports, and to connectivity in Scotland, is the obsession with air passenger duty and the discrimination that it creates against airports in Scotland and, indeed, against airports in the northern regions of England.

Devolution of air passenger duty to the Scottish Parliament, which would enable it to take effective action to increase connectivity in Scotland, was certainly supported by a majority—I think, a large majority—in this Parliament. I hope that the Tories and Labour, with their alliance in the better together campaign, have not lost their enthusiasm for seeing air passenger duty devolved to this Parliament so that we can take effective action on behalf of Prestwick and the other airports in Scotland.

Scottish Police Authority (Information Technology)

5. Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what impact the recent decision by three senior executives to leave the Scottish Police Authority will have on its information technology strategy. (S4F-01491)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I have no reason to believe that their decision will have any impact. The official who is responsible for the delivery of the Scottish Police Authority's IT strategy is its chief information officer and not one of the three people to have left their interim roles at the SPA. The authority continues to be led by an able, skilled and experienced board.

Graeme Pearson: The First Minister talked previously of “creative tension” across Scottish policing. With the loss of the head of finance, of the head of governance and strategy and of the chief executive officer—the accountable officer for the Scottish Police Authority—it is clear that the factors that lie behind the crisis are more than “creative” tensions. Will this week's meeting of senior officials to reorganise governance responsibilities across Police Scotland and the SPA finally indicate that the Government is coming to grips with this taxpayer-funded £1 billion organisation and deliver an efficient single police force?

The First Minister: I do not think that we should question the efficiency of the Police Service of Scotland, given that recorded crime in this country is now at a 39-year low thanks to the commitment of the officers of the service, whose numbers are up by 1,262 since the Government took office. Thank goodness those officers are in place and are policing our communities.

On IT, it is important for Graeme Pearson to know—because he has expressed concern about the matter in the past—not just that the responsible officer is not one of those leaving interim appointments at the Scottish Police Authority, but that the i6 programme is a potential solution to the challenges of the legacy of having previously had so many separate boards. I think that Graeme Pearson has pointed out the lunacy of having IT systems across Scotland that could not communicate with each other.

The i6 proposal for the acquisition of a single information and communication technology system for the police service to cover recording, management and analysis of data on crime, vulnerable persons, criminal justice, custody, missing persons and property, is a major advance, and I am pleased to say that discussions with the SPA indicate that the estimated total cost of £45 million over 10 years is affordable within its existing budget. I know that the SPA board will consider the proposal next week, on 26 June.

Piper Alpha Disaster

6. Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what plans the Scottish Government has to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Piper Alpha disaster. (S4F-01484)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): The Piper Alpha disaster remains the world's worst offshore platform disaster, and the events of 25 years ago remain etched in the memories of those of us who are old enough to remember them.

The Government is setting out and has set out a range of ministerial involvement in the very important activities that are taking place over the next two weeks, which include the offshore safety conference and the screen premiere of "Fire in the Night", which is a hugely effective film and is hugely important in bringing to a new generation both the horror of Piper Alpha and the absolute importance of ensuring that such a disaster does not happen again.

The Pound for Piper Memorial Trust appeal is raising funds to ensure that families and others who were affected by the Piper Alpha disaster have a peaceful place to remember their loved ones for years to come. We were able to contribute to that appeal. I commend the efforts of the trust's campaign to give the bereaved families an appropriate place to remember their loved ones in Aberdeen.

Christian Allard: I take the opportunity to highlight the screening of "Fire in the Night" at the Belmont Picturehouse in Aberdeen this Friday, and its wider distribution in the weeks ahead. Will the First Minister join me in welcoming that

feature-length documentary as an important testimony to the terrible events for new generations to learn from?

The First Minister: Yes, I will. "Fire in the Night" has great importance for a new generation, and I hope and believe that we can ensure that every schoolchild in Scotland has access to the information that is contained in it. It is really important that people remember Piper Alpha and the critical importance of safety in the North Sea.

However, it is not just children and young people in Scotland who have to remember that, of course; we have to remember that many current offshore workers were not alive when the Piper Alpha disaster happened 25 years ago. Therefore, the initiative to have a special safety film screened to every single offshore worker—to remind them why they have the permit-to-work system and the safety-case system that Lord Cullen recommended, and which was introduced after the Piper Alpha disaster, as one of his 106 recommendations—is crucial.

In terms of public obligation, it is a necessity to ensure that the Maritime and Coastguard Agency is properly manned and that offshore safety considerations are properly organised, because they are part of the public infrastructure. Our commitment is to ensure that offshore workers, who work in the most hazardous of environments, are properly protected.

James IV and Flodden Field

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S4M-05610, in the name of Christine Grahame, on James IV and Flodden field. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes that 9 September 2013 will mark 500 years since the Battle of Flodden in which King James IV of Scotland was killed; notes that he was reputed to be fluent in many languages including Latin, French, German, Flemish, Italian and Spanish, and that, among other achievements, he founded two new dockyards and acquired 38 ships for the Royal Scots navy, granted the Edinburgh College of Surgeons a royal charter in 1506 and welcomed the establishment of Scotland's first printing press in 1507; notes that his marriage to Margaret Tudor, "The Thistle and the Rose", paved the way for the Union of the Crowns and probable eventual political union, and recognises calls for the return "on loan" for the 500th anniversary of Flodden of the only artefacts attributed to him, a sword, dagger and turquoise ring currently with the College of Arms in London.

12:34

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I feel that my voice may echo around the chamber.

I thank all the members who signed the motion that has allowed the debate to proceed and those who have relinquished a trip to somewhere in the north to be here.

The debate is timely, given that the quincentennial anniversary of Flodden will be on 9 September this year. That is a date in my diary, as it is also my birthday—not my quincentennial birthday, although I sometimes feel that old. As an aside, I think that we are all taught history when we are too young, but perhaps these days it is livelier and is given the immediacy of real life and made relevant to our lives.

Although a king, James IV was first and foremost a man of flesh and blood who breathed, loved and died, as we all do. He was a real person. He was also a political beast, as monarchs were then; some would say that they are political beasts, with a small P, even now. He was astute—he made alliances—and educated. He survived and died in violent circumstances.

If members will forgive me, this will be a potted and selective history. James IV was born in 1473 and, at the age of 15, rode at the battle of Sauchieburn, at which his father was killed. It is said that he wore an iron belt as penance from that date until his death on Flodden field in 1513, at the age of 40. Even for monarchs—with the exception, perhaps, of Elizabeth Tudor—life then was short.

In that time, James IV achieved much. He spoke Latin—at the time, it was the international language—French, German, Flemish, Italian, Spanish and some Gaelic, and he took an active interest in literature, science and the law. He even tried his hand at dentistry and minor surgery. With his patronage, the printing press came to Scotland, and the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh, St Leonard's College in St Andrews and King's College in Aberdeen were founded. He commissioned building work at the royal residences of Linlithgow palace, Edinburgh castle and Stirling castle, and he developed a strong navy that was led by his flagship, the Great Michael, which was said to be the largest vessel of the time.

However, James IV is remembered most because of the massacre at Flodden. Even to this day there is a poignant moment in the Selkirk common riding when, each year, the casting of the colours in the square testifies to the fact that, of the 80 Selkirk men who left to fight at Flodden, only one returned—Fletcher. The casting of the colours replicates the legend that he cast a captured English flag about his head to show that all the others had been cut down. To this day, the casting of those colours to the rhythmic drumbeat silences the crowd.

Flodden itself, which I first saw on a bright, breezy July day, is not an historic monument but a war memorial. That is an important distinction. On that July day, the long grasses in the fields below where the slaughter took place rippled like green water, and on the memorial someone had laid a clutch of thistles. At that moment, even though centuries had passed, the pain of that day and the waste of lives were quite tangible.

It is said that between 1,000 and 4,000 English soldiers were casualties, and that between 7,000 and 11,000 Scots lay dead, including King James and most of his nobles who were on the field. Such was the concern that the English would march on to Edinburgh that the construction of the Flodden wall was begun. It is possible to see a bit of it just up the road by turning left at the lights to the Pleasance.

James's burial place is unknown, but it is alleged that three artefacts—a sword, dagger and a turquoise ring—that belonged to him were taken from the battlefield. Those are currently in the custody of Mr Cheesman, who is Richmond Herald at the College of Arms in London, with whom I correspond, and although their provenance is not secure, there are sufficient grounds for believing at least that the sword was the sword of James IV.

I am grateful to Gary Stewart of the Society of William Wallace, Dr Elspeth King of the Stirling Smith art gallery and museum in Stirling and, indeed, Parliament staff, who are negotiating the

terms of loan of those artefacts to Scotland for possible display here and at the museum from the weeks at the end of August until October. I hope that they will be exhibited in the Parliament's public area in the week of Flodden—fingers crossed.

James has another claim to fame. He also married, with consequences that were unforeseen at the time, Margaret Tudor, who was one of Henry VII of England's daughters. It was called the rough wooing. The marriage of the thistle and the rose took place at Holyrood on 8 August 1503. The match had great significance in the long term. After the death of Elizabeth I of England and the end of the Tudor dynasty, the two thrones were inherited by the great-grandson of James and Margaret—James I of England and VI of Scotland. The Stuarts had arrived. The rest, as they say, is history—quite literally. It now seems inevitable that the marriage of the thistle and the rose—the union of the crowns—would move on to the union of the Parliaments.

The threads from that history of 500 years ago gave us the union flag. With devolution, some of that stitching was unpicked. Next year will tell us whether those threads remain or will finally be cut and whether the saltire will fly on its own again. Whatever happens, it will be from the other Holyrood that that event takes place.

12:40

John Lamont (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): I congratulate Christine Grahame on securing the debate on this important topic. It is my great pleasure to add my modest speech to today's discussion.

I also record my thanks to Greig Lamont, who helped to research the speech. He finishes working in the Scottish Parliament this week and I am grateful for the help that he has given me in preparing the speech.

Not many occasions are remembered 500 years after they occur—I very much doubt that my speech will be—but the fact that the battle of Flodden is remembered half a millennium later illustrates its importance as a central part of Scotland's historical journey and national story.

The battle of Flodden will be remembered once again this year all over my Borders constituency during many of the Borders towns' common ridings and civic weeks. My home town of Coldstream is no exception. The annual ride out to Flodden is seen as the zenith of the annual civic week. It was 51 years ago that the first cavalcade of horses made its way to Flodden, with more than 100 horses and riders being piped over Coldstream bridge to "Blue Bonnets" against the background of the waters of the River Tweed.

Although 500 years ago we crossed the border to meet our foes, making the journey as outlaws, today we cross it as friends, neighbours and, indeed, family. Although 500 years ago we Scots rode over the border to raid, today we do so to remember an ancient rivalry, remember those on both sides who fell and celebrate the central importance of the battle of Flodden in our Scottish story.

James IV's defeat at Flodden gives him the unique claim of being the last monarch of Scotland, England or Wales to die in battle. However, although those are certainly the main facets of his memory that have been immortalised by history, they are far from being his only achievements, if that is the right word to use. His accomplishments ranged far beyond his ability to lose decisive battles. He was an experienced horseman and, despite what I have said, a talented military leader. However, he was far from being a warmongering brute. He was a steadfast patron of the arts, and his drive to improve cultural, political and scientific developments in Scotland earned him the honorary and rather becoming title of the renaissance prince.

As Christine Grahame notes in her motion, 505 years ago, James IV issued the first royal licence for printing in Scotland. The first printed book in the nation was published one year later in 1508 on a printing press not far from here in the Cowgate. A copy of that volume remains to this day in the National Library of Scotland and stands as a testament to his contribution to literature, learning and enlightenment in Scotland. Not only that, but the Palace of Holyroodhouse, which stands a few hundred feet from where we debate, owes its existence and location to his vision.

However, it was not only Scotland's culture and landscape that James IV influenced; its shape as a nation was transformed as a result of his life. His marriage to Margaret Tudor and the eventual unification of the Scots and English royal households that resulted strengthened relations between Scotland and England. At the time, the poet William Dunbar hailed it as an end to the Anglo-Scottish rivalry that had raged for centuries. The influence of that marriage on the eventual act of union in 1707 is hardly insignificant. Therefore, James IV's legacy remains pertinent to us today.

Christine Grahame may not have forgiven James IV for the consequences of his choice of companion, but that debate is for another day.

12:44

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I apologise for the fact that I am unable to stay for the cabinet secretary's summing-up speech, as I have another meeting to go to. I have informed the

Presiding Officer in writing. I congratulate Christine Grahame on securing today's debate on a subject that we all know is close to her heart.

It was fitting that, last weekend, the loss of life at the battle of Flodden 500 years ago was the focus of one of Europe's oldest and biggest equestrian spectacles, the Selkirk ridings, in my colleague's constituency. I am not sure whether my colleague took part in the ride through the town that day—perhaps as a modern-day Lady Godiva.

John Lamont: For the sake of clarity, I should point out that Selkirk is in my constituency; Christine Grahame represents the neighbouring constituency.

Sandra White: I thank the member for that correction, but that would not stop my friend from attending.

I, too, want to thank Gary Stewart and Elspeth King for the work that they have done on this and other issues. They have done a great deal to ensure that our history is kept alive.

As we have heard, the common ridings were established to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the fateful day in 1513 when 80 men left Selkirk to fight for King James IV and just one returned. As legend has it, he returned with a captured English standard, which he cast around his head to let the people of Selkirk know that everyone else had perished.

The generation of borderers who were lost in the battle are immortalised in the Scots folk song, "The Flowers of the Forest":

"The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away."

I will not sing it, but it is a haunting tune that many know as the lament that is played on remembrance day or remembrance Sunday.

The song goes on to tell the fate of the battle:

"The English, for ance, by guile wan the day".

It is said that, although King James IV's army vastly outnumbered that of his English rival, through Scottish mistakes and English guile, the English inflicted on the Scots one of the heaviest defeats in Scotland's history.

King James was killed and his body removed and taken to Berwick, where it was embalmed and put in a lead coffin. The coffin was taken to London and was placed in a monastery, but disappeared during the dissolution of the monasteries about 20 years later.

Mystery still surrounds the whereabouts of the body, with some rumours suggesting that the king was eventually buried at St Paul's cathedral. It would be interesting to know whether that is the case. Maybe that is something that my colleague could take up, among her other crusades.

I support my colleague in her calls for the artefacts that are attributed to King James—a sword, a dagger, and a turquoise ring, which are currently with the College of Arms in London—to be returned to Scotland in time for the anniversary.

Only the other month, more artefacts of the battle were unearthed on the field where the battle was fought. One was a badge made of copper alloy, which appears to have been snapped off a hat band. Its design includes the fleur-de-lis, with jewels and diamonds—elements that were part of the Scottish crown in 1513. That shows that there is still much to be discovered about the battle and Scotland's history.

I was surprised and interested to hear that James IV was fluent in many languages, including Latin, French, German, Flemish, Italian and Spanish. If only we had such language skills today. Perhaps we will move on to that. Those skills reflected the vital importance of Scotland in Europe at that time and the enduring friendships that we had built up throughout the continent. It is a shame that events that followed seemed to reduce that friendship. However, as history moves on, we can see those friendships being rebuilt, particularly with our European friends.

I am sure that history will not repeat itself, that we will go on to independence following the referendum in 2014, and that the friendships and the languages that have been built up will continue to flourish in an independent Scotland.

12:48

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I congratulate Christine Grahame on securing the debate and on her continuing efforts to mount an exhibition in Parliament around the Flodden objects from the College of Arms in London. What today's speeches lacked in quantity they made up for in quality—we have had three very fine speeches.

As Christine Grahame said, James IV was one of Scotland's greatest kings. His achievements were remarkable, and she was right to set them out. However, of course, his reign ended in disaster. It had all started so well. Just 11 years earlier, the treaty of perpetual peace had been signed between Scotland and England and, the following year, on 8 August 1503, James married his child bride, Margaret Tudor, across the road from the Parliament, in Holyrood Abbey. The thistle and the rose were finally at peace.

Yet, on a dreich autumnal day in 1513, thousands of the flower of Scotland were scythed down. The immediate impact of the battle of Flodden was horrendous. The head of state—the king—was dead, along with many of the country's governing elite. The army was decimated, with

thousands of foot soldiers slaughtered. It is hard to imagine, but the nation was rocked to its core. Writing in 1530, Sir David Lyndsay, the Scots poet and parliamentarian, reflected:

"I never read in tragedy nor story,
At one journey so many nobles slain,
For the defence and love of their sovereign."

Then there was the human impact. Hardly a family in the land was left unaffected by the battle's aftermath—not even the royal family. Queen Margaret, with her 17-month-old son, was waiting in Linlithgow palace for news of her husband. It took five days to come. To protect her son, she immediately went to Stirling castle, where, 12 days after his father's death, the child was crowned King James V. Five hundred years on, this is not forgotten history; these are real events, with real and lasting consequences for Scotland's future both then and now.

Throughout this centenary year, there has been a resurgence of interest, and a wide range of events are taking place on both sides of the border to commemorate the battle of Flodden. Many are community-inspired initiatives that have been brought together under the remembering Flodden project. The old red telephone box in Branxton, near the battlefield, has been turned into the world's smallest visitor centre, and tours of the battlefield will mark the anniversary on 9 September. The Flodden 500 archaeology project has brought together professional archaeologists and local community enthusiasts to understand the battlefield site better, and the Flodden 1513 ecomuseum is working with Historic Scotland and other partners to create web links with many associated historical sites.

As part of its 40th birthday celebrations, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra has commissioned three new pieces, one of which was composed by Sally Beamish specifically to commemorate the battle. During an evening focused on war and music, aptly entitled "The Pity of War", the piece will premiere during the orchestra's 2013-14 season at venues throughout Scotland from this October through to May next year.

The same tragic loss of life was marked in a very different manner in the Borders just last week, when the common riding in Selkirk also remembered the time in 1513 when 80 of the town's men left to fight for King James and only one returned.

Throughout this summer, Historic Scotland's living history events will remember Flodden. The popular annual jousting event at Linlithgow palace will this year recall that the knights jousting in the summer of 1513 lost their lives a few weeks later at Flodden. At Edinburgh castle, the story of the optimistic prelude to the battle will be told, including the army mustering on the Meadows and

the state-of-the-art artillery being brought out from the castle's gun house. The programme will culminate in a weekend-long event on 21-22 September at Stirling castle, relating the defeated army's return and the crowning of the infant King James V. Also, Iona Leishman, the former artist in residence, will exhibit new paintings in the chapel royal that were inspired by the events around the battle.

Destruction is in the nature of war, and few artefacts from Flodden survive intact. Mystery and family traditions surround those that do. The Keith heraldic standard was gifted to the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh, in 1808, by a descendant of Black John Skirving, the Earl's standard bearer. The story goes that Black John survived the battle but was taken prisoner and saved the banner by stuffing it inside his clothes. Although doubts have recently been cast on the authenticity of the College of Arms objects—similar uncertainty must be attached to the Keith standard—the stories that surround them are marvellous and very much part of the traditions that are associated with the battle. I commend Christine Grahame for her successful efforts to secure the loan of the Flodden objects from the College of Arms in London.

Many things that are now lost were, no doubt, taken from the battlefield in the days that followed the battle, not least the mutilated corpse of the king. It was not treated well. Taken to Sheen monastery in Surrey, the decapitated body now lies buried somewhere in the ruins under a modern golf course, while the head, which was buried unceremoniously in St Michael's church in London, is now under an office block. The remains of Richard III, the last English king to die in battle, were discovered recently under a Leicester car park, but there seems little likelihood that the remains of the last king of Scots to die in battle will ever return home.

The Flodden commemorations demonstrate what can be achieved if people unite behind a common purpose. Preparations are well under way across the country to commemorate, starting next year, the first centenary of the first world war—another conflict in which the flower of Scotland paid a heavy price. Here again, I see meaningful and imaginative collaborations being developed across the entire cultural sector. Those and this year's Flodden-related events show the huge passion and commitment that so many have for our historic environment in its widest sense.

I thank Christine Grahame for lodging the motion and allowing us to debate an important part of Scotland's history and the telling of Scotland's tale.

Meeting closed at 12:55.

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