



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Tuesday 10 December 2013

Session 4

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Tuesday 10 December 2013

CONTENTS

	Col.
TIME FOR REFLECTION	25429
BUSINESS MOTION	25431
<i>Motion moved—[Joe FitzPatrick]—and agreed to.</i>	
TOPICAL QUESTION TIME	25432
Alcohol Misuse	25432
MOTION OF CONDOLENCE (NELSON MANDELA)	25434
<i>Motion moved—[First Minister].</i>	
The First Minister (Alex Salmond)	25434
Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)	25436
Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con)	25439
Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)	25441
Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)	25442
HUMAN RIGHTS	25445
<i>Motion moved—[Roseanna Cunningham].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Jenny Marra].</i>	
The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs (Roseanna Cunningham)	25445
Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab)	25449
Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)	25452
Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)	25454
Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)	25455
Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD)	25457
John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)	25459
Alex Johnstone	25460
Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)	25462
Roseanna Cunningham	25464
FISHERIES NEGOTIATIONS	25468
<i>Motion moved—[Richard Lochhead].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Claire Baker].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Alex Johnstone].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Tavish Scott].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead)	25468
Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)	25472
Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)	25475
Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)	25477
Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP)	25479
Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab)	25481
Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)	25482
Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP)	25484
Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab)	25485
Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)	25486
Tavish Scott	25487
Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)	25489
Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab)	25491
Richard Lochhead	25493
YOUTH SPORT STRATEGY	25498
<i>Motion moved—[Shona Robison].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Patricia Ferguson].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Liz Smith].</i>	
The Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport (Shona Robison)	25498
Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)	25502
Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	25505
Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP)	25507
Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)	25509
Aileen McLeod (South Scotland) (SNP)	25511

Margo MacDonald (Lothian) (Ind).....	25512
Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)	25514
Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab)	25515
Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)	25516
Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con).....	25518
Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)	25519
Shona Robison	25521
MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE	25525
<i>Motion moved—[Joe FitzPatrick]—and agreed to.</i>	
DECISION TIME	25526
YOUTHLINK SCOTLAND	25534
<i>Motion debated—[George Adam].</i>	
George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)	25534
Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab).....	25537
Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con).....	25538
Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)	25540
The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell).....	25541

Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 10 December 2013

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is the Most Reverend Leo Cushley, the Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh.

The Most Rev Leo Cushley (Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh): Presiding Officer, dear friends, I am grateful for this opportunity to address this distinguished group of representatives in our nation's ancient capital. I have not lived in Scotland for a long time, so it is a wonderful thing to return, to have the chance to stand here in our new Parliament and to consider all that has been achieved here in so short a time.

We hear it said that life is sacred without thinking about it too much, but it remains impressed upon how we relate to each other as a society, and that is why it is in the bedrock of the laws of our country. When we look at Scots law, we can see the various origins and influences on it, and one of them is Christianity. Of course, that pleases me as a Christian, not because it makes the law biased in my favour but because I know that Christians start from the premise that all life is sacred, irrespective of creed or any other accidentals, and because they believe—as many do—that all creation starts in some way in God.

Law and legislation appear naturally, too. Wherever there are two or three people in one place, there is necessarily interrelationship and interaction, there are rules of conduct, and there springs up a way of behaving that is agreed on. Those are the beginnings of human society, and human society naturally develops rules of conduct. Those become human laws that are useful for a season but, inevitably, are occasionally in need of reform. Human laws are of course imperfect, just as we ourselves are fragile and imperfect.

Until recent times, all law in our country, to some degree, reflected our relationship with God and our relationship with our fellow human beings, including our own selves. If our human laws failed in either of those dimensions, the argument went that they would fail to promote the common good that all law must surely strive to uphold. By contrast, laws that passed those two tests stood the test of time, for the good of the whole community, even for non-believers.

Law that truly serves the common good will surely encourage us to respect ourselves and to love our neighbours. Without those two elements, our society would be, in the Christian view, closed in on itself and would become a contradiction in terms—individuals with little or no connection to the commonweal.

And so I would like to pray for those who make Scotland's laws, that the Lord may bless them with justice and temperance, with courage and prudence. And may all Scots and the strangers who live among us be blessed on the way to a more harmonious peace and a more balanced prosperity in our beloved country.

Amen.

Business Motion

14:04

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-08555, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out revisions to this week's business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the programme of business—

(a) Tuesday 10 December 2013

after

followed by Topical Questions

insert

followed by Motion of Condolence: Nelson Mandela

delete

6.00 pm Decision Time

and insert

6.30 pm Decision Time

(b) Thursday 12 December 2013

delete

2.15 pm Members' Business

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Bill

and insert

2.30 pm Stage 3 Proceedings: Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Bill—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

Motion agreed to.

Topical Question Time

14:04

Alcohol Misuse

1. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to tackle alcohol misuse. (S4T-00540)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): Our framework for action document contains a package of more than 40 measures that seek to reduce consumption of alcohol; support families and communities; encourage more positive attitudes and positive choices; and improve treatment and support services. Together with minimum unit pricing and other regulatory measures on, for example, the irresponsible promotion of alcohol, this wider package will help to create the cultural shift that is required to change our relationship with alcohol. Considerable progress has been made on implementing key aspects of the alcohol framework, including a record investment of more than £237 million since 2008 in tackling alcohol misuse; the delivery of more than 366,000 alcohol brief interventions by NHS Scotland; the establishment of 30 alcohol and drug partnerships; the development of an implementation plan to deliver the recommendations of the quality alcohol treatment and support report; the commencement of the Alcohol etc (Scotland) Act 2010; and the passing of the Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Act 2012 in May 2012.

Rhoda Grant: Given that alcohol is killing around 20 people a week in Scotland, which is still a higher rate than that in England and Wales, and given that minimum unit pricing is delayed in the courts, will the cabinet secretary come forward with meaningful action to tackle alcohol misuse in Scotland?

Alex Neil: It is a bit rich for anyone from the Labour Party, with its constant opposition to minimum unit pricing, to demand action now. We have already implemented a 40-point action plan and, as the NHS Health Scotland report that was issued yesterday indicated, measures such as the ending of multiple unit sales are already having a positive impact in reducing alcohol sales in Scotland.

Rhoda Grant: As the cabinet secretary is aware, minimum unit pricing alone will not tackle Scotland's problem with alcohol. He will also be aware that Dr Richard Simpson is leading proposals for an alcohol (public health and criminal justice) (Scotland) bill. Will the cabinet secretary back that bill in principle and introduce

Labour's proposals so that we can take action and tackle this problem now?

Alex Neil: We have never claimed that minimum unit pricing is a single silver bullet, but it is a prerequisite to breaking the back of the problem of alcohol misuse in Scotland. I draw Rhoda Grant's attention to what are now four reports that have been produced by Professor Tim Stockwell, the global expert on this matter, which demonstrate beyond any doubt—let alone any reasonable doubt—that, unless we affect the price of alcohol, we will not be able to beat this problem in Scotland. That is why minimum unit pricing is so essential and why, despite Labour's opposition, the Government was determined to deliver it.

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): Is the cabinet secretary aware of any other European Union member states that are set to follow Scotland's example and introduce minimum unit pricing? If so, could that be because this policy has the support of every health organisation in Scotland and each of the chief medical officers in these islands?

Alex Neil: The Irish and Estonian Governments have adopted a policy on minimum unit pricing that is similar to the one adopted by the Scottish Government, and I know of other Governments that are giving similar consideration to following our example. Having spoken to the World Health Organization at a recent conference in Tallinn in Estonia, I can tell the member that we have its whole-hearted support in pursuing minimum unit pricing. There is no doubt that the almost unanimous view not just among health professionals in Scotland but, increasingly, among Governments and health professionals in Europe is that minimum unit pricing is the right policy for pursuing our objective of substantially reducing the harm that is caused by alcohol abuse.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): That ends topical questions.

Motion of Condolence (Nelson Mandela)

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is a motion of condolence, in the name of Alex Salmond, following the death of Nelson Mandela. I inform members that I have instructed that the Parliament's flags be flown at half-mast today. They will again fly at half-mast on the day of Nelson Mandela's funeral. Following agreement with the South African honorary consul, we have made a book of condolence available for the public, members and staff to sign in the main hall.

14:10

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I will have great pleasure in moving the motion, which I know will be supported by every member in the Parliament.

In 1875, less than a mile from the Parliament, William Henley wrote a poem called "Invictus" while he was being treated for tuberculosis in the old Edinburgh royal infirmary. Several generations later, 6,000 miles from here, it spoke directly to Nelson Mandela when he was in prison on Robben Island:

"I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul ...

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul."

In recent days, the entire world has given thanks for the "unconquerable soul" of Nelson Mandela and it is therefore entirely fitting that this Parliament should mark his passing in this fashion. He was a towering political leader, the greatest statesman of his generation. He was an inspiration to countless millions around the world. This afternoon, I want to reflect briefly on three of the visits that he made to these islands.

I met President Mandela only once, but I almost met him as a young politician in 1990 when, along with, if I remember correctly, Gavin Strang, George Foulkes and Jim Sillars, I was inveigled into presenting the hands-off-Hibs petition in Downing Street. When we arrived at the steps in Downing Street, there was an extraordinary hullabaloo of cameras and television cameras, the like of which I had never seen. I had no idea that the hands-off-Hibs petition had generated such interest.

Then we were told that Nelson Mandela was meeting Margaret Thatcher and that the meeting had run over by well over an hour. The press were passing their time with the hands-off-Hibs petition.

In a moment of inspiration, I said to the assembled press corps that Nelson Mandela was supporting the hands-off-Hibs campaign. We loitered for a time hoping to meet the great man on his way out of Downing Street but, as we were ushered back up Downing Street, the press corps broke into a chant of "Free Mandela!", suggesting that after 27 years of incarceration on Robben Island he was now captured in Downing Street by Margaret Thatcher. When we got back to the gates at the entrance to Downing Street, the African National Congress supporters there started chanting "Hands off Hibs!" Both campaigns were successful.

The second visit was three years later, in 1993. As has been well documented over the past few days, and rightly so, Glasgow was the first city anywhere in the world to award Nelson Mandela freedom of the city. It was followed by many other cities around the globe and in Scotland, of course, by Aberdeen, Dundee and our capital city of Edinburgh, and by Midlothian Council. In 1982, Michael Kelly, the Lord Provost of Glasgow, launched a declaration arguing for Nelson Mandela's release. That declaration went on to gain support from 2,500 civic leaders from 56 countries around the world. Famously, in 1986, St George's Place in Glasgow, then home to the South African consulate, was renamed Nelson Mandela Place. In 1993, when Nelson Mandela was able to accept the freedom of Glasgow in person, he remembered and said how much that gesture had meant to him. He said:

"While we were physically denied our freedom in the country of our birth, a city 6,000 miles away, and as renowned as Glasgow, refused to accept the legitimacy of the apartheid system and declared us to be free."

The place that Glasgow in particular and Scotland more widely earned in Nelson Mandela's heart has been much commented on in recent days; it is something of which this nation can be justifiably proud.

The third visit that I want to reflect on was in 1996 when President Mandela give an address in Westminster Hall to both houses of the United Kingdom Parliament. It was a much anticipated address and he certainly did not disappoint. He said that unity and reconciliation would be the first founding stone of the new South Africa. Of course, unity and reconciliation shone through in all of Nelson Mandela's actions—in his refusal to look for vengeance, in his understanding that forgiveness was essential to South Africa's future and, perhaps most of all, in the empathy that he showed to his former oppressors. He invited his prison warder to his inauguration, he asked his prosecutor to lunch and he travelled to the home of Betsie Verwoerd, the widow of the South African president at the time of his own trial and imprisonment.

Those acts of grace, empathy and forgiveness helped to make South Africa's transition to democracy possible. They are the greatest examples of true statesmanship of our times. Perhaps the handshake today in the First National Bank stadium between the President of the United States and the President of Cuba is an indication that that empathy, forgiveness and reconciliation continues after death, in terms of the effect that Mandela is having.

At the end of his trial in 1964, Mandela made one of the most admired speeches of the last century. He said:

"I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Nelson Mandela did not die for that ideal. He lived for it, and he achieved it more successfully than anyone could possibly have imagined. In doing so, he provided an example to people across the planet. He encouraged us all to live up to our better natures, and he inspired us to continue to work for the day when, in the words that resounded around this Parliament when it was opened,

"Man to Man, the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that."

Today, this Parliament extends our condolences to the great man's family and to the people of South Africa. The world is much poorer for his passing, but much, much richer for his life.

I move,

That the Parliament records its sadness at the passing on 5 December 2013 of Nelson Mandela; celebrates the inspirational life of a prisoner who became president; recognises Nelson Mandela's role in the peaceful development of the modern South African nation and immense contribution to conflict resolution as a world statesman; celebrates his longstanding friendship with Scotland, and extends its deepest condolences and solidarity to Mr Mandela's family and the people of South Africa at this time.

14:16

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity on behalf of the Labour Party to support the motion of condolence on the passing of Nelson Mandela. I concur with everything that the First Minister said.

I am all too aware that, given the capacity of Nelson Mandela, his energy, compassion and courage, and the forgiveness embodied in him, this is a life so immense that words can barely capture the character of the man or do him justice.

As I was travelling through the centre of Glasgow today to get the train, I was reflecting on what I might say. I spotted flowers in abundance laid across the pavement, and I realised that they were there to mark the passing of Nelson Mandela. They were in the place, right at the very heart of Glasgow, that was named after him when he was given the freedom of the city.

I am proud that Glasgow was the first city in the world to convey this freedom upon a man who was imprisoned because of his belief in equality and justice—a belief for which he was prepared to die. I recognise that, as the First Minister said, other cities such as Aberdeen followed. It was, of course, more than a gesture. Mandela spoke of the impact of the news on those in jail. It was an act of solidarity that gave them succour and told them that the world outside supported them.

It was solidarity, but it was also a rebuke to the apartheid regime, both symbolically and in a practical way. In a perhaps typically Glaswegian approach, the creation of Nelson Mandela Place did not just involve renaming a street; of course, it was the street that housed the South African embassy, which meant that correspondence to the embassy had to be delivered in the name of the man who symbolised the world's abhorrence of the apartheid regime that it defended. Indeed, I recall that postal workers would not deliver correspondence to the embassy if it was not properly addressed, which led eventually to the embassy being forced to get a post office box number to avoid the problem. All of that, of course, highlighted the increasing absurdity and isolation of its position.

It took courage. There were those who spoke out and asked for action. It is important to reflect that the struggle against apartheid took leadership and the immense courage of those who were at the heart of the suffering, but it also took individual decisions to choose humanity, often in countries, such as Scotland, where there were family connections to South Africa. People acting in small ways right across Scotland and the United Kingdom led to international consequences. That involved people far beyond politicians, with Brian Filling, who we have seen this week, the churches, people of compassion and the trade unionists all coming together to reject the regime and its brutality.

There are many examples over the years of people choosing the world that they wanted and fighting for it—people such as Bob Hughes, who led the Anti-Apartheid Movement at a UK level for many years. Of course, there is a strong tradition of solidarity in Scotland.

Another example, which is perhaps not remembered so well, is the rectorial campaign at the University of Glasgow in 1962, which

transferred a student election into an election that had an international impact. Students across parties supported Albert Luthuli, who was elected in his absence—a man who was awarded the Nobel peace prize for his struggle against apartheid. He was prominent in the ANC and could not leave his country to take on the rectorial duties, but the message of solidarity, even at that time, ran very strong.

I am proud that our own Donald Dewar was part of that campaign and that a Luthuli scholarship still exists. Indeed, in the 1970s, a fellow student of mine on our politics course had come from South Africa to study because of the benefit of that scholarship. He was a bright young man who still could not vote in his own country and would not have a vote for many years to come.

There was solidarity and there was a campaign, but it was not a campaign that those involved believed could easily be won. We remembered Soweto and the death of Steve Biko. I vividly remember standing in protest with many others in 1979 outside the South African embassy, pleading for clemency for Solomon Mahlangu, who was to be executed, and the absolute sadness when we realised that international pleading had failed and he had been killed.

It seemed overwhelming and impossible that change might come. When it did and Nelson Mandela walked from jail tall, smiling, dignified and unbroken, how many across the world found hope again—a belief that change might be possible—because of that man and the individual decisions to boycott, support sanctions and challenge investments in South Africa? All of us could tell that that work could make a difference and that there was a point in politics and campaigning.

Surely the awe in which we hold him is magnified by the way in which he responded. He sought to heal his country and unify through peace and reconciliation. We look now and say how right that was, but it was not an easy option or route to take.

In the past few days, I am sure that many members have, like me, watched on television the lessons and message of Nelson Mandela. One image struck me like a physical pain. The truth and reconciliation process was being looked at. People spoke of their loss and suffering, confronted their tormentors, and their tormentors confronted their past. Archbishop Tutu had his head on a desk weeping, overwhelmed by the pain that truth and reconciliation bring.

The man whom we mourn today for his courage and towering ability was dignified, but not a man who stood on his dignity. With his humanity, warmth and smile, he spoke to us, and he was of

us. That makes his suffering over 27 years and his survival of it all the more remarkable.

I recall when Nelson Mandela came to Glasgow to receive the freedom of the city. He came to George Square, and I recall the joy when he addressed us and then could not resist moving to the music. The folk singer Ian Davison wrote a song that captures that moment and told us that Nelson Mandela was not an ordinary leader, but one who could dance, too. He wrote:

"We'd sung about him for years,
And there were speeches everywhere.
But I'll never forget the cheers,
When Mandela danced in the square."

We remember Nelson Mandela and seek to console and reach out to the family who lost him, who suffer most from his loss, and to the country that he so proudly served. He fought injustice when there seemed to be no chance of victory, but he fought, endured and won. When he won, he struggled as hard for peace as he had to defeat apartheid.

Nelson Mandela was the best of Africa. He was the best of humanity. He was the best of us all.

14:23

Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con): We view events, people and change through our own eyes, and our time and experiences are reflected in what we see. Nelson Mandela's journey from prisoner to president, which was watched around the world, spanned the decades, and the years of that journey are clear in this chamber.

The First Minister and, to a greater extent, the leader of the Labour Party have talked about their memories of the apartheid struggle and how it impacted on their political consciousness and the politics and world view of those around them, but my memories are, by necessity, only of what came after.

When The Specials charted with "Free Nelson Mandela", I was five. When the world watched the man walk free from prison, I was still at primary school. My political consciousness was not really formed until I was in my teens, and by then he was already president. By the time that I reached voting age, he was more than halfway through his term of office and had already indicated that he would step down. So I do not remember the struggle. For me and people of my age, it was something to be viewed almost in the rear-view mirror of modern history—as anachronistic and wrong as American segregation or communist rule across Europe.

My view of Mandela was of a man who was greatly wronged trying to heal his broken country and lead it from darkness into light. He said:

"No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

On leaving prison, with more reason to hate than anyone, Mandela showed people how to love and how to forgive. Mandela taught the world that reconciliation was more powerful than retribution. Despite terrible provocation he never answered racism with racism; instead, he chose to build a rainbow nation. He lived his philosophy every day and sometimes at great personal cost.

It was only a number of years after the fall of apartheid that I started more fully to appreciate that the transition that occurred from oppression to equality under the rule of law was not an inevitability and not simply the right and proper or even the obvious way that things could have happened by natural political evolution; rather it was as a consequence of one man's courage, conviction and conscience.

As a young reporter, I was invited to hear FW de Klerk speak at the University of St Andrews. It was only then, when I heard at first hand but from the opposite side the difficulties entrenched in their shared land, that I understood just how big a gap had been bridged: the pressure on Mandela from newly emancipated black South Africans to hit back at their oppressors for every wrong that they had endured; the moral courage required to stand up and show that there was another way—that truth could lead to reconciliation.

Mandela's words

"to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others"

describe the simplest of concepts but the hardest of tasks, especially given that he had to work with leaders of an establishment that had taken a third of his life and subjected a whole people.

Back in those dark days of strife, turmoil and challenge, many struggled to understand the potency of what was unfolding, not least those in my party. I am pleased that the opening of the Thatcher archive shows that Margaret Thatcher lobbied PW Botha for Mandela's release repeatedly and with vigour. She told him that such a move

"would have more impact than almost any single action you could undertake."

That knowledge and the subsequent acknowledgement of the unique greatness that was Nelson Mandela does not change the fact that many members of my party did not recognise apartheid for the grave violation of human dignity that it was and did not back the struggle to end it. That is a stain on our party, and those members have found themselves on the wrong side of

history. As someone who is a generation behind, it is almost incomprehensible to me how their judgment could have been so wrong.

Following his release, Nelson Mandela showed the world what could be achieved by offering a hand of friendship, shared endeavour, trust, forgiveness and love. His example gave hope not just to his country or his continent but to all people. Describing himself, he said:

"I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair."

That action—that refusal to give in to rancour and the persistence to keep putting one foot in front of the other and to guide his nation in its journey from division to unity—increased everybody's faith in humanity. All nations were represented at his memorial today because Mandela spoke not just for South Africa but to the world. His message of love, faith, forgiveness and human dignity made him a man not just for our time, but all time.

I support the motion.

14:28

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

Like so many others, I saw today's remarkable scenes from Johannesburg, with presidents and prime ministers, archbishops and cardinals, and village choirs and children from Soweto gathered in one place.

Nelson Mandela's death was a moment that we all knew would come but, for most of our lives, we could only have dreamed that he would be able to pass on peacefully, in freedom and with the thanks of the world around him.

The vocation of politics to play a part in a changing world grew with me in the 1980s. At that time, we had the iron curtain in Europe, the cold war across the world and apartheid in South Africa. Then there was that brief, remarkable time, when Nelson Mandela was out of prison and president of South Africa; Václav Havel was out of prison and president of the Czech Republic; and Lech Wałęsa was president of Poland—three things that had seemed impossible just five years earlier. I can only imagine the impact on those individuals and on the people who had campaigned for decades.

First among those campaigners in the context of the Scottish Parliament was David Steel, who was a member of the Anti-Apartheid Movement—he became the movement's president—from his first days in politics in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1986, when he was leader of the Liberal Party, he delivered the annual freedom speech at the

University of Cape Town. He has written about that in the past few days, saying that the South African foreign minister, Pik Botha, refused him permission to visit Nelson Mandela and asked why the west was so obsessed with "this chap". Within five years, he knew why. Nelson Mandela led a peaceful but fundamental change to democracy in South Africa.

We no longer hear the word "apartheid", with all the evil, cruelty, division and injustice that was its true meaning and at the core of that rotten system. The world is a better place for that. Apartheid South Africa was almost alone in the world. We boycotted its goods and shunned its businesses and spokespeople. We can now be proud of the South African embassy in Trafalgar Square in London, but back then people went there only to protest about injustice and to demand Mandela's freedom and an end to apartheid.

Mandela was a leader, a statesman and certainly an inspiration, but he suffered as a man. His daughter Makaziwe spoke yesterday, with something of her father's uplifting manner, about how her father sought not just political but spiritual freedom. She spoke about how Mandela thought that if he did not forgive others he would remain imprisoned.

Such spiritual freedom has been a feature of these days of mourning. There have been personal stories of kindness. I was particularly moved by what Gordon Brown said on the radio a few days ago. He said that after his son was born he received a call, at home, from Nelson Mandela. It was not a routine call of congratulation but a call from a father to a father; an intimate call, from a parent who had lost a son to another who had lost a daughter—a human touch.

As Makaziwe reminded us, to her dad was given the strength that enabled him to be the champion of forgiveness and reconciliation. Mandela did not want the hurt that he had suffered to be part of anyone else's life. Through his strength, he gave a future to the country of South Africa, which could so easily have failed. He also inspired reconciliation after other conflicts, not least in Northern Ireland, where many brave individuals have put their losses and tragedies behind them.

In captivity, Nelson Mandela inspired us with his struggle, and on his release he gave us hope across the world. Today, as we reflect on his life, he lifts us again, to work for a better world, where, as he said, we "close the circle" and

"herald the advent of a glorious summer of a partnership for freedom, peace, prosperity and friendship."

14:33

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Images that I saw at the age of 16, on a portable television that

had a wire coat hanger for an aerial, made me feel that I was living in an age of profound hope for change and a better world. The first image was of people dancing on top of the Berlin wall and taking chunks out of it. The second was of Nelson Mandela walking from the prison gates and into the global spotlight, dignified and unbroken, as Johann Lamont rightly said.

The image that we saw was not of the young man who had been imprisoned but of a man in his 70s. It is rare that a leader has emerged to govern at such an age without having been compromised by the lifetime of political deals behind him. Perhaps that, as much as his innate qualities, made him the embodiment of hope.

Therefore, I felt the dismay that I felt at hearing of Nelson Mandela's death last week not only because the man had died—all of us knew that that was expected; I felt it because he died in, and we still live in, a world in which hope is so hard to sustain. We look around and we still see the things that he fought against: poverty and inequality; war and conflict; prejudice and discrimination; and the exploitation of people and of the planet that we share. Brutality and injustice are still perpetrated in places such as Palestine, as they were in South Africa by the apartheid regime.

The tribute today in Johannesburg, which has been drenched in the rain as so many Glasgow demonstrations have been over the years, has been inspirational to see. It has reminded us of the capacity of human beings to progress and that, through a determination to do so, we can achieve, if not yet a decent world for all people, a better world.

Nelson Mandela has received praise from all quarters. He has been praised for the sense of justice that gave him the determination to oppose apartheid and economic injustice, and for having the humanity to forgive, in a spirit of truth and reconciliation, those who had perpetrated apartheid. Between those chapters, he also showed the courage to fight when the necessity became clear, and the resilience to survive and to show continued leadership through decades of brutal treatment and imprisonment at a time when so many around the world continued to treat the apartheid regime as a legitimate Government. Our respect and admiration for him should not be limited to his life as an elderly elder statesman. If he had not shown the courage to fight and the resilience to survive, would he have become the figure of such global significance that he became?

How can we learn from Nelson Mandela's story and continue to change the world for the better? Consigning war, poverty, racism, injustice and exploitation to history might seem impossible. We will need the sense of justice, the courage, the

resilience and the humanity that he showed if we are ever to be able to say, as he did:

"It always seems impossible until it's done."

[*Applause.*]

Human Rights

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-08544, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on human rights.

14:38

The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs (Roseanna Cunningham): Today marks the launch of “Scotland’s National Action Plan for Human Rights: 2013-2017”—Scotland’s first national action plan for human rights—and I am delighted to be here to debate it on international human rights day.

In talking about human rights, I could not let the debate pass without paying my own tribute to Nelson Mandela. With the passing of the first democratically elected President of South Africa, the world has lost a towering statesman and the outstanding political leader of his generation. His integrity, humanity and compassion were an inspiration to countless millions around the globe, and his influence transcended ideology, race and creed. He was an outstanding champion of universal human rights everywhere.

The creation of a modern inclusive Scotland that protects, respects and realises the universal human rights of all our citizens is a core ambition of this Government, which is why the Scottish Human Rights Commission’s efforts over the past 18 months to develop a national action plan for human rights have enjoyed our support and our active engagement.

Human rights are more than mere legal instruments; they are the fundamental freedoms and rights to which everyone is entitled. They are built on the universal values of dignity, equality, freedom, autonomy and respect that were first set down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 65 years ago, and which are now grounded in international law. It is fair to say that those fundamental principles resonate closely with Scotland’s own deeply held values of fairness, social justice and communitarian spirit.

Of course, the protection of human rights in Scotland and beyond depends on a clear legal framework. The European convention on human rights acts as a guide to the common European ideal in that regard. It has been with us for some time. Members may be aware that September marked the 60th anniversary of its coming into force across Europe—a Europe that was coming out of a horrendous war and which needed to establish and look forward to a far better future. There is also a broader framework of international human rights law, which consists of various

covenants and treaties to which Scotland is obliged to give positive effect.

Domestically, human rights are embedded within the Scotland Act 1998, while the Human Rights Act 1998 places further obligations upon all public bodies to respect human rights in the exercise of their functions. A strong legal framework is already in place. We start from the premise that human rights are a force for good and provide the foundation of a modern democratic society.

Ultimately, it is for nations to ensure that they secure human rights for their citizens through their institutions and public services. The devolved settlement ensures that the Scottish Government and Parliament are constitutionally bound to uphold human rights. That system is progressively in line with the European main stream. Of course, an independent Scotland could do more: human rights would be secured within a codified constitution and we could ensure that Scotland became a beacon of progressive opinion, in keeping with the importance that we have long attached to human dignity, equality and fairness, and the pursuit of social justice.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): I ask the minister for clarification on that point. Would an independent Scotland take the Human Rights Act 1998 and embed it in the Scottish constitution or would it be looking at a different set of rights?

Roseanna Cunningham: We would be looking at exactly the kinds of rights that most countries in Europe and the wider world regard as human rights. I do not want to disappoint Jenny Marra by suggesting that we are going to come up with a completely different set of human rights. We will work with, and build on, what we already have.

The First Minister has spoken of the potential to go even further than the ECHR does and to consider how we might embed economic, social and cultural rights within a constitution for Scotland. Those matters could be considered by a constitutional convention that would be set up after independence to prepare the permanent written constitution.

Such a move would accord with the Scottish Government’s existing approach—our abolition of tuition fees and legislation on homelessness are just two examples in which we have demonstrated our commitment—but it would also accord with the broader social democratic consensus in Scotland and our collective commitment to the common weal.

Those are interesting subjects for wider debate—a debate that would probably continue on into the development of any constitution.

Members will all be familiar with Eleanor Roosevelt's oft-quoted remarks that human rights begin

"In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world ... Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere."

It is key that we ensure that those fundamental legal principles translate into real life experiences, which accords with the Government's approach.

Across the Scottish Government's various responsibilities, we are working to realise the rights of the people of Scotland. I will give a few examples. We have introduced legislation to ensure that our criminal justice system has human rights at its heart. We are working to embed human rights in the integration of healthcare and social care. Our commitment to equality and non-discrimination is supported by the provision of over £20 million to realise the rights of communities. We are committed to progressing implementation of the "United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child", which includes the introduction of dedicated children's rights legislation for the first time. We are also taking action to mitigate the worst impacts of the United Kingdom Government's welfare reforms.

There has been a step change in Scotland's Government's approach to international engagement. The placing of human rights at the heart of our international framework, the championing of climate justice at home and abroad, our international development programme to support the aspirations of the developing world and a greater focus on engagement with the UN human rights system all demonstrate our commitment to acting as a modern responsible nation, and to supporting the realisation of human rights across the world and in the developing world.

Part of that role involves promoting Scotland's values internationally. The First Minister delivered a significant speech in China recently highlighting the launch of the national action plan and outlining the importance of participation in the UN human rights system—a speech that Amnesty International described as "an important first step".

In 2014, there will be a further opportunity to showcase our values, with the advent of the Commonwealth games and the eyes of the world being on Scotland. I am certain that the world will be left in no doubt about the values of Scotland and the Commonwealth games, or about our collective commitment to humanity, equality and destiny.

It will come as no surprise that I believe that with independence we would gain the levers to give further effect to our international human rights

obligations domestically, and that we would play a more active role as a responsible nation on the world stage. Scotland's first national action plan for human rights recognises that Scotland is at a particular stage in her journey and that there is more to be done, whether it be through building a rights-based culture, tackling the continued injustices in Scottish society or playing our part as a responsible actor globally.

The aspiration to create a country where everyone lives with human dignity is one that we can all support. Although we may have interesting debates about particular aspects of it, what we are all trying to achieve is a unified end.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Would the minister care to commend Mary Robinson—who is a former President of a small country: Ireland—for her significant contribution to human rights in respect of climate justice? That contribution shows what small countries can do.

Roseanna Cunningham: I am sure that Stewart Stevenson would expect me to endorse that, as I have met Mary Robinson and know the huge impact that she had internationally—not just on climate justice but on a wide range of issues. It shows that small countries are not constrained, nor always restrained, in what they are able to do, even in this huge global endeavour of pushing forwards human rights. Scotland's politics and history suggest that we could have that same commitment and push forward internationally in ways in which we are constrained at the moment because of the constitutional set-up. I know that members have differing views about that, but I would like to unleash our views on human rights on the world because I believe that we have as much to offer as Ireland did under President Mary Robinson.

The Scottish Government is fully committed to continued engagement with the first national action plan for human rights. I commend the Scottish Human Rights Commission for the work that it has put in—work that has been done not just in partnership with the Government but across a wide range of partnerships. A huge number of groups and organisations have been involved in developing the action plan and in giving us a blueprint for our work in the future. Whatever happens in 2014, the action plan will become an important part of Scotland's future and will help us to build a Scotland and a wider world where everyone can live with human dignity.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of Scotland's first *National Action Plan for Human Rights*; recognises it as a historic milestone in Scotland's progress toward a vision, shared across the whole of Scottish society, of ensuring that everyone in the country can live

with fundamental human dignity through the realisation of the universal and inalienable human rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and recognised in international law; commends the Scottish Human Rights Commission and all those from across the public, private and voluntary sectors, and from Scottish civil society at large who have contributed to the inclusive and cooperative process of developing this first *National Action Plan for Human Rights*, and looks forward to future opportunities over the lifetime of the plan to hear reports of the actions taken, and the progress achieved, in better realising the human rights of all in Scotland through realising the vision and achieving the outcomes mapped out in the plan.

14:48

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): It is particularly appropriate that we gather in the chamber today on international human rights day, and on a day that is marked by such a momentous occasion as the passing of Nelson Mandela and the events that are taking place in Soweto as we speak. I hope that today gives us some inspiration for action.

The Labour amendment proposes action on human rights that is not constrained by the current constitutional settlement. It pleads with the Government for action on a very important human rights abuse in our communities—female genital mutilation. However, what we are proposing is completely within the powers of this Parliament, this Government and this constitutional settlement. I hope that the minister will seriously consider our amendment.

I welcome the action plan for human rights, not least for its honesty about our often limited success in embedding human rights in the policies and laws that we pass in this chamber. There must always be that balance. From the Cadder judgment and the emergency legislation that followed, to the cuts to legal aid that left article 6 questions unanswered, to the fact that we find one victim of human trafficking every four days in our communities in Scotland, it is clear that sometimes we act adequately, but also that we sometimes fall short of what is expected of us. Our amendment asks the Government to take action in one of those areas. There are 3,000 women and girls living in Scotland today who are at risk of, or who have undergone, some of the most barbaric acts of torture and child abuse imaginable—in this country, against our current law.

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I thank Jenny Marra for taking an intervention. I know of her interest in the subject. When I was a member of the Equal Opportunities Committee we inquired into the matter of female genital mutilation and we went out and visited groups of women. Jenny Marra said that 3,000 women in Scotland are either in danger of going through or have gone through that horrific treatment. When members of the committee, including members of the Labour

Party, went out to visit those groups of women, we did not find 3,000 women. I would be interested to hear where Jenny Marra got the numbers from.

Jenny Marra: I got the numbers from the Minister for Public Health, Michael Matheson, who said just a few weeks ago in the chamber that 3,000 women are at risk in Scotland, but the numbers could be higher as a result of the 2011 census, which has just been published.

These women and girls have had their clitoris cut out of their vagina. They have had their labia sliced off with a knife or a razor and have been sewn up like rag dolls, only to have been unsewn again for sex or childbirth. These women and little girls suffer from chronic psychological and physical pain and can be left infertile. On occasion, they simply bleed to death.

Female genital mutilation is a crime in Scotland. It has been banned since the 1980s and further measures were put in place when this Parliament passed an act in 2005 making it illegal in Scots law for a Scottish resident to be taken to a third country to have it done. Despite three decades of criminal law against this torture and despite there being so many women at risk, there has been not one conviction and not one prosecution—not even one police report has ever been filed on female genital mutilation in Scotland.

Last month, persistent work by a dedicated Scottish journalist reported that Scotland is seen as a soft touch for genital mutilation. Agencies are saying that girls are being brought to Scotland from England and Europe, because it is a safe place for this torture to be carried out—it will be neither detected nor prosecuted in this country.

It is mutilation and it is torture. We should challenge the patriarchal myth that it is female circumcision—it is not. Circumcision is a medical procedure with clear health benefits. There are no such advantages to genital mutilation.

Earlier this year I asked the Minister for Public Health how many women and girls are at risk of genital mutilation in Scotland. He responded by telling me that the number who are at risk is likely to be “significantly higher” than 3,000 with new population figures from the 2011 census. I hope that that answers Sandra White’s question. We simply do not know how much higher the figure is. The Scottish Government has not tried to scope the extent of this human rights abuse in Scotland, much less to challenge it. Why? It is because it involves little girls, their genitals, race and where they come from. It involves challenging a culture in which many women who have undergone FGM themselves still believe that it is an acceptable practice. As we stand here today on international human rights day and recommit to advancing the rights of every person in Scotland, I do not believe

that our health professionals, our social services, our police and our charity workers can begin to undermine the practice of FGM while respecting those sensitivities.

Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (Ind):

I think that everybody will agree with what Jenny Marra said about the crime that she has described. However, forced marriages are still happening in Scotland. All kinds of things are happening. The motion really incorporates all of that, rather than singling something out. Jenny Marra might have brought her own debate on this one subject—and endorsed the generalisation of the minister's motion.

Jenny Marra: Presiding Officer, can I have a little more time to address that?

The Presiding Officer: I will tell you when you should stop.

Jenny Marra: Thank you.

We have lodged our amendment because I do not believe that FGM is specifically mentioned in the human rights strategy and, given recent press reports and concerns, it is something that needs to be looked at urgently, so I wanted to draw it to the minister's attention today. We already have the law on it, but we could easily put together an action plan to delve into our communities and prevent it.

Legislation is not enough: we have legislation and it is not working. The crime goes on because it is neither detected nor prosecuted. Are the right questions being asked in the situations where FGM can be detected, such as pregnancy screenings? I understand that they are not, and the public health minister was unable to assure me that they were when I asked him that in the chamber.

Nicola Sturgeon said this morning that human rights would be better in an independent Scotland. I am asking the Scottish National Party to make human rights more meaningful for the 3,000 women who are at risk of FGM today in our communities. Law is one thing, but action in our communities is what is needed to prevent FGM; that is what we are asking for. I hope that other parties will support the amendment that is in my name.

I move amendment S4M-08544.1, to insert at end:

“; notes the risk of female genital mutilation in Scotland; further notes that there have been no prosecutions for female genital mutilation despite the fact that 3,000 women in Scotland are at risk; further notes the Scottish Government's information that the number at risk is likely to be ‘significantly higher’ in light of new data in the 2011 census, and asks the Scottish Government to bring forward a strategy in the next six months to prevent female genital mutilation and enforce the existing legislation”.

14:56

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

I welcome the publication of the national action plan for human rights. There is certainly a strong element of consensus on the topic across the chamber and—despite what some might say—across the United Kingdom too. All major political parties are signed up to the importance of human rights. However, there may be disagreement as to the best way to enforce and interpret those rights.

It is no secret that the general public's opinion of human rights is not as positive as it could or, indeed, should be. A YouGov poll that was published last year found that 72 per cent of the public thought that

“human rights have become a charter for criminals and the undeserving.”

A similar poll that was published the year before that found that 75 per cent of respondents believed that the Human Rights Act 1998 was

“used too widely to create rights it was never intended to protect.”

That is not something that we should ignore or brush aside. It is in the interests of all those who champion fundamental human rights to bring the public on side and improve the image of human rights.

The perception that human rights is a charter for criminals is supported in some respects by the concentration on criminal justice issues that we often see here. Whether that perception is accurate or not, it persists in society and does not do the concept of human rights any good. It is one that we need to address here in Scotland and across the whole UK.

The UK has a proud record and tradition of human rights, which ensures that they are reflected in our cultural norms and institutions. We must remember that the ECHR was written in part by Conservatives from Britain in the 1950s as a response to Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. It included the fundamental principles of a democratic nation at a time when very few existed. However, as we have seen in many recent judgments, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has extended its remit by going into areas that have little to do with real human rights issues.

Human rights have become twisted by political correctness, with the catchphrase “I know my rights”. The European Court of Human Rights has been subject to lengthy delays and pries more and more into matters that should be routine issues for national courts and parliaments.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind):

About 15 years ago, the Northern Constabulary issued a book to young people about knowing

your rights when dealing with the police. Is it not a positive thing for people to know their rights?

Alex Johnstone: It is, of course, positive that that sort of thing happens, but we must remember that we have to take the public along with us. If we concentrate merely on telling people what their rights are without encouraging them to take responsibility for the circumstances in which they find themselves, human rights themselves are marginalised.

The action plan focuses on outcomes rather than the structures and processes that are in place to protect human rights. That new and interesting approach is welcome. For too long, discussion on human rights has centred on processes rather than outcomes.

However, we should not misrepresent the action plan. It includes consideration of services and calls for a human rights-based approach to delivery of services. That does not mean that everyone has an unlimited right to whatever public service they desire. For example, the UN human rights convention includes a right to paid holidays. It is hard to believe that the right to a paid holiday is an absolute and inalienable moral right, just as it is difficult to see that the right to respite care is a moral right. That does not mean that those rights and aspirations are not worthy or important, but we must recognise that they exist because of political pressure rather than because of some moral absolute.

As for housing and welfare, all parties agree that there is a need to increase the availability of affordable housing and to improve the quality of ageing social housing stock. Everyone has a right to be adequately housed, but that does not mean that everyone has the right to any type of housing that they wish. We live in a world of finite resources, so we must reconcile the rights of a family who are housed in overcrowded accommodation with the rights of an individual who lives in social housing that he or she is underoccupying. In that case, a human rights-based approach must surely favour the family who live in temporary or vastly overcrowded circumstances.

Equally, a human rights-based approach does not preclude welfare reform. Our welfare system will and must continue to protect the most vulnerable people in our society, and to offer a safety net of adequate housing and financial support.

As we move towards the introduction of universal credit, some landlords in Scotland—councils and housing associations—are opposing direct payment of housing benefit to claimants or tenants. However, one or two landlords are beginning to realise the importance of giving

individuals responsibility for their own decision making and financial wellbeing. I welcome the fact that that is beginning to change.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Conclude, please, Mr Johnstone.

Alex Johnstone: As we come to the end of the opening speeches, I look forward to an in-depth discussion about the action plan, and to summing up at the end of the debate.

15:03

Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP): It is right to have the debate on this, the 65th anniversary of the signing of “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. As the minister said, it is apposite to have it following the motion of condolence for Nelson Mandela. There is probably no finer embodiment of a person who values our fundamental human rights than him.

Human rights are often viewed in a silo and as a somewhat legalistic matter. As Alex Johnstone said, human rights are often viewed negatively—I am not sure whether his speech is likely to improve that perception, but perhaps we will leave that for another day. People often feel that human rights have little relevance to their lives, but that is not the case—they are important to us all.

The minister quoted Eleanor Roosevelt, who was fundamental to bringing into being “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. I will expand the quotation that was used. The minister started with:

“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world.”

Eleanor Roosevelt went on to say:

“Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination.”

In that context, the national action plan is very welcome.

We should probably also reflect on the fact that it is the first such action plan to be developed in the United Kingdom. Given that Parliament has a responsibility to ensure that our legislation is compatible with the ECHR, we must have a plan that sets out how we might achieve that. We must also set out in detail how we can get across to people the fact that human rights are relevant to them.

I have not been able to read the plan in detail, although I will do so, but it is clear from its methodology and what is planned that it is about trying to create a participative process that brings

human rights alive for people. It has been welcomed outside Parliament. Amnesty International tells us that it was asked to participate in the development of the plan, that it welcomes its publication and that it looks forward to working with others to implement the outcomes that it believes

“have the potential to deliver real and meaningful improvements to the lives of those who live and work in Scotland.”

I should declare an interest as a member of Amnesty International and in the fact that my wife works for the organisation and wrote the excellent briefing from which I have just quoted. The Scottish Human Rights Commission, the chair of which also chaired the team that pulled the plan together, talks about implementation of the plan being

“a process of culture change: unlocking the transformative potential of human rights in all areas of our lives.”

We might expect those organisations to welcome the plan, but we also received a number of briefings from other organisations. The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland talks about how human rights are important in the area that it works in. Inclusion Scotland talks about how human rights are important for it and how disabled people self-define independent living as the

“rights to practical assistance and support to participate in society and live an ordinary life.”

I was surprised to get a briefing from Community Land Scotland, which talks about the relevance of human rights to land ownership. The fact that those organisations are involved in thinking about how the national action plan can interact with their areas of interest demonstrates that the plan is not going to exist in the silo that I spoke of earlier.

I very much welcome the fact that the plan has been published today and look forward to its being put into practice in better embedding a human rights culture in Scotland. I hope that it is a subject to which we can return to debate in the chamber in the future.

15:07

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): It is particularly important that we are debating Scotland’s first human rights action plan on international human rights day and the day on which we remember Nelson Mandela—although I am sure that we will always remember him. He said:

“As long as women are bound by poverty and as long as they are looked down upon, human rights will lack substance.”

He was addressing the pervasive gender inequality and oppression that is one of the two

most widespread human rights abuses throughout the world. The other abuse that he referred to is poverty, and in other contexts he would have emphasised the poverty of men as well as the poverty of women.

Kofi Annan, the former secretary-general of the United Nations, narrowed it down further when he said that violence against women and girls is

“perhaps the most pervasive violation of human rights across the globe”.

I had intended to talk about that in the debate but, a few minutes before the debate, I discovered that we are belatedly going to have a debate on violence against women next week, so I will make just two summary points on that.

First, four significant points are made in the action plan about violence against women. It states that additional measures to tackle human trafficking are required and that legal protection is disparate, so we need to consider several issues around that. The plan says that domestic abuse courts

“should be replicated, with appropriate support”;

that is an important recommendation. It also reflects on concerns about access to legal aid for those seeking remedies for domestic abuse. That is an important part of the action plan.

Secondly, I briefly back up what Jenny Marra said. She has been a passionate and empathetic campaigner on the issue of female genital mutilation, as on other issues, and she was quite right to highlight the omission of that issue from the plan. It emphasises a more general point about human rights. There has been no greater supporter of multiculturalism than me when multiculturalism has been under attack from many people in the UK, but we should remember that human rights always trump multiculturalism. Even if female genital mutilation or some other human rights abuse is accepted in some cultures, that does not make it right. We must always remember that human rights come first.

I mentioned poverty. Article 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family”,

although it should say “himself or herself”. Interestingly, the ECHR does not include a specific right to a minimum standard of living, which might be—actually, I am sure that it is—a weakness of that convention. I am glad that the action plan has interesting actions and recommendations on that issue, including on a human rights action group on standard of living, which will involve the Scottish Trades Union Congress and others. That is an important development. There are lots of other interesting suggestions, such as that on a human

rights-based approach to taxation. I look forward to the conclusions on that.

I have one minute to go in my speech, and I have a lot to cover. Health and social care has come up in the context of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Bill. It is good to see a human rights approach being recommended on that, particularly the idea of independent living being a basic human right for disabled people. There is an interesting reference to health inequalities being seen through the human rights lens, which is another fruitful angle.

I have 30 seconds left. The tricky area is that of human rights and justice issues. Of course we need more emphasis on victims, and we will come back to that issue on Thursday, but the accused has rights, too. I welcome the fact that reforms had to be introduced as a result of the Cadder case. Alex Johnstone mentioned the most difficult area, which is the human rights of people in prison. They rightly have certain rights taken away, but they also have certain rights that should be preserved. We need more debate and discussion on that, but it is not an argument for abolishing the Human Rights Act 1998. It is important—this is my final sentence—that fundamental human rights are embedded in law, but we must act on them, and I hope that the action plan will help us to do that.

15:11

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): I join colleagues in celebrating international human rights day and in welcoming the publication of Scotland's national action plan on human rights. I pay tribute to all those who contributed to the new plan.

We know that there is a fairly strong legal and institutional framework that is dedicated to enshrining and protecting our human rights, but the action plan is significant, because it seeks to build on those foundations by making human rights more relevant and meaningful to people through a series of tangible evidence-based steps and by bringing human rights into daily domestic life. The plan reminds us that human rights define the way in which we are treated and determine our opportunities and the extent to which we are free. It helps to cut through the dangerous perception that human rights are abstract or immaterial, that they are an obstruction to justice or that they should not necessarily be universal.

In identifying the areas in which human rights can be better protected and how that can be achieved, the plan poses challenges and opportunities. In the brief time that I have, I will focus on a number of those. The document challenges the Scottish Government to improve conditions of detention and highlights problems

with overcrowding, access to mental health services and vocational and educational opportunities. It also presses on the need to implement the recommendations of the commission on women offenders. Those are all issues that I have spoken about in the chamber and which must be considered a priority.

Elsewhere, the plan presents an opportunity to improve the quality of care for vulnerable and older people so that they are not only treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve, but empowered to remain autonomous—as far as possible—and supported to realise their rights through personalised provision.

The plan challenges us to promote a
“consistent understanding and respect for human rights”

in mental health care and treatment. Indeed, it highlights the need to reconsider existing approaches to

“restraint, seclusion, involuntary treatment, and informal detention.”

Again, I whole-heartedly welcome that proposition.

I acknowledge the work of one of my constituents, W Hunter Watson, who has worked tirelessly to highlight the plight of mental health patients in Scotland. Earlier today, he petitioned the Parliament on the need to reform the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 to protect patients' human rights. In particular, the focus is on the need to end the totally objectionable enforcement of electroconvulsive therapy on patients who resist or object to that treatment.

The plan notes that we have a responsibility to create a better world through respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights internationally. It recognises that Scotland's obligations

“do not stop at its borders”

and that such considerations must be at the heart of the Government's international framework and bilateral engagements. Our values cannot be traded away.

The action plan is not a wish list; rather, it should provide stimulus to further embed human rights in the way that we do things, from the first legislative proposals to the delivery of services and the subsequent monitoring processes.

Before concluding, Presiding Officer, I agree with Jean Urquhart that Jenny's amendment would have been better dealt with in a debate of its own, but I nevertheless support her amendment.

Parliament must act as a champion for the action plan and I hope that it will have regular

opportunities to consider its progress. That will be essential.

Earlier today, the Parliament celebrated and reflected on the life of Nelson Mandela. It therefore seems entirely apt to finish by recalling that he once said:

"To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity."

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members to use full names when they are referring to colleagues.

15:15

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): First, I congratulate the Scottish Human Rights Commission on the publication of its national action plan. It is significant that it had Scottish Government support and active participation; that sends a clear signal. The plan represents four years of hard labour for the SHRC and it has been fruitful. The purpose of the plan is:

"To focus and coordinate action by public, private, voluntary bodies and individuals to achieve human dignity for all through the realisation of internationally recognised human rights."

For me, it is important that people understand and can affirm human rights, and a requirement for that understanding is education. As I said in my intervention, I see no threat in people understanding their human rights fully. In the longer term, problems will arise if people do not know their rights. If the national action plan is properly implemented, people should be pushing at an open door with authority to ensure that their rights are being respected.

We cannot say often enough that those rights are dignity, equality, freedom, autonomy and respect. Indeed, the PANEL—participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment and legality—acronym has participation as a key element and there are opportunities with things such as consultative budgets and, as members have alluded to, the opportunity to participate in the compilation of our constitution, which has adopted a rights-based approach.

Accountability is the next element, and the Parliament has been criticised for not having a human rights committee and not appearing to address human rights issues overtly when we know that they are being addressed. Perhaps we need to be a bit more explicit about that.

Non-discrimination is the third PANEL element. We all have interests in particular areas. Ms Marra is genuinely interested in and concerned about the issue of female genital mutilation, and who would not be? Others, like myself, are interested in Gypsy Travellers, Roma, and blacklisting, all of

which are important aspects that we have to pick up on.

Empowerment is very important, and we need to be alert to the role that advocacy plays in that, and how often it is the first thing that local authorities cut in these pressing times.

The national action plan will be relevant regardless of the outcome of the referendum, although I note that the report says that progress has been made since devolution, and it identifies the next steps. The minister rightly points out that we have a strong legal framework.

Perhaps surprisingly, Alex Johnstone referred to the deserving and undeserving as viewed in rights. He referred to one poll and I will refer to another. A recent Trades Union Congress poll brought out the many misconceptions about welfare and benefits spending. It found that

"On average people think that 41 per cent of the entire welfare budget goes on benefits to unemployed people, while the true figure is 3 per cent."

That clearly has some resonance in the debate that we are having today.

It is interesting that the UK Government's position should be brought up in this debate. I would have thought that Mr Johnstone would keep quiet about that because, just as Mr Cameron talks about slaying the health and safety monster, he takes a very similar approach to human rights, and there is no place for that. We will have an opportunity to address that in the coming months.

Health and social care has been touched on, and I think that independent living is a clear issue, as is the fact that the ever-present dignity and acknowledgement of the individual should be key to any care package.

The minister is right to talk about the Government's commitment to abolishing homelessness, and that is very positive, but it has to be delivered in practice. However, the challenges remain for people such as prisoners who are released without a home to go to and who have difficulty in accessing medical treatment because general practitioners will not treat certain individuals who have addiction issues.

The action plan has a vision of a Scotland in which everyone is able to live with human dignity, and I do not believe that anyone will dissent from that.

15:19

Alex Johnstone: It should be made clear that in what has been an interesting if short debate we will not have time to raise a number of points. Nevertheless, as John Finnie pointed out, too many of us are willing to talk about human rights

as a series of absolutes while failing to understand the complexities of how individuals' rights interact with each other. It is, for example, legitimate to ask how we reconcile the absolute rights of a victim with those of an assailant, and the fact is that we need to work very hard on human rights to ensure that we achieve some equality and justice.

However, the usual prejudiced view that the Conservative Party does not support human rights has been aired in this debate. In fact, that could not be further from the truth. I am pleased to tell the chamber that in the new year the Conservatives will publish a document setting out exactly how they will replace the Human Rights Act 1998, which was introduced by Labour, and later in the year the party will publish a draft bill containing the legal detail of exactly how those changes will take effect. Therefore, it is not correct to say that the Conservatives want to scrap the 1998 act; instead, my party—correctly, in my view—is looking at reforming legislation to focus human rights on those who deserve and require protection. Indeed, members who have spoken in the debate have dealt at some length with the areas in which protection is required.

Jenny Marra has thrown some elements of the Parliament into confusion with her amendment, which, although out of place in the broader context, addresses a key subject that, I believe, the Equal Opportunities Committee will examine again as part of its current work programme. Ms Marra herself mentioned a recent journalistic inquiry that brought to light a risk that attitudes towards female genital mutilation in Scotland might be causing the crime to become more common here. However, as members have pointed out, a similar priority could be given to a whole list of other areas including human trafficking, domestic abuse and the series of mental health issues that Alison McInnes highlighted in her speech.

I as a Conservative and my Conservative group in the Parliament give our full commitment to furthering the aims and objectives of human rights legislation as implemented in Scotland. Where we might differ from the Government is in our belief that such advances can be taken forward under the UK as a strong and robust political unit and I see no advantage to their being taken forward in an independent Scotland on its own.

At decision time, we will support the Government in the publication of the document and the broad principles that lie behind it. To be honest, I do not know whether we will be able to vote for Jenny Marra's amendment but I certainly hope that the Parliament and its committees will be able to take forward the issue and reach some conclusion on it and that we can debate it in greater detail at some later point.

15:23

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab): I am pleased to close for Scottish Labour in this short but important debate on Scotland's national action plan for human rights and concur with members' comments about the appropriateness of its following the tributes to Nelson Mandela, who did so much to fight for human rights and, later on in his life, the rights of children.

I welcome the opportunity that is provided by the debate to promote human rights in a positive way. Alex Johnstone referred to the public perception of human rights; unfortunately, some right-wing politicians and certain sections of the UK media that support them have promulgated the view that human rights are all about the rights of bad people. Some have actually said that our obligation should be abandoned; indeed, I thought that Theresa May herself had suggested as much.

It is also unfortunate that media attention on human rights focused this weekend on those of a convicted criminal—in this case, a murderer's claim to conjugal rights—and his successful application for legal aid instead of, on this day in particular, reflecting on why the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. That arose because of the horrendous abuse on the grounds of religion, race, nationality and sexual orientation that had taken place in Nazi Germany—a country not unlike Britain; a western country, like us, but one in which human rights were abandoned—and the recognition that it was necessary to provide globally recognised definitions of the rights to which all human beings are entitled.

The development of Scotland's national action plan is in line with the United Nations' recommendation that national action plans should be developed and adopted by each country. The recommendations were made as part of the Vienna declaration and programme of action some 20 years ago. Although it is good that Scotland is the first country in the United Kingdom to have developed a national action plan, we are all a little bit behind the game in taking 20 years to do that. However, I congratulate the SHRC for facilitating the process of development of the plan. It was developed through the participation of a range of organisations, which identified three outcomes: understanding and empowerment of individuals to claim their rights; tackling injustice and improving lives; and delivering on our international obligations.

I was disappointed with the minister's contribution in her opening speech, because she seemed to use it to talk about the constitutional arrangements within the United Kingdom. As John Finnie said, the relevance of the national action

plan is not about whether people vote yes next year. In fact, I felt that the minister's speech was self-congratulatory in tone in talking about the wonderful legislation that we have passed in this Parliament. It was recognised by those who developed SNAP that the plan was not all about legislation. We pass good legislation in the Scottish Parliament, but when it comes to translating that into embedding human rights in the provision of public services and individuals' understanding their rights, that is where we do not do so well. Just talking about what a wonderful job the Government is doing was not taking the opportunity of the debate to discuss what is actually in the plan.

The amendment makes a practical suggestion regarding how we can protect today the rights of a group of women in Scotland, but Malcolm Chisholm referred to a load of other actions that need to be taken regarding the rights of women and girls. I am sure that some of those actions will be discussed next week.

The implementation of SNAP is a process of cultural change, making respect for human dignity central to public services and applying a person-centred approach. That approach in service delivery is not new, because there are already developments in health and social care services, such as personalisation, which seek to involve clients in the design of the services that they receive and to allow them to choose and have control of the delivery of the services. However, this is an opportunity to think about the extension of the principle into other areas of public services.

As I said, the public perception seems to be that human rights is about protecting criminals. However, it is obvious that victims also have human rights, and a person-centred approach has implications for our justice system. We will discuss some of that in the context of the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Bill later this week. However, a person-centred human rights approach has implications for not just the court system but the system of policing in Scotland. Some of those will need to be reflected on as we go forward.

Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland made the point in its briefing that the human rights approach has important implications for the delivery of health and social care. People with disabilities and long-term conditions should be treated as human beings rather than just as people who suffer from a condition that requires health and social care interventions; and the outcomes that they desire for themselves must be taken into account when services are designed. Alison McInnes made an important point about the rights of mental health patients.

Jamie Hepburn referred to Community Land Scotland. I was quite interested in its observation that a human rights-based approach has implications for land reform and the community right to buy, in protecting not just the human rights of the landowner but the rights of communities to have access to land and to create a sustainable future for themselves.

I will touch very briefly on human rights for workers. My colleague Neil Findlay would have liked to take part in the debate to talk about blacklisting. There was not time for that, but blacklisting is a human rights abuse in that workers have been denied employment because of their political views or trade union activity, or because they have raised health and safety concerns.

We need to take ownership of the progress of SNAP and we need to stand up to those voices that portray human rights as a negative issue. We also need to be proactive in discussing the situation of the rights of convicted criminals. We must have a mature and sensible debate about that rather than just react to things that the media brings to us.

Overall, I welcome the publication of SNAP, which has vital implications for not just how we legislate but, crucially, how public services are designed. Most important of all, perhaps, is that for the approach to be successful it will require cultural change.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call Roseanna Cunningham to respond to the debate, I advise members that this afternoon's debates are on a follow-on basis. I remind members who wish to participate in the next debate that they should be in the chamber for the opening speeches. Minister, you have eight minutes.

15:30

Roseanna Cunningham: It is amazing how wide a variety of views can be encompassed even in a short debate such as this. Practically all the speeches have been constructive in addressing the issue, even if they do not all come from exactly the same starting point.

I will shortly meet the Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights, Nils Muižnieks—I hope that that is the correct pronunciation—who is visiting the Parliament today. Indeed, he might be in the public gallery somewhere. I recall meeting him in Strasbourg last year, and I was struck by his deep commitment to human rights and by his positive impression of Scotland's approach in this area.

Earlier today, I spoke about the Scottish Government's strong commitment to human rights.

I am sorry that Jenny Marra found that objectionable in some way. I spoke about what we are doing to make rights a reality for all and about our future aspirations in this field. I will conclude today's debate by linking that further to Scotland's first national action plan for human rights.

I join other members who have spoken today in commending the Scottish Human Rights Commission for its achievements. The SHRC is Scotland's A-rated national human rights institution. It is statutorily independent of Government and Parliament. The commission has a key role in promoting and protecting the human rights of everyone in Scotland. I do not know whether everyone here is aware of how widely well regarded the SHRC is across the whole of Europe. It is considered to be an extraordinarily important institution, and it is held in great regard across Europe. We need to commend the commission for its work in getting to that position.

Jenny Marra: Will the minister commit to voting tonight for a strategy on female genital mutilation?

Roseanna Cunningham: I will come to the Labour amendment later in my speech.

The Government has enjoyed a productive, constructive relationship with the commission on a wide range of issues. The commission's approach has been very much in evidence in the development of the plan. The SHRC team is small but perfectly formed, and their intelligence and commitment are impressive.

It is worth noting that a national action plan for human rights has been developed not simply because the Scottish Human Rights Commission, or indeed the Scottish Government, thought that it was a good idea. Twenty years ago at the world conference on human rights in Vienna, the international community adopted a declaration on human rights that reaffirmed many core principles. One of the recommendations was for each state to

"consider the desirability of drawing up a national action plan identifying steps whereby that State would improve the promotion and protection of human rights."

Since then, a number of states have done so—Sweden, Finland and New Zealand are three fine examples. I am delighted that Scotland is following suit, and I very much hope that our approach will act as a model of best practice for others to follow. Scotland is joining a group of progressive nations across the world in seeking not to assume, but to assure, human rights.

In building a coalition of partners who share its vision of a Scotland where everyone lives with fundamental human dignity, the Scottish Human Rights Commission has been successful in facilitating a genuine co-production effort. I emphasise that, although the plan is very much the SHRC's creation—and it should take the credit

for that—the commission has been open and inclusive in involving a range of partners from all quarters in shaping the plan. It is far from being a traditional action plan; it is much more a programme of action constructed around a shared vision, with a closely aligned set of outcomes. The sharing of that vision goes beyond government; it goes right across society.

The plan has been explicitly linked to the Scottish Government's national outcomes framework, which has attracted international attention and praise. It aspires to create an environment in which people better understand rights and organisations are able to apply them. That is linked to the Scottish Government's ambition to ensure that our public services are high quality and responsive to need.

Improving lives through tackling injustice and exclusion in our society accords strongly with the priority that the Scottish Government has placed on tackling the significant inequalities in Scotland—and there are indeed significant inequalities in Scotland. The more that Scotland gives effect to our international obligations, the more we can take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity.

I turn briefly to the Labour amendment. Work to tackle female genital mutilation, which is a form of violence against women, will be included in Scotland's national strategy to tackle violence against women. That strategy is being developed in collaboration with public and voluntary sector partners and will be the first of its kind in Scotland. It will be published in the summer of 2014 following a consultation in the new year. I expect that all members in the chamber will wish to contribute to that consultation and take part in the discussions around it.

However, I wish that the Labour Party had allowed the motion simply to proceed on the basis of its congratulating the Scottish Human Rights Commission and what it says about Scotland's first national action plan. For those reasons, I cannot find any reason to support the amendment.

Malcolm Chisholm: I am very sorry to hear what the minister is saying. Does she understand that Jenny Marra's addendum accepts all the wording of the minister's motion, but that she lodged the amendment because the serious crime in question was not included in the action plan, there have been no prosecutions, and there is a perception that it is easier to commit that horrendous crime in Scotland than elsewhere in the United Kingdom? As the minister says that there will be a strategy, I can see no reasonable or legitimate reason why she should not support the amendment.

Roseanna Cunningham: I normally find myself broadly in agreement with Malcolm Chisholm, but we could have had an entire catalogue of amendments on individual subjects today. I am simply saying that I think that the motion should be passed in its entirety, as it is presented to members.

Jamie Hepburn made a very good point, which was perhaps a counterpoint to Alex Johnstone's speech, in reminding us that many people still do not see human rights as applying to them at all. The debate can sound very high flown, and it is often wrapped up in legalese. An important outcome of the national action plan will be to relate those ideas to the real existences of ordinary people where they live.

Malcolm Chisholm, who was interesting, as always—even if I do not always agree with him—flagged up some issues that he thought were missing from the ECHR. That was an interesting perspective that I had not considered before. I think that he talked about issues around the standard of living. Perhaps that highlights how perceptions change over the years, even in an area that we think of as somehow inalienable.

Alison McInnes highlighted the human rights issues that surround mental health decisions and outcomes. That is also a significant area of current concern. She was right to flag up that human rights issues apply in that area as they do everywhere else.

As befits the convener of the cross-party group on human rights, John Finnie outlined the huge number of specific areas to which human rights could apply. Certainly, individuals and communities understanding their rights and duty bearers understanding how to apply them, all set in the context of an international human rights framework, are critical to creating empowered communities.

I am conscious that I am running out of time, so I will move quickly towards the end of my speech. My colleague Stewart Stevenson mentioned Mary Robinson. She has been quoted as saying:

"Every human has rights. What does it mean? It means simply that rights belong to people, not Governments. That the Universal Declaration on Human Rights gave a birthright to every child born in the world".

That usefully encapsulates the challenge before us, not just for Christmas or for Governments but for everybody everywhere.

I invite members to support the motion.

Fisheries Negotiations

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-08540, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the end-year fisheries negotiations.

15:39

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): We meet after what has been another eventful year for our important fishing industry.

We started this year by breathing a sigh of relief after the negotiations in December 2012, having avoided a further cut in the number of days at sea allowed to our vessels and having protected our vital North Sea cod quota. That soon gave way to increasing anxiety over the persistent and worrying scarcity of prawns in our waters, which lasted throughout the first half of the year.

We acted to bring the fleet through those tough times, with a jointly agreed action plan worth £6 million launched in the middle of the year. That included a £3 million hardship fund to help vessels that were suffering exceptional economic distress to get through an acutely bad patch, endured as a result of the dramatic fall in prawn catches that, as we all recall, was in the headlines.

Our fishermen are among the most resilient in the world. I am glad to say that, more recently, prawn catches have bounced back and catches of white fish have held up very well. Indeed, the industry's dynamism was on display only last week when we saw more than 28,000 boxes of fish landed in Peterhead alone in a single week, which is one of the highest catches ever recorded in the past decade. In addition, Shetland has set—even though we have yet to reach the end of the year—a new annual record for the number of boxes of fish sold, with the figure heading towards 275,000 boxes for the year, which eclipses the previous high set in 2008 of more than 260,000 boxes. That shows how our fishermen continue to brave the elements to bring Scotland's superb seafood ashore and help to feed not only Scots but populations around the world.

Scottish seafood cannot always compete on volume but, with its strong emphasis on provenance and sustainability, it produces the utmost quality, which overseas markets crave. That is why we are striving to expand opportunities overseas, driving up the value of Scottish produce and maximising the income for all those involved—from net to plate.

We are also supporting the industry closer to home. I am delighted to announce the latest package of awards under the European Fisheries

Fund. This is the 11th round of awards under the EFF, supporting some 45 new projects with more than £3.1 million-worth of support, enabling investment of more than £11 million. Since the launch of the EFF in 2008, it has delivered an impressive £76 million of awards and £170 million of investment in Scotland.

We will make the most of the fund. However, Scotland receives only £46 million under the EFF, which equates to only 40 per cent of the funding available to the United Kingdom. That does not reflect the size of our fishing industry and pales into insignificance compared with the funding in excess of £100 million given to countries such as Lithuania and Denmark.

The industry deserves the support of the Parliament and the Government. As I stand here at the end of another topsy-turvy year—at times distressing and challenging; at times buoyant—I am struck by the constant uncertainty and the unpredictable ups and downs of this great industry. I am also struck by its steady resilience and its unerring spirit in the face of those challenges. Unflinching support for our fishermen is foremost in my mind as we approach the vital first round of negotiations in Brussels next week.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): Will the cabinet secretary update the Parliament on the status of the European Union-Norway talks?

Richard Lochhead: Yes. I will come on to that very important point on the shared stocks between the EU and Norway if the member will just hold on.

I mentioned that the first round of negotiations will take place next week. As Tavish Scott alludes to, we will decide at those talks only the quotas for those stocks wholly within the EU's waters. To answer his point, the negotiations on the North Sea stocks shared between the EU and Norway, such as cod, haddock, whiting and saithe, have been postponed until a second round of talks that will take place early next year. That is not the first time that such delays have happened, but it is the situation that we will again face next year. All is still to play for.

Across many of those stocks, the situation this year, as often before, will be challenging. Unlike last year, the scientific advice for a number of stocks is for reductions in some quotas. That is a reflection not of the conservation efforts of our fishermen but of a lack of juvenile fish coming through, which is simply the way of things when dealing with a biological resource. However, within those circumstances, I am determined to negotiate the best possible deal for Scotland's fishermen and their communities this month and to meet the many challenges coming down the line in the policy landscape in the months and years ahead.

On that note, just a few hours ago the final part of the common fisheries policy reform process was completed, when the European Parliament took its final vote. The new CFP will become law on 1 January 2014. There will be a ban on discards in the pelagic fisheries in 2016, and a ban on discards for all species by 2019. I am sure that all members are aware that that will transform fishing practices in our waters. The industry and other sectors who are involved are very much aware of that.

At last, an end to the wasteful practice of throwing dead fish back into the sea is in sight, and decision making can be brought closer to home, as we move away from the dreadful one-size-fits-all, top-down approach of the old CFP, which has been so damaging. I hope that decisions and plans will be taken forward on a more regional basis and will deliver more sensible and practical proposals for our industry.

As usual, our work will be cut out for us in the December talks as we fight to protect Scotland's position. We will be guided, as ever, by three fundamental principles; first, our approach will be guided by the science on stocks and sustainability; secondly, we will protect the social and economic wellbeing of our industry and the communities who depend on it; and, thirdly, we will act in line with our commitment to achieve discard-free fisheries. Those principles are underpinned by our conviction that conservation and stability of stocks will deliver long-term economic health for the whole industry, onshore and offshore. That is our key message.

With a view to achieving all that, I have set key objectives for our negotiations. First, we need to minimise the burdens of the deeply flawed cod recovery plan. I will again demand a freeze in the days at sea that are allocated to Scotland. I will ask the European Commission to ensure that no more automatic cuts are permitted—otherwise our fleet simply will not have enough time at sea to catch its quotas.

Another aim is to secure a cod quota that reflects reality. In the North Sea, cod mortality is at its lowest since assessments started in 1963. Our fishers are seeing the stock in ever-greater numbers, and their findings are backed up by scientists. If we were slavishly to follow the long-term management plan for North Sea cod, which was set in stone a few years ago, we would have to agree to a 9 per cent reduction in the North Sea cod catch, which seems perverse given the stock's increasing abundance year on year and the certainty that a quota reduction will simply serve to increase discards, which is the exact opposite of one of our key objectives and indeed of one of the European Commission's supposed key objectives. The science shows that a modest increase in the

allowable catch for North Sea cod will allow the stock to continue to grow in abundance and deliver a sustainable fishery for the long term. That is why I have pressed for the UK to make a moderate increase in the North Sea cod quota a top priority at next week's negotiations.

Another key priority is to secure increased flexibility in where the fleet can catch its valuable monkfish quota, which will be vital in allowing our vessels to fish more efficiently and sustainably. Currently we have only 5 per cent flexibility; in my view we need at least 20 per cent if we are to make a genuine difference to how the fishery is conducted. I will work to ensure that the UK vigorously sticks to such a position throughout the talks, because it is important for a number of our fishermen.

In other areas, we need to begin the transition to a discard ban. If we are to run trials in which vessels can start to land all that they catch, which is the fundamental point of a discard ban, we need the Commission to provide fishermen with additional quota to cover the fish that they are currently forced to discard. The Commission must give us the tools to get on with the job of putting in place a sensible and practicable discard ban in our waters.

On the west coast fishery, in the talks next week I want to maximise our valuable hake opportunities and to secure the flexibility that I mentioned in relation to catching monkfish. We welcome the recent advice on increases in the Rockall haddock fishery, which is important to the west coast. In addition, we have worked hard over the past year to put in place rigorous cod avoidance measures on the west coast, to conserve stock and get it on the road to recovery.

I will press the Commission to ensure that our fishermen have the means and the flexibility to make the transition to a discard ban, identifying the issues and the solutions. Fishermen will clearly need additional quota if that is to happen. If Brussels refuses that, it will quite simply be planning for failure of the discard ban. We cannot allow that to happen. That is why, in negotiations earlier this year, I fought hard for regionalisation to be at the heart of the reformed common fisheries policy. We cannot have an effective discard ban unless the principle of regionalisation is adhered to and decisions are taken closer to home.

I am pleased to say that the process is coming to life. Regional groups for the North Sea and our western waters were swiftly established and regional plans for delivering on the discard ban are beginning to take shape. Having pushed for decentralisation from Brussels, I am determined that the Commission should provide the regions with the tools that they require if they are to make discards a thing of the past.

We always seem to face stiff challenges and difficult decisions at the end-of-year fisheries negotiations, but what those negotiations are all about—what they will mean in the real world for our fishermen and the women who work in the industry, what they can fish, how much they can catch, where they can catch it, how much time they will have at sea to catch it and all the consequences for the onshore sector—is never out of our minds.

I will ensure that Scotland's priorities are uppermost in the minds of the UK ministers, and we will do our utmost to fight for Scotland's interests right across the board. Our aim throughout the negotiations will be to build and maintain a strong platform for our industry offshore and onshore—a platform that will do justice to the resilience and ingenuity that are shown by our fishermen, and which will allow them to continue to thrive in 2014, by putting premium Scottish seafood on dining tables throughout Scotland and around the globe.

I move,

That the Parliament supports the Scottish Government in its efforts to achieve the best possible outcome for Scotland across the range of ongoing annual negotiations and agrees that the negotiated settlements must have at their heart the interests of Scotland's fishermen and coastal communities while seeking to ensure the sustainable use of Scotland's marine environment and its natural resources.

15:50

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I welcome today's debate in advance of the end-of-year fishing negotiations. It gives us the opportunity to speak in the interests of Scottish fishing and to demonstrate the lead that Scotland is taking in delivering sustainable fisheries. Of course there is much more progress to be made, but the level of co-operation between the fishing sector and environmental organisations such as RSPB Scotland and WWF is encouraging.

Scotland's fishing sector employs in the region of 5,000 people in the catching sector and supports key employment in supporting sectors. The fish processing sector can be vulnerable and although our produce is sent all around the world, we could do more to support our sector at home by increasing seafood consumption. Despite being an island, we are not big consumers of our produce and there could be greater promotion of seafood. This year, I supported Sainsbury's switch the fish campaign to promote more sustainable consumer choices, and it is encouraging to see the extent to which our supermarkets support seafood.

However, more can be done. For example, I would like greater emphasis to be placed on seafood on school menus. The health benefits of

eating fish are clear and more could be done to promote it as an affordable and sustainable part of the Scottish diet. Our coastline and seas produce world-class produce, and we have a responsibility to ensure that there is a legacy for future generations.

The industry has a significant base in Scotland but operates throughout the UK, with a common regulatory system and a UK network of harbours and fish processors. It is also an industry in which onshore operations and exports are dependent on Europe. The resource is shared, and the end-of-year negotiations are key to achieving sustainable management.

The lack of a resolution to the continuing difficulty with north-east Atlantic mackerel, which has been caused by the unacceptable behaviour of Iceland and the Faroes, will again delay decision making on key North Sea stocks. The situation is becoming increasingly intractable. More and more, sanctions are becoming the only option, which is not a situation that anyone wants. It is not helpful to our fleets to have such delay and uncertainty, and it is bitterly disappointing that another year has passed without a resolution to the situation being achieved. The fishing opportunities for 2014 need to be completed as soon as possible to provide some certainty, not just to the fleets, but to the onshore sector that is dependent on their business.

On the setting of North Sea cod quotas in the new year, it is important that the Scottish and UK Governments put forward a strong case to roll over the quota and not to implement the planned 9 per cent cod recovery plan cut. The cod fishery is one of our most valuable—its value is in excess of £20 million. The cod recovery plan was a response to concerning stock levels, but it needs to be reformed. Last September, the European Commission produced proposals for a new plan, but since then there has been a lack of action. The cod recovery plan is inflexible and, perversely, risks hindering conservation measures. It proposes a 9 per cent cut, but the scientific advice indicates positive stock recovery, points towards the sustainability of a rollover and identifies the potential for the quota to be revised.

We can be proud that the Scottish sector has been at the forefront of developing sustainable fishery measures. In a mixed fisheries sector, that is challenging. Conservation credits and the cod catch quota scheme have been developed successfully, with the focus on the reduction of discards. In responding to the demands of a mixed fisheries sector, there needs to be flexibility in the discards plan. The upcoming proposals for discussion on effort control or days at sea are equally important. The wrong decision could have the effect of increasing discards, which we are all

united in trying to address. As the briefing from WWF and the RSPB states, although the scientific advice indicates that a rollover plus up to a 10 per cent increase in quota could be implemented, there are risks attached to any increase. Any arguments for an increase in quota must involve a strong commitment from the industry—and evidence to show—that discard avoidance is increasingly being achieved and that removals and discards will not increase. Good progress has been made on cod recovery, and that cannot be put at risk.

Going into the December negotiations, the focus will be on the west coast fisheries, nephrops and monkfish. Some of the headline figures for agreement present challenges for the Scottish sector. Although there is a proposed increase in the northern hake quota by 49 per cent and 20 per cent for the west coast, proposed cuts of 5 per cent for west coast haddock, 20 per cent for west coast whiting and 25 per cent for west coast and North Sea monkfish are all on the table. In addition, a 10.5 per cent cut in North Sea nephrops—or langoustines—is proposed alongside a reduction of 8.5 per cent in the west coast fishery.

Those are challenging proposals, which are driven by the move towards achieving maximum sustainable yield and the forthcoming discard ban. That was always going to be difficult to achieve in a mixed fishery. Although the upcoming negotiations do not address the implementation of the discard ban, it is starting to have an impact on quota setting. The conditions are challenging for the west coast and, as the WWF-RSPB briefing sets out, a greater emphasis must be placed on the need to build a vision for the west coast fleets that moves towards sustainable, high-quality catches of a mix of species.

Cod needs a chance to recover, but it is still being caught and discarded. As much as possible, we need to eliminate cod capture in smaller-mesh fisheries and make sure that it is selected out in larger-mesh fisheries. Those measures will play their part in helping to deliver a better, more secure future for fishing communities that rely on that sector.

The discard ban will require effort and planning. The public outcry over discarding at sea was understandable, but we must ensure that the ban does not lead to an increase in onshore discarding. Minimising bycatch is essential, and Scotland has been at the front of new technology. However, investment is needed in science and manufacturing. A lot of good work is going on in our universities and colleges, but we need to ensure that there are strong commercial opportunities and that knowledge transfer takes place.

As the cabinet secretary said, regional decision making will be key to the success or otherwise of a discard ban. We need a commonsense, flexible approach with a deliverable timescale that responds to the demands of a mixed fishery. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation makes a pragmatic argument that that must lead to an increased quota, but any move in that direction must be balanced with the priority of maximum selectivity and discards minimisation. That detail needs to be ironed out.

As this year's negotiations take place, we will move into the implementation phase of the reformed common fisheries policy. Although the headline principles have been established, much in relation to how they will be achieved is to be determined. Today, the Scottish Fisherman's Federation raised concerns about the final decisions on regionalisation and maximum sustainable yield. I seek assurances from the cabinet secretary that we will have meaningful regionalisation and that it will be possible to test that properly.

Labour's amendment recognises the importance of regionalisation and of reducing discards, issues that provide the backdrop to decisions that are being taken at the December Council of Ministers meeting.

I move amendment S4M-08540.3, to insert at end:

"; as part of the ongoing implementation of the reformed common fisheries policy, supports the drive toward regionalisation in European fisheries management, and believes that every effort must be taken to ensure that Scotland's fishing industry is ready to implement the discard ban".

15:57

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

I enjoy the annual opportunity to participate in this debate, with its traditional role of sending the minister off to the European fisheries negotiation with the full weight of parliamentary support behind him. I hope that we continue to do that in the way in which this debate is conducted.

I recognise a number of issues from participation in earlier such debates. We have been talking about the minister's strong belief in regional management for a long time. I am sure that he well remembers—I certainly do—that, more than a dozen years ago, as the convener of the Parliament's Rural Affairs Committee at the time, I attended the publication in Brussels of the European green paper that originally proposed regional management committees. Of course, in the end, we got regional advisory committees.

Often, the opportunity for regional management is held up as a tempting and tantalising promise

for the future. I hope that, on this occasion, the minister manages to succeed in achieving it.

A series of issues must be addressed in this round of negotiations. The minister has gone through them in significant detail, but the most profound objective is the move towards a discard ban. The plans are in place and they must be achieved.

Our fishermen should be commended for the work that they have done over many years in ensuring a reduction in wasted effort—they took more than their fair share in ensuring that—and in the number of discards, by applying technology to ensure that smaller fish were not caught at all. Through that sustainability, we have seen significant improvements in the level of stocks in the North Sea. I am particularly taken by the fact that cod numbers are on the rise once again because, in the time that this Parliament has existed, there has been considerable effort to ensure that cod recovery took place.

While this negotiation goes forward, it is important to note that there have been a number of delays. The fact that the talks with Norway will continue into the new year is not a unique situation but one that will delay the delivery of proper outcomes.

On that subject, a couple of issues have been raised with me in order that I might discuss them with the cabinet secretary. We heard extensively from Claire Baker about the problems facing the pelagic fishery and in particular about the mackerel stock in the North Atlantic. I ask the cabinet secretary to give an assurance that any future deal on mackerel, first of all will involve Norway—because, in my view, without Norway's involvement we will not have a deal—and, secondly, will not result in Iceland in any way gaining access to EU waters. If we are to continue as part of a common fisheries policy, it is important that we have control over resources locally wherever possible. Any extension of access to EU waters, particularly our waters, would have the opposite effect.

A number of issues are crucial to the success of these negotiations but many of them are simply part of the process of progressing from where we were the year before. As the cabinet secretary said, last year was a good year: we saw limited reductions in quota and stability for our fishermen.

However, as we saw with the scare over falling nephrops numbers, things can change from one season to the next. It is important that we get a future for our fishing industry that will deliver confidence, continuity and sustainability in the long term. As I said at the start, it is for that reason that I believe that the cabinet secretary has set out the appropriate way forward in European negotiations.

I hope that he, along with his UK counterparts, will be able to go to Brussels and ensure that Scotland's two Governments, working hand in hand, deliver for Scotland's fishing communities.

I move amendment S4M-08450.2, to insert at end:

“, and urges the Scottish Government to continue to work closely with the UK Government and the fishing community to secure the future viability of Scotland's fishing industry”.

16:02

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): The EU fisheries talks next week may not agree much. The continuing failure of international discussions involving the EU, Norway, the Faroes and Iceland will mean that agreement on stocks caught and fished in EU waters will not happen until January—if the industry is lucky. The cabinet secretary was good enough to illustrate that point earlier. I and the fishing industry are very concerned that the industry will have no fish to catch well into 2014 because it suits some countries to have no agreement. That is where we are this year, which is very different from previous years.

Iceland and the Faroes have no interest in being helpful to our fishermen. The EU sanctions in place over their illegal fishing of pelagic stocks are hurting. Those countries can block agreement on the mainstays of the Scottish fleet, which are cod, haddock and whiting. That is the current position.

Norway, which makes Machiavelli look a rank amateur when it comes to negotiations, is resisting EU attempts to give the Faroes and Iceland a larger slice of mackerel quota, and quite right too. They may do that, however, on the basis of extracting a better deal for themselves on other fish stocks.

I am sure that the cabinet secretary is clear that if there is no agreement between the EU, Norway, the Faroes and Iceland, it will lead to immense pressure for a deal on mackerel. The EU will argue that agreement must happen to allow the Scottish white-fish fleet—and indeed other fishing fleets—to sea in EU waters. The price of that deal is greater Faroese and Icelandic access to mackerel. That is what the local industry fears—it is certainly what I fear—will happen in 2014. The Faroes and Iceland will be rewarded for illegal fishing.

I hope that the cabinet secretary will confirm that that would be utterly irresponsible and unacceptable. In my view, he should resist that Hobson's choice. It would be very wrong if our white-fish fleet could catch fish in 2014 only at the expense of cuts in mackerel quota for the Scottish

industry. Those two are linked as they have never been linked before.

The most important win that the cabinet secretary can achieve next week in Brussels is, as he said, on effort—the time our fleet can spend at sea. The cod recovery plan is a shambles. Two years ago, the industry was promised by both the Commission and the Government that there would be changes to the plan. However, as fishermen said to me in Lerwick yesterday, nothing about it has changed. The SFF advise that the Commission's proposals on cutting the time our boats will have at sea in 2014 are unacceptable. As the cabinet secretary rightly said, the Commission hides behind EU law, but that is the law that it and the Government told the industry two years ago would be changed. It has not been changed, so will the cabinet secretary assure the industry that coming from the December fisheries council with anything worse than an effort freeze is simply not an option?

Fishermen have complied with draconian EU rules, some of which are designed here in Edinburgh. Our vessels are allowed to fish for only 90 days in a year. It is possible to achieve more days by jumping through further bureaucratic hoops, but we do not ask any other business in Scotland to restrict its open trading to just 90 days out of 360. Despite sacrifice layered upon sacrifice, there appears to be no let-up in the draconian measures placed upon vessels.

If the cod recovery plan is bad—and it is—fishermen also fear the imposition of a discard ban, not because they do not believe that stopping the dumping of marketable fish is the right thing to do, but because the important thing is getting the plan to work in reality. No one—and I mean no one—has yet explained to the industry how a discard ban will work in practice. It is right to stop dumping. Every fishermen would wish to do that, and the processing industry would wish to stop it as well. However, many Scottish white-fish boats, and certainly the Shetland fleet, depend on a mixed fishery. They catch and have quota for different species. One cannot just catch one species in a net and then haul for a second species. That is not the way a demersal fishery works. So, the devil will truly be in the detail. The industry wants an assurance from the Government that it accepts that the policy must be sensible and possible; otherwise, far from reducing discards, it will increase them. I know that the cabinet secretary is all too well aware of that, but he needs to commit not just to the rhetoric of a discard ban, which we are all very good at, but to ensuring that it works in practice.

There has rarely been a more fraught year than this for the EU fisheries council, not because the prognosis on quotas is bad but because there is a

link between what happens in international talks on the pelagic industry and what happens to our white-fish industry like we have never seen before. If there is any sell-out by the EU on rewarding those who are fishing illegally, there will be an outcry, not just in Scotland but right across the EU. Of that there can be no doubt.

I certainly support the cabinet secretary's motion today. He goes to the talks next week with my support. However, I suspect that the talks between the EU and Norway, the Faroes and Iceland will be far more important in the longer term than what happens in Brussels in a week's time.

I move amendment S4M-08450.1, to insert at end:

“; notes the importance of the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council in December 2013 agreeing a pragmatic implementation of the EU discard ban on the whitefish fleet; recognises the need for changes to the Cod Recovery Plan, which discriminates against the Scottish industry; supports increases in quota allocations and days-at-sea, and calls for EU international sanctions over mackerel to be given time to deliver the outcomes that the EU has agreed”.

16:08

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): One thing that can definitely be agreed by all interested parties is that there is a general consensus that cod stocks are recovering in the North Sea. That is good news all round, although it has to be noted that WWF Scotland and RSPB Scotland warn that any departure from the cod recovery plan in Scotland must include evidence that the counterproposal is in line with scientific advice and will deliver better—or, at the very least, no worse—outcomes for the stocks in question.

However, we also have the recent report from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, which states that quota cuts imposed to save cod from extinction could actually be harming the North Sea, because the species is now so strong that it is eating too many other fish. The ICES report talks about the “abundance” of cod in the North Sea. According to scientists, because cod is top of the food chain, its increasing numbers are having an impact on haddock, herring and whiting numbers. A moderate increase in the total allowable catch for cod would indeed be welcome.

What should be of concern to RSPB Scotland is the scientific evidence that sand eels, the staple diet of many of Scotland's sea birds, are also being eaten in alarming numbers, although thankfully we no longer see the Danes coming in and Hoovering up sand eels on the Wee Bankie and other areas in the North Sea as they did in past decades. As our knowledge of marine ecosystems increases, it is becoming more apparent than ever that species' interactions are complex and if a predatory fish stock such as cod

increases its numbers, there is a knock-on effect on the populations of the prey, which includes other fish and shellfish.

Although scientific evidence shows that the picture is looking promising in the North Sea, the picture is not so great in the west of Scotland, where cod biomass remains low, yet cod continues to be caught and discarded. Both the RSPB and WWF call for greater efforts to avoid cod in the west of Scotland, which they say is vital. They also call on us to place a much greater emphasis on the need to build a vision for the west coast fleets in which boats can move towards sustainable, high quality catches of a mix of species, which they say will result in the more secure future for fishing communities that Claire Baker alluded to. The west of Scotland cod stock is not recovering and is estimated to be just more than 3,500 tonnes. The target is 22,000 tonnes.

It is worth stressing, though, that Scottish fishermen have made substantial changes to help cod recover, with the conservation credits approach incentivising change by giving more time at sea to vessels that undertake conservation measures. In addition, the amount of cod discarded by Scottish white-fish trawlers has declined by two thirds since 2008.

There is good progress in the Western Isles, thanks to Marine Scotland and the Scottish Government listening to local fishermen. For the first time in a number of years squid has been caught off the Western Isles and has been available for islanders to buy. The first squid were caught in the first week of November, landed at Stornoway harbour at 8 pm on the Wednesday night, sold locally the next day and served in Parisian restaurants the following evening. Squid is mainly winter fishing in the north Minch. The boats can target it with a proper squid net and it does not affect their days at sea. That is very welcome news for fishermen in the Western Isles.

Until now, fishermen were prohibited from catching squid west of Scrabster under the west of Scotland cod recovery measures, but now the restrictions have been relaxed, which has given a much-needed boost to the local fishing industry. I am pleased to report that by using the specialised squid nets, fishermen are landing clean catches and there is no or very little bycatch.

Squid fishing in the Western Isles is just one example, but there is a great deal of potential to develop it. Although it is still at a very early stage, it could become very important to our fleet. There are further examples of the range and quality of Scottish seafood.

I had hoped to have time to go on to the issues of excessive spurdog—or dogfish—off the coast of the Western Isles and the resultant bycatch,

ending discards, and the benefits of regionalisation. However, as always, time has got the better of me.

I wish the Scottish Government and officials well with their end-year negotiations next week and look forward to the outcome of the second round of EU talks with Norway in January.

16:12

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): There are wide areas of agreement on many aspects of the negotiations and it is right that the members who lodged the motion and amendments have highlighted them. Everyone now recognises that to catch too many fish would be the surest way to deny fishing communities a future, but to follow a prescriptive regulatory regime without paying proper heed to science can be equally damaging. That danger has rightly been highlighted today in relation to the cod recovery plan.

It is important that both the Scottish and British Governments approach the negotiations with the objectives of maintaining current effort levels and current good practice to manage fish mortality and that ministers seek to build a consensus for that approach among industry and environmental interests. Although the cabinet secretary told us the position on quotas that he proposed to ministers, it would be useful to know how far the various negotiating positions he outlined are common to both Governments.

Today's debate is about the latest in a long line of annual fisheries negotiations, but it is also important in the context of the on-going reform of the common fisheries policy. The reformed CFP, which is due to start on 1 January, will be the third European fisheries policy to be considered in this Parliament since 1999—as Alex Johnstone reminded us—and the fifth in the past 40 years. We on the Labour benches have long supported objectives such as the regional control of fisheries and achieving long-term sustainability; other parties share those aims too. They are core objectives of the new CFP, as is an effective ban on discards at sea.

The difficulty is how such laudable aspirations can be turned into practical change in the real world. When I spoke in the CFP debate last year, I drew an analogy between how the European Commission manages its fisheries policy and the proposals that it actively promoted for a time in relation to the offshore energy industry. In the latter case, it wanted to replace a focus on outcomes and culture with prescriptive regulation, which would have increased the bureaucratic burden of box ticking but reduced the active engagement of all parties with the culture of safe

working in a hazardous environment. The problem with fisheries policy reform may parallel that, as the regulatory mechanisms can become more important than the outcomes that they are supposed to deliver.

There is a broad consensus in favour of the regional management of fisheries in the European Union, but responsibility for marine biological conservation remains with the Commission in Brussels. The delivery of policy is devolved to regions such as the North Sea and the north-east Atlantic, but the content of that policy continues to be driven from the centre. That reservation of responsibility cannot be changed without amendment of the European treaties, so the question for the Scottish Government is how its impact can be managed.

Everyone wants discards at sea to end, but Bertie Armstrong of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation drew an analogy this morning with having a legal ban on traffic accidents in Europe—everyone would applaud that in principle, but enforcing it in a literal way could have unintended consequences. It would be useful to know the Government's view on the best way to move towards complying with a ban on discards by 2019. The Scottish catching sector needs to be ready for implementation, but it cannot act in a policy vacuum.

That issue will not be settled this month, but it is bound to dominate debate in the months and years ahead, so it is important to go beyond the detail of catches and effort in the next 12 months—although that is important—and for ministers to give a clear view on how the new common fisheries policy can be made to work in the interests of having a sustainable and productive Scottish fisheries sector in the medium to longer term.

16:16

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): PG Wodehouse used to have Bertie Wooster insist that Jeeves had some fish when a particularly knotty problem had to be dealt with, so I naturally had fish for my dinner today in the canteen, in preparation for the debate.

This is the most exciting time of the year for me, not because of the fisheries debate but because, in a few short weeks, that most beautiful product of the sea—cod roe—will appear. My wife does not like it—she prefers herring roe—but we share the belief that nothing beats scallop roe, which is often taken off the scallop. We also share the belief that what comes out of the sea is good for us. So obvious are the benefits that people have known that for years, without the assistance of scientists.

Scottish fishermen are the arch conservationists, because they depend on a natural resource. They know that how they treat that resource determines their future success. They are competitive and innovative in everything that they do. Central control via the CFP sits uneasily with our fishermen's entrepreneurial spirit and generations of detailed experience.

Our fishermen are gifted with significant problems. Having a mixed fishery creates difficulties when we seek to protect one species and catch another. One fisherman's bycatch is another's target species, so there is often debate in the industry.

Our fishermen's efforts in recent years in experimenting with selective gear are very much to be commended. We have not yet developed the perfect selective gear, but we are making the progress that we need to make.

The cabinet secretary referred to a key problem with developing that gear, which is having the quota available to test it. If fishermen have no quota for cod and they know where a lot of the cod are, they will avoid those areas. However, when they need to test a selective-gear net that is designed to go into an area with cod and not catch cod, they must go into a cod area and take the risk that their net—whose selectivity is not yet perfect—might catch cod. Fishermen are burning up their quota quickly by experimenting with selective gear. We need more support and more quota for that valuable work, which is being done voluntarily by many of our fishermen. We must not move to the position that we have seen in the whaling industry, which lives off the back of so-called scientific research, but we need a little more help.

Our fishermen, conservationists that they are, work with other environmentalists such as WWF Scotland. That absolutely shows that they are prepared to be driven by good science and to work with others using their local knowledge and experience. Only 14 months ago, in September 2012, a headline in *The Daily Telegraph* stated that there were 100 cod left in the North Sea. The author of that absurdity now says that there will be no brown crab left. That wonderful Radio 4 programme about statistics, "More or Less", described that as

"the worst wrong number that we have ever reported",

the correct number being 21 million cod.

I know someone who is learning Icelandic and I have a nephew who is fluent in Danish because he lives there. We will have to engage with some difficult people in difficult times through difficult negotiations. I hope that the minister can do his bit for Scotland's fishermen.

16:21

Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP):

I declare an interest, in that I have worked for the past 20 years in the Scottish fishing industry in Aberdeen, in North East Scotland, the region that I have the pleasure and honour of representing as a member of the Scottish Parliament.

I have been involved in various fishing organisations, both in the catching sector and in the processing sector and I have often heard, in many meetings, about the admiration that the members of the Scottish industry have for the representatives of other EU countries—particularly French representatives—and for the way in which they negotiate with the rest of the EU.

Richard Lochhead, the cabinet secretary, might not be a Frenchman but he is perhaps the closest that we have to one because of the skills that he has developed over the years in the fisheries negotiations. Particularly important is the experience that he has gained in regionalisation, which Claire Baker has spoken about and which is mentioned in the Labour amendment. It is very important that we have regionalisation, which has been put forward by the cabinet secretary and which the EU will implement.

Richard Lochhead has also had a lot of experience of dealing with UK ministers and EU commissioners over the years. He has persevered and has convinced successive UK Governments and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of the importance of the Scottish fishing industry by briefing them and sitting behind them, hoping for the best, when he has attended EU meetings. He has all the patience that I, as a Frenchman, do not have.

The cabinet secretary comes to the latest negotiations without the backing of the UK Parliament and DEFRA, however, because of a concordat that was signed early in May 2012, of which we have not yet seen the outcome. In that concordat, the UK Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Scottish Parliament were united in demanding that DEFRA, the UK Government department that is in charge of fishing quota management, release the names of the individual companies and multinationals that have been trading quotas. Some of those are profiteering from the work of active fishermen and some are causing the same concern in the fishing industry that slipper farmers are causing in the farming industry. The cabinet secretary has been patient, but it is important that he secure that outcome at the end of this year, before we enter the negotiations in January. I seek reassurance from the cabinet secretary on that point.

The Scottish Seafood Association, of which I was a member, has stated that its members support complete transparency regarding quotas, as has the Mallaig and North West Fishermen's Association and the Aberdeen Fish Producers Organisation. They are all in favour of transparency regarding quotas, which is important when we talk about the negotiations next week. Transparency will be the first step in regaining control of Scotland's fishing rights, because it will give future generations access to quotas that we do not have now. The consequences of the establishment of a publicly accessible register of fixed quota allocation holdings and transactions will be that the value of trading quotas will plunge to a level that will allow working fishermen and young fishermen to go fishing, which will mean a great future for our industry.

16:25

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): As a member for North East Scotland, I am glad to speak in the debate and to support the Labour amendment. The common fisheries policy was set up to address the simple collective action problem that, if each member state were to fish unfettered, collectively we would decimate our stocks, permanently harm the biodiversity of our waters and undermine the long-term economic interests of the coastal communities that depend on our fishing industry.

Co-operation is therefore the key to success. In recent years in Scotland, we have taken great leaps to demonstrate our commitment to co-operate within the UK and across Europe and to fulfil our role as a responsible nation in the common fisheries policy. From real-time closures to closed-circuit television pilots, we have shaped Europe's approach to a sustainable fisheries policy. Those measures must continue to be developed, as they are a proportional and effective means for Scotland to continue to lead the way on responsible fisheries management.

However, in the interests of fairness, it is vital that the restrictions that we place on our industry are backed by robust and reliable scientific data. One of the most significant opportunities that regionalisation gives us is the opportunity to collaborate better and build on the science that underpins the decisions that we make. That is because good scientific data has the ability to build consensus on what our collective interest looks like. For example, on cod quotas, WWF has stated:

"A 9% cut in next year's North Sea cod quota is on the cards not because of scientific advice, but because of the provisions under the Cod Recovery Plan. Scientific advice indicates that a rollover ... can be consistent with achievement of sustainable fishing levels by 2015 as long as current cod avoidance fishing behaviour is maintained."

The response of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation is significant, because there is a shared acceptance built on scientific evidence that, as long as we continue our leading conservation efforts, our quotas can be adjusted.

As we continue through the negotiations and on our wider journey towards regionalisation, if we are to strike the right balance between the needs of our fishing industry and the need to make our waters sustainable, I urge the Scottish Government to build on our scientific data and to collaborate with our neighbours on the collection and production of that data so that we can reach decisions about our waters that, through the veracity of fact, are built on consensus and a shared understanding of our collective interest.

16:28

Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): I am pleased to take part in the debate. The end-year fishing negotiations are vital to many communities that I and many other members represent. The Scottish Government continues to fight hard in Brussels for Scotland's fishing sector and I am sure that it will do so again next week. That builds on the strong record of previous Scottish Administrations doing just that. However, Scotland is ready not just to have a seat at the negotiations but to take its turn in leading them. That would be a step forward for protecting and developing our fishing industry.

It is important to recognise that these end-year negotiations come down to a number of key aspects, which I will touch on. The starting point is the issue of landing obligations. We know that we will have a big job to measure how the discard ban is brought about. The way in which fish are sorted and weighed is quite important in that process and I ask the cabinet secretary to make sure that the control orders that deal with that rely on as little handling of fish as possible and move towards weighing being done at sea, with scales that are agreed by the authorities before the boats leave, and without the need to have so much of that weighing done and sampled on shore. The landing obligation leads me to believe that it is important that it is spread over all the species that are landed at one time because, as we move towards a discard ban, the job will be more complicated.

The SFF considers that maximum sustainable yield is

"a laudable intention but the way it is now enshrined in the regulation is scientifically impossible".

If that is so, we have to find the cabinet secretary a means of cutting the Gordian knot, but in supporting the progressive move towards maximum sustainable yield by 2015 when possible, and no later than 2020, we are taking a

realistic view of moving towards the means of sustaining the many mixed fishery stocks in our seas that we have to deal with.

The next issue I would like to deal with is licensing. Our country has a tremendous record of exports and the food and drink sector has led to a large amount of fish exports. It is therefore important that the licensing process for getting stocks from here to places such as China is made much simpler than it is at present. I am afraid to say that licensing can take weeks, if not months, and it must be speeded up in order to help exports to take place.

I will move on to talk about the coherence argument. WWF and the RSPB have said:

"Thanks to the progressive approach adopted by the Scottish Government in working alongside fisheries and environmental stakeholders in the *Fisheries Management and Conservation Group*, Scottish fisheries can better respond to the challenges of the new CFP regulation."

I agree with that. A couple of Mondays ago, I was pleased to attend the launch of a sustainable food festival. It will be in Scrabster next September and will be based on fish. The intention is to encourage as many people as possible to eat sustainable fish, and for our Parliament to be able to back a cabinet secretary who ensures that the potential of our fisheries to be sustainable can be achieved.

16:33

Tavish Scott: Alex Johnstone started his contribution by saying that this annual debate is Parliament's way of sending off the minister with great support. It did not always feel that way back in the early days; I remember a few debates that were certainly not like that. I can only imagine what Richard Lochhead's reaction would have been if Ross Finnie had squeezed in a fisheries debate between debates on human rights and sport. I will leave that there.

I agree with the priorities that the cabinet secretary set out in his opening remarks, and I agree with his point about the freeze on days. I would argue for an increase in that figure—as I am sure he would—but he has to work within the art of the possible. He has to work hard with other member states on dealing with the inherent flaws in the cod recovery plan that Jenny Marra touched on. They do not go away. We keep being told that the plan is going to go because it has no further role to play, but every year our fishermen see that it is still in place and imposing the kind of restrictions that the minister has to deal with every December. As a representative of an island that is massively dependent on fisheries, I would dearly like to see the end of an inherently flawed policy.

I also agree with the cabinet secretary's point about monkfish flexibility.

Stewart Stevenson: Will the member take an intervention?

Tavish Scott: I will just finish my point. Monkfish is the most valuable species to the Shetland fleet, being worth approximately £4 million out of the £60 million of fish that was landed in Shetland, which is a quarter of all fish landed in Scotland.

Stewart Stevenson: Like those of Tavish Scott, my constituents are heavily dependent on the fishing industry. I wonder whether, in light of the fact that our minister is one of the most experienced ministers in Europe, Tavish Scott might join me in seeking a bigger role—I am not specific when I say that—in fisheries negotiations in Europe, where his experience can be of benefit to all members of the European Union.

Tavish Scott: I do not in any way doubt the cabinet secretary's involvement or his expertise, as he has taken part for many years. However, my knowledge of the process has taught me—I am sure that Stewart Stevenson, who like me is an ex-minister, will accept this—that it is the bilaterals that matter. The work that matters, and of which Richard Lochhead has huge experience, is not in the Council chamber. We may make a big song and dance about that aspect, but the reality of European negotiations is about the people whom one talks to in the coffee room—I shall keep it at that—and the agreements or near agreements that one can come to there.

I would like to make two other points about observations that colleagues across the chamber have made. First, we have talked the talk on discards, but if we look at the Norwegian experience of a discard policy we see that it is anything but a discard policy. The Norwegians describe their fishing approach as one where they have banned discards, but if we look closely at it, as I am sure the cabinet secretary has, we find that there are areas in which they have a discard ban and that they also have what is in my view an enlightened policy that recognises their white-fish industry's needs and its catch in a mixed fishery.

That relates to the one point that I would make about Stewart Stevenson's earlier remarks about our industry volunteering for selective gear. I am sure that, like me, he would recognise from his own constituency that when our boats were asked to put cameras on board it was because there were more days to achieve from that policy. The industry was not exactly ecstatic about it—I am sure that Mr Stevenson had the same kind of conversation on the pier as I did—so we should be careful what we say about the balance between our industry moving forward on selective gear and the reality that it has been forced to do so because that is the nature of the requirement.

My final point is on the north-east Atlantic mackerel situation, and I am grateful to other colleagues who have mentioned that. It is tied to white-fish stocks for the first time in our observations on those matters, and I wish the minister well in untangling a difficult knot.

16:37

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Presiding Officer, I sometimes think that we ought to recall Parliament on Christmas day to hold this debate, such is the degree of good will that emanates from all sides of the chamber towards the minister as he sets about these difficult negotiations. I hope that you will not take that advice too seriously.

I have listened carefully to the debate, which as always has been a good one, but it is difficult not to remain deeply concerned about the international situation and the recent international negotiations, because those are the negotiations that really set the quota for stocks of mutual interest.

As has been highlighted vividly, not least by Tavish Scott, we now appear to have reached a stalemate with Norway, Iceland and the Faroes in relation to the north-east Atlantic mackerel. That will mean that total allowable catches for jointly managed stocks will not be set until well into the new year, as the cabinet secretary said in his opening remarks, leaving our fishermen facing yet more uncertainty about their livelihood. It cannot be right, surely, that countries increase their allocations unilaterally year on year and simply refuse to co-operate when it is time to get round the negotiating table. The stalemate has to end, and soon.

On the common fisheries policy itself, the key issue, as other members have said, is surely how the new CFP will actually be implemented. Like everybody else, I am obviously pleased that we have reached an agreement on discards and that the ban is to be phased in gradually, but I am sure that we would all agree that there has to be a commonsense approach to the way in which discards are managed. A total elimination of discards is simply not practical in the very short term. As we have said before on this side of the chamber, simply banning discards is effectively banning the symptom rather than tackling the cause of the problem.

If the discards question is to be solved, a key element must be an increase in TAC, and in that regard we should not underestimate the importance of recognising changing scientific advice. As the North Atlantic Fisheries College Marine Centre in Shetland has recently reported, over the past decade cod stocks in the North Sea

have doubled, plaice stocks have trebled and hake stocks have quadrupled, while fishing mortality rates have fallen dramatically year on year.

Although the North Sea is, in some ways, full of fish, the quotas for cod and haddock are now so low that fishermen are sometimes catching their quota within eight weeks and then having to turn to other catches to make a living. The conservation measures put in place by the CFP are therefore in some ways now creating an imbalance in the North Sea. For example, the number of sand eels, to which I think Angus MacDonald referred, has been greatly reduced. There is also displaced effort, which is resulting in too many boats fishing for prawns, for example, while other stocks protected by the cod recovery plan remain plentiful.

The recovery is good news, however, and our fishermen deserve enormous commendation for taking the hard decisions and making the necessary changes to ensure the industry's viability. Make no mistake: fishermen want nothing more than to make fishing sustainable not just now but for generations to come. They have given up a great deal over the years to bring that about.

We share the cabinet secretary's concern over ICES's advice recommending a 9 per cent cut in the North Sea cod quota, particularly when the same advice shows that a 20 per cent increase in the quota would still keep the recovery of the stock on track. I agree that a further cut in quota could lead only to more discarding, given the abundance of cod in our seas. We therefore support the call from the Scottish Fishermen's Federation to secure an increase in the cod quota for 2014, for the simple reason that it can ensure the continuation of sustainable fishing while reducing discards—I think that that is called a win-win situation.

Fishermen also face a 15 per cent cut in North Sea haddock, which is a mainstay of the Scottish fleet, so it still appears that our fishermen are being penalised even though they are the ones taking the necessary steps to help the industry survive.

Time does not allow me to discuss many other issues that the debate has thrown up, so I will finish by merely quoting the Scottish Fishermen's Federation:

"The reform of the CFP has been a political process and we are stuck with it... ministers ... now have to deliver workable plans that will protect our industry and ensure a sustainable future for fishing."

Like other members, we on the Conservative side of the chamber wish the cabinet secretary every success as he seeks to do just that.

16:41

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):

This time last year I stood in the chamber to debate the annual EU fisheries negotiations, and I expressed concerns about the state of our shared European fisheries. At that stage, reform of the common fisheries policy was being debated. In February this year, the European Parliament finally and belatedly reached an overdue arrangement. We are now all grappling with the final details.

As has been discussed by my colleagues, the CFP reforms have signalled an end to the widely discredited practice of discarding, which is certainly to be welcomed. We on this side of the chamber have again reiterated the importance of following sound scientific advice in developing European fisheries policy, which has not always been the case in the past.

As we have heard in the debate, the SFF, the RSPB and WWF are not that far from each other on the way forward for cod fisheries. In the words of my North East Scotland colleague, Jenny Marra,

"It is therefore clear that industry and environmental experts are prepared to unite when the scientific evidence is there."

She urges the Scottish Government to

"build on our scientific data and to collaborate with our neighbours on the collection and production of that data".

Angus MacDonald, too, has highlighted how essential the science is as a basis for moving forward in this complex area. Unfortunately, however, bilateral discussions between the EU and Norway have again fallen through. I wish the cabinet secretary every success in January in trying to resolve that very important issue. As Tavish Scott highlighted, the issue relating to the Faroes and Iceland must also be resolved if we are to have a fair way forward.

In our view, one of the most important developments that came out of the past year's negotiations is in regionalisation. It is now the mainstream opinion in Europe that regional groups such as the Scheveningen group or the Baltic Sea fisheries forum—BALTFISH—are the preferred model for regional co-operation. However, more formalisation will of course need to take place. As Claire Baker highlighted earlier, the SFF today expressed concerns about "exclusive competence" being held in Brussels and "enshrined in the Treaties." However, it is hoped that the cabinet secretary and others in the negotiations will be able to resolve that so that some sense of power and decision making is felt to be held at a regional level. I wish the cabinet secretary well with that.

On today's announcement by the cabinet secretary about the European maritime and fisheries fund, the fund is sometimes forgotten in the debate but it is an important issue in terms of diversification and support for our coastal communities, such as Eyemouth, which is in my region and that of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. I am sure that members will agree with me that the fund is really important for the future of our coastal communities. I wonder whether the cabinet secretary can indicate what types of projects will be proposed in this round.

As my colleague Claire Baker has highlighted, and as we have suggested in our amendment to the Government's motion, our fishing industry must be supported to comply with the ban on discards, which will soon come into effect. With the challenge of a mixed fishery, our fishermen must be able to adapt gradually to the incoming discard regulations and, as such, they must concentrate on discard minimisation and maximum selectivity. We cannot be left still adapting to the new regulations when the legislation comes into force.

I wish to say something about fashions in fish—perhaps in an attempt to be slightly light-hearted in this Christmas period. I recall my Aberdonian grandmother telling me that she heard in her childhood, "Fresh herrin—two a penny," in Aberdeen. Once, mackerel was frowned on by some; then, smoked mackerel became good pub fare. Cod and haddock are the staples of fish suppers, but let us not shun other species in the bid for sustainability. The BBC website tells us:

"Coley is one of the least expensive fish in the cod family and is a great sustainable substitute for cod or haddock in many recipes."

With his delicious cooking, my Thai son-in-law has proved that monkfish is great in a Thai curry, as it holds together well. One of the other ways to be adventurous is to order a fish box, which can come out of Aberdeen. What is in it depends on what the weekly catch is. My partner is getting one of those for Christmas.

What is the cabinet secretary doing further to promote the spread of species and to encourage sustainable catches? I said to my son last night—just to carry on the family theme—"I hope you're going to eat well the night before your exam." He is taking the exam as we speak. He said, "Yes, of course. I'm eating fish, because it will make me clever." We all need to be extremely clever in the support that we must give to the cabinet secretary for what are very complex negotiations, so that we ensure that sustainable development is at the heart of the way forward for Scottish fisheries in sustainable Scottish seas.

I ask the cabinet secretary whether he might be minded to support our amendment, which we have

lodged in a positive spirit. We wish the cabinet secretary well in this year's end-of-year fisheries negotiations.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call the cabinet secretary to close the debate, I once again remind members that the debates this afternoon are on a follow-on basis. Members who wish to participate in the next debate should be in the chamber for the opening speeches.

I call on Richard Lochhead to wind up the debate. The cabinet secretary's speech should be eight minutes, please.

16:48

Richard Lochhead: Once again, this has been a helpful and useful debate prior to the end-of-year bun fight that takes place in Brussels every December. These annual fisheries negotiations are so important to the future of our coastal economies, our seafood sector and the wider fishing industry.

I feel the weight on my shoulders as I head out to Brussels on Sunday for a two-day or three-day marathon, no doubt overnight and without sleep at some points, as is often the case in those mad surroundings. However, it is important that Scotland is represented there, given the importance of the fishing industry and seafood to Scotland.

I thank the many members from all parties for their fine speeches today. Alex Fergusson enjoyed the subject so much that he wants to come back and debate it again on Christmas day. He may be a lone voice on that particular suggestion, but I agreed with many of the other points that he made. Claudia Beamish referred to what she was giving her partner for Christmas, which I thought rather spoiled the surprise. I am sure, however, that he never reads in the *Official Report* the comments that his partner makes in the Scottish Parliament.

I congratulate Christian Allard on his first speech in the annual fishing debate. He reflected on his more than 20 years of experience of working in the north-east of Scotland fishing industry. It is fantastic to have his experience of the industry in the Parliament and to have heard from him during the debate. As he is French, I am trying to work out how we can use his ability and his negotiating and diplomatic skills, given that we sometimes have issues with the French in relation to some North Sea stocks. Perhaps we could make Christian the hake envoy for Scotland—we are always trying to get hake quota off the French, so that is perhaps a new job that we could give to him.

Many members have mentioned the quality of seafood from Scotland. I welcome that, because when we have such debates, we should always remember that, although they are about the technicalities, quota negotiations and all the other issues and bureaucracy surrounding them in Brussels, ultimately they are about the fantastic food that we are lucky enough to have in our waters. We are also lucky enough to have people with the skills, ingenuity, attitudes and aptitude to go out in all kinds of conditions to land that fantastic seafood for our own tables and the rest of the world. Given that around 50 per cent of our food exports are seafood, it contributes to their success.

I am pleased that Claire Baker mentioned serving up that fantastic seafood in our schools. The Scottish Government has run the seafood in schools project for some time now with a lot of success in introducing many of our children to healthy and good-quality Scottish seafood. My son is just as fussy as most other children of his age. It is encouraging that, when he comes back from his school dinners in Moray, he always compliments the fish, which he says is his favourite thing on the school menu. That is good news. There are schools across the country that serve up seafood.

A number of issues have been mentioned. I want first to turn to the talks between the EU and Norway. Many members have mentioned different dimensions of those talks, but there are essentially two dimensions to them. There is an on-going mackerel dispute, which is, of course, of international significance and of crucial importance to Scotland, and there are the white-fish stocks that are shared between the EU and Norway and are often the subject of separate negotiations. Those negotiations have been postponed to early 2014, as have the mackerel negotiations.

It is fair to say that those negotiations are not completely divorced from each other. They are tangled up to a degree, but in past years the white-fish negotiations on some of the crucial North Sea stocks, such as haddock and cod, have been carried out early in the following year due to their being postponed. The guidance that I have taken from our industry is that it is better to wait for a few months—perhaps even just a few weeks—to get the right result in the white-fish negotiations than to rush and have those negotiations on the normal schedule if we are not confident of getting the right result for Scotland. I take comfort from the fact that our industry understands the situation at the moment.

There is a new minister in place in Norway, of course. She is getting to grips with her portfolio and all the complex issues that surround it, and she no doubt welcomes the extra few weeks to do that.

The mackerel dispute is, of course, crucial. I am afraid that I have a slight issue with the Liberal Democrat amendment, as it seems to take the onus off having the option of securing a deal at the right time if the opportunity presents itself. Now that we have good science for the mackerel stock, there is a new atmosphere in trying to reach a deal in the dispute, which has gone on for several years now. I do not want to be bound by Parliament's view, if possible, to avoid any opportunity that comes along to sign up to a deal if it is the right one for Scotland, so the wording of the Liberal Democrat amendment is not helpful. If we have the opportunity to secure the right deal for Scotland in the next few weeks or months, we should grasp that and put in place a stable management framework for an internationally important stock that is crucial for Scotland and which has to be governed on a sustainable basis.

I put on record once again that I will not sign up to any deal that is unreasonable and unfair to Scotland, rewards irresponsible behaviour from Iceland, the Faroes or any other country, and does not take into account the fact that Scotland, like many other countries in Europe, has been responsible over the past years and was part of an international management regime until the agreement broke down. That regime led to the stock being so healthy in the first place and to those other countries being able to take their quotas, which, unfortunately, they have established on a unilateral basis.

I am happy to support the Labour and Conservative amendments, which add to the motion, and I hope that the Liberal Democrats and other parties sign up to the final motion so that we can move forward with one voice.

Presiding Officer, before I address any other issues, can I check how long I have in the debate?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Eight minutes.

Richard Lochhead: Okay. Eight more minutes or eight minutes altogether?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Eight minutes in total.

Richard Lochhead: Thank you.

The talks between the EU and Norway are therefore crucial; let me now turn to members' comments on the cod recovery plan.

Lewis Macdonald made a very good point when he alluded to the fact that we have a regulatory straitjacket that is the cod recovery plan, which was signed up to a few years ago and reflected circumstances at the time. This Government, of course, was not happy with the particular wording of the plan back then, and here we are in 2013 looking at the current fishing biology and circumstances with a plan that was designed a few

years ago—a plan that is being adhered to time and again by a European Commission backed up by its lawyers.

At the forefront of our minds should be what is best for the cod stock and a reasonable outcome for our fishing industries. We do not want a situation in which Europe implements a 9 per cent cut because that is what the plans says. The cod recovery plan leads to more cod discards in our waters, forcing our fishermen to have the abhorrent experience of throwing good-quality fish—that is dead—overboard back into the sea. It is therefore good that the scientists, environmental organisations, the Scottish Government and all other parties in the chamber back a reasonable outcome and the potential for a modest increase in that quota.

A difficulty with the cod recovery plan is that it has had a huge negative impact on fleets' ability to catch other stocks. It has been difficult for the Scottish fleet to catch other healthy stocks, because the state of the cod stock and the related legislation that it must adhere to means that it is not allowed to visit parts of the sea at certain times. The inflexibility in the cod recovery plan is so damaging to the Scottish fleet, and we must get it changed as quickly as possible.

A number of big challenges are on the horizon. We have the short-term challenges of next week's quota negotiations, which we have discussed at length; the mackerel dispute that forms the backdrop of the negotiations—I hope that we can get a deal on that signed up to in the next few weeks and months; and the implementation of the discard ban, which will be possible only if we have genuine regionalisation in place. We do not want the detail in our complex fisheries decided in Brussels over the implementation of a discard ban; rather, we must work in partnership with our own industries and scientists in Scotland and those in other countries in the same waters to put the right measures into place.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): The cabinet secretary will be well aware that, in going into negotiations, the more priorities that one has, the weaker one's position. A number of members have called for negotiating no further reduction in effort. Can he conceive of any circumstances in which he would sign up to a deal that would include effort reduction, or is that one of the red lines over which he will not cross?

Richard Lochhead: I am happy to confirm that, as I alluded to in my opening remarks, I will not support any deal that leads to any cut in days at sea for the Scottish fleet. It is ridiculous that, in 2013, we are still in a legal quagmire given that we all accept in Europe that the cod recovery plan is flawed and does not work in the way that it should. Indeed, many countries agree that there should be

no further cuts in days at sea, and yet once again we have such a formal proposal from the European Commission. We must fight against that proposal next week, but I am hopeful of a good outcome. I will be demanding the support of the UK Government in taking that approach forward.

I thank members for their contributions. As I said, there are short-term challenges to face as well as the long-term challenges that include the discard ban and implementing regionalisation. We are fighting for a valuable industry for Scotland that lands fantastic seafood for our tables in this country and throughout the world. There is light at the end of the tunnel—if we can get through some of the challenges of the next year or two, we will be talking about a prosperous fishing industry for many years to come, with sustainable fish stocks in our waters. That is a win-win situation for everyone. I ask the industry for its patience and its co-operation and to continue the resilient attitude in the years ahead, so that we can achieve that success for Scotland.

Youth Sport Strategy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-08546, in the name of Shona Robison, on the youth sport strategy.

16:59

The Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport (Shona Robison): I am delighted to address Parliament on “Giving children and young people a sporting chance: a draft Strategy for Scotland”, which we published yesterday.

Earlier, we had a motion of condolence for Nelson Mandela. As on so many matters, his words on sport are uplifting:

“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than Governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.”

We all recognise the importance of being physically active, and we know that sport is just one part of an active life, but given the legacy that will come from Scotland's hosting the Commonwealth games and the Ryder cup next year, there is no better time to celebrate our successes in youth sport and to consider what more needs to be done. It was clear from June's debate on youth sport that members have their own ideas about that, but I am sure that members agree that the strategy should not be full of things that adults think are important. The strategy should be not only for but by children and young people, which is why we started by asking the young people's sport panel for their views. What its members told us has shaped the document that members have before them, including the title, which was the panel's suggestion. Members of the panel are in the gallery today; I thank them very much for their input.

The panel told us that they want only the best for children and young people in Scotland. They want opportunities that ignite and excite young people to get involved and stay involved. Young people's needs can be summarised as follows: “Give us great opportunities, supported by great people, delivered in great places and given a higher profile.”

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I agree with the sports minister about the principle of giving young people opportunities. Does she recognise that in outlying areas an argument is being made about the need to address transport costs? The draft strategy does not particularly

address the issue, as I read it. Will she ensure that the final version covers that point?

Shona Robison: I am happy to take that point on board and to give it further consideration.

The draft strategy sets out in some detail what we are doing, collectively, and what more might be done, in the four areas that I set out. I cannot do justice to all the detail in this speech, but I will spend a little time on each area.

The young people's sport panel told us that they want opportunities to be involved in sport in a range of ways—at school, out of school, in clubs and groups, and informally with their friends and families. We think that the position is already strong. There are opportunities to try sports through physical education, active schools and programmes that local authorities and leisure trusts provide, as well as through sports' governing bodies and clubs, the voluntary sector landscape of youth and community organisations and in higher and further education. There are opportunities, through schools, to take part in events and competitions such as the Sainsbury's school games and the Commonwealth youth games. There are opportunities to develop leadership skills through programmes such as youth legacy ambassadors, young ambassadors and lead 2014.

However we can build on that. On PE, we are making good progress, with 89 per cent of schools delivering on the PE target. That is up from just under 10 per cent in 2004-05, so there has been almost a complete reversal of the position then, when 90 per cent of schools did not achieve the target. There is more to be done, which is why I announced yesterday that continued investment of £5.8 million over 2014-15 and 2015-16 will be provided through the partnership between Education Scotland and sportscotland to help local authorities to maintain the quantity and, which is also important, to improve the quality of PE provision in schools.

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab): I am sure that the minister is aware, in presenting those statistics, that when the Parliament was established very few new PE teachers were being recruited. I think that something like nine new PE teachers were recruited in 2003-04, and by 2004-05 the figure had gone up to 80. That increase clearly feeds into the statistics on activity and PE, in particular, and is something that we should all welcome.

Shona Robison: I am sure that that is true, to some extent. What is also true is that the priority that is given to PE, particularly in the primary sector, is now far more prominent. That has taken a lot of hard work by front-line professionals. Head teachers have shown leadership and classroom

teachers have been skilled up so that they can make an important contribution to PE.

On that point, we will reject the Conservative amendment because it fails to recognise the essential role of the primary school classroom teacher in delivering PE. Without classroom teachers developing such skills, we would not have made such progress on the quantity and quality of PE.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will the minister give way?

Shona Robison: I will do so in a second. If we were to remove that resource, the quantity and quality of PE that children in primary schools get would be drastically reduced. I am sure that that is not what Liz Smith wants.

Liz Smith: I thank the minister for that comment. Quality is extremely important. Parents want PE to be provided by qualified PE instructors. When I made a freedom of information request recently, the number of councils that did not hold the relevant information was extremely surprising.

Shona Robison: PE specialists have an important role to play, particularly in supporting classroom teachers and in creating links between secondary schools and their feeder primaries, but we cannot underestimate the role of the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher has always been important in delivery of PE. What is new is that we are upskilling that workforce and ensuring that its members have the necessary confidence when they deliver PE. Without that resource, we would not get anywhere near the target of delivering two hours of PE a week. We must recognise that that is an important resource.

I am conscious of time, and I want to move on to other ways in which we will build on the work that has been done. Although school sport competition is only a small part of the strategy, it is an important part of it. We feel that more can be done on the quality of school sport competition. Sportscotland will learn from and roll out the current pilot activity on intra-school and inter-school sport competition to drive up the number of opportunities that exist for young people to take part in good-quality competition. On opportunities for children and young people to lead, sportscotland will work to ensure that young people are an integral part of the management team of every community sport hub.

It is, of course, crucial that all children and young people have the opportunity to take part in sport. The PE disability inclusion training programme, which is provided through Scottish Disability Sport, is giving up to 1,000 teachers the knowledge, skills and experience to include disabled young people fully in quality PE and sports provision by 2014. I know that that is an

issue that Patricia Ferguson has mentioned in her correspondence to me about the strategy.

In addition, a range of valuable existing programmes reach out to those who have particular needs, such as the active girls and street soccer schemes, jump2it and the Co-operative young volunteer programme. Community sport hubs provide an opportunity to reach out to young people in their communities, and sportscotland will work alongside the Robertson Trust to develop and support stronger youth work approaches in community sport hubs. That will involve reaching out to young people who do not take part in sport at the moment, and for whom the school environment is perhaps challenging.

Notwithstanding all that, I want to consider whether we are doing all that we can to ensure that opportunities are inclusive and engaging, and especially that we get views directly from children and young people. We and sportscotland are working closely with representative bodies for children and young people, including Young Scot, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, and the Children's Parliament to ensure that we get the views of those who already participate in sport and—importantly—of those who do not.

Day in and day out, and week after week, vast numbers of teachers, volunteers, parents and coaches give of their time, energy and commitment to encourage children and young people to enjoy sport. In recent years, an enhanced effort has been made to support those who work with children and young people to develop more child-centred behaviours. That has included provision of enhanced training about safeguarding, disability inclusion and protecting children and young people, and the introduction of positive coaching Scotland, which is a programme that aims to drive culture change in the behaviours of key influencers in young people's lives, including parents, teachers and coaches.

Although we are fortunate to have a huge and talented resource of coaches and volunteers, we can build more on those foundations. To do that, sportscotland will continue its commitment to the positive coaching Scotland programme, it will develop and deliver a new club leaders training programme, and it will deliver a new multiskill coach training programme and qualification.

In recent years, Scotland has seen a transformation in the capital infrastructure for sport. The scale of new national, regional and local facilities for sport, combined with the school estate modernisation programme, means that we have never been as well served by great sports facilities across Scotland as we are now.

However, it is important that, as well as having those fantastic facilities, the school estate is open at local level. By March 2018, the £1.25 billion schools for the future programme will see the construction of 67 new schools for more than 46,000 pupils. In our debate on the subject in June, Tavish Scott highlighted his concerns in relation to sportscotland's involvement in the design of new schools. To ensure the best possible outcomes, the Scottish Government will facilitate sportscotland's earlier and continuing involvement in the design of new schools. That will be delivered within the Scottish Government's school building programme. At the same time, sportscotland will use its research on the school estate as a basis for discussing with local authorities and their partners improvements to the programming of community sport hub activity in schools.

The young people's sport panel is keen that a higher profile be given to young people's involvement in sport. I have asked the panel to develop proposals on how that can happen. I am confident that it will, if its contributions to date are anything to go by, embrace the opportunity and provide us with some comprehensive and creative ideas.

I move,

That the Parliament acknowledges the important role that sport plays in the lives of children and young people by providing them with skills and confidence now and for later life; recognises the potential of youth sport in improving physical and mental wellbeing, competences for work and establishing sporting success in Scotland; recognises that young people have been directly involved in the development of the draft youth strategy, and agrees that this is an important step in delivering a lasting legacy in 2014 and beyond.

17:10

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab): I am pleased to speak in the debate. For reasons that will become clear later, I am also pleased that the minister chose the quotation that she did from Nelson Mandela. I will come back to that near the end of my speech, but perhaps it would be appropriate if I, too, cite Nelson Mandela on sport. He famously said that sport reaches

"areas far beyond the reach of politicians."

Perhaps that is something that we should all remember.

I record my thanks to the minister for bringing the debate to the chamber at this stage in the development of the strategy. I have to say that, at the moment, the strategy needs a little bit more meat on its bones. I hope that today's short debate can influence its final content, although I suspect that there will be many areas that we will not be

able to cover in the allotted time. Perhaps we will have the opportunity to come back to it on another occasion.

I acknowledge the involvement of the young people's sport panel and congratulate it on its efforts and ambition. It has identified some important areas of work and provided a clear focus for the strategy, which is welcome.

However, a number of challenges remain at the heart of the debate. How do we reach the young people who are not involved in sport or who are not physically active? Where is the money that will be needed to underpin the strategy? Can the strategy's ambitions be achieved when we have not reached the targets for PE, as the Conservative amendment highlights?

There is also an issue about quality. I, for one, do not mind if the people who teach PE at primary school are properly trained primary school teachers, but I would not want it to be left to the luck of the draw. That is at the nub of the Conservative amendment.

Shona Robison: I welcome Patricia Ferguson's comments on the role of classroom teachers. Does she not recognise the huge progress that has been made towards all schools achieving the target? The latest figures show 89 per cent, with progress happening apace for the remaining schools. Surely she recognises that that represents progress and work by many people.

Patricia Ferguson: Progress is always to be welcomed, but we must recognise the challenges that remain. We would be doing the young people about whom we are talking a huge disservice if we did not acknowledge those challenges. Of course, at the same time, there is an overall decline in physical activity, as Scottish Labour has noted in its amendment.

A useful starting point would be to ensure that all young people are physically literate before they leave primary school and that primary school PE concentrates on supporting them to enable them to run, jump, throw, catch and swim with confidence. The optimum age for that seems to be between about eight and 12, so primary school time coincides with the most crucial period for that development. That is incredibly important, because without those core skills young people will struggle to progress whereas, with them, they will be equipped to develop in the sport or sports of their choice.

The involvement of teachers and education policy makers—including the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning—is vital to that agenda. I hope that the minister will assure us that such a commitment exists. I note that sportscotland has reported that many schools are now well equipped to take forward the agenda—

which is welcome—but that some serious challenges remain.

If we really want to change the culture and increase the number of young people who are involved in sport, we have to invest in it. I hope that the minister's colleagues in health, education and justice will contribute financially from their departmental budgets.

The Scottish Labour amendment draws attention to the decrease in physical activity that has occurred in recent years. We recognise not only that that is a complex matter for the health and wellbeing of our nation, but that it is a serious one that needs to be addressed by the combined efforts of Government departments. Similarly, and in recognition of the transformational nature of sport in relation to community cohesion, the justice department must bring its resources, in terms of diversion and cashback for communities' money.

There seems to be a particular problem with the level of young people's involvement in sport after transitional times in their lives, when they move from primary to secondary school and from secondary school to further and higher education or employment. We need to find a way to encourage them to remain involved. We must ensure that there is a pathway for them to find the club, gym or track that will allow them seamlessly to continue their involvement, and to progress to the limits of their ambition. Active schools are very important in the transition between schools, which is a transition not only educationally but in terms of sport and activity. One can complement the other.

The minister knows of my concern that young people who have disabilities should have as many opportunities as their peers who do not have disabilities. I was pleased to note that the draft strategy mentions Scottish Disability Sport's inclusion training, but it could go further. I hope that the final version of the strategy will acknowledge the additional benefits of physical activity to young people who have disabilities and will ensure that that is recognised and supported. As I have mentioned previously in debate, I hope, too, that the additional cost of adapted equipment is recognised.

We read that young people want to see their hard work and dedication respected, recognised and rewarded. They are quite right to highlight that. For that reason, I welcome the school sports awards, which all schools will strive to achieve.

However, perhaps we could go further. As the minister said in opening, earlier today we celebrated the life of Nelson Mandela. I suggest that there might be a tangible way in which we could recognise his achievement, his legacy and Scotland's respect for him. As we know, Nelson Mandela was a keen boxer in his youth and was

someone who truly understood the value of sport and the importance of the symbolism that often accompanies it. I will repeat the quotation that the minister gave; it bears repeating. In Monaco in 2000, Nelson Mandela spoke of the transformational nature of sport when he said:

“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand.”

Perhaps the minister would consider establishing in the name of Nelson Mandela a scholarship fund to help the sporting or academic achievement of young people from low-income backgrounds or people who have shown a real commitment to using sport to help to break down barriers. I hope that she will at least consider the idea and recognise that sport can help to encourage people to work together for the good of their community.

The debate is all too brief, but I sincerely hope that it will provide an appropriate launch pad for the consultation on the youth sports strategy.

I move amendment S4M-08546.2, to insert at end:

“; voices concern at the findings of the Scottish Health Survey 2012, which highlighted that the proportion of children meeting physical activity guidelines ‘has not changed significantly since 2008’ and that, while children’s participation in sport and exercise increased between 1998 and 2009, levels have been declining since; believes in the importance of promoting inclusion and solidarity through sport and physical activity, and believes that the Youth Sport Strategy should address these issues”.

17:18

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the minister for writing to the relevant spokesmen in the parties back in October to ask us to give some input. I congratulate the young people who have been involved in the draft strategy. As the minister said, it is very important that it is the young people in the front line who help to develop the strategy rather than simply politicians.

I think that I am right in saying that it has been six years since Scotland’s sporting landscape was last thoroughly reviewed. Given what we have to look forward to next year in the context of the Ryder cup and the Commonwealth games, it makes sense to take stock of what still needs to be addressed. Notwithstanding some very good progress, there are still some key concerns.

I turn to the Conservative amendment. I think that I am right in saying that, in the 2007 Scottish National Party manifesto, the strong commitment was for two hours a week from specialist physical education teachers. That is one reason why it is extremely important.

Shona Robison: In the 2011 manifesto, we recognised that the classroom teacher is a key resource in delivering PE. I absolutely acknowledge that now. I hope that Liz Smith will do so as well, as Patricia Ferguson did earlier.

Liz Smith: Absolutely. I think that the two are complementary. The fact remains that specialist PE teachers were mentioned in the SNP manifesto. There must have been a specific, important reason for that, so we need to take it forward.

I repeat what I said about the FOI request. There is concern that not enough local authorities are aware of those who hold the relevant qualifications and where they are teaching. We could perhaps do a little bit more work with the General Teaching Council for Scotland to ensure that we have a good record of just who holds the relevant qualifications.

Tavish Scott raised an important point—although I see that he is no longer in the chamber—about the fact that there are obviously some serious cost issues for those who come from rural communities. Very good progress has been made in some such areas, but we need to do more to ensure that those who come from a very rural background have good access to facilities and can take part in as much sport as is possible.

I said in my response to the minister back in October that I thought that we could do more to help build bridges between the private sector and the state sector. There are some excellent initiatives in state schools and in private schools, many of which have excellent sporting facilities. It is important that we try to use those facilities as much as we possibly can, to the benefit of all children. We should consider the point that Patricia Ferguson just made about scholarships, whether in the name of Nelson Mandela or other international and sporting figures, because a person’s parents’ income or where they come from should not determine whether their options for school sport are available or closed off. I welcome the suggestion that was made.

There is a need to ensure that there is a good coherent strategy between central Government and local government. This morning, the Education and Culture Committee heard loud and clear from a group of outdoor education specialists that they are concerned that there is not a coherent strategy and that there is a bit of a disconnect between central Government and local government. I noticed that that was mentioned in the strategy, but perhaps we need to think a bit more about how the Scottish Government can create a better system in that regard.

As somebody who over time has held various sports coaching qualifications, I am acutely aware

of the input that is provided by volunteers. If it were not for those volunteers, far fewer children would have the benefit of sport. We have done a lot to increase the number of volunteers, but we have to be mindful of the fact that there are still concerns, particularly in some sports, that people cannot volunteer because of the bureaucracy that goes with it. Volunteering has perhaps been hindered by the fact that bureaucracy gets in the way.

I very much look forward to the publication of the final youth sport strategy; 2014 is shaping up to be a fantastic year for sport and it presents Scotland with a terrific opportunity, but only if we can take the very strong message back from the young people who are in the gallery and their peers and address a lot of the issues that have been raised.

I move amendment S4M-08546.1, to insert at end:

“, and urges the Scottish Government to place additional focus on ensuring that all primary school children will receive two hours of PE per week delivered by a qualified PE instructor”.

17:23

Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the launch of the Scottish Government's draft strategy on youth sport and the opportunity to take part in today's debate. It is appropriate that the Scottish Government has chosen to launch the consultation on the draft strategy at a time when we are also preparing for the Glasgow Commonwealth games and, of course, the Ryder cup in 2014. The Commonwealth games in particular will be a stimulus for various economic, sporting and health initiatives, but it is important to ensure that those initiatives leave lasting benefits after the exciting events of next year have ended.

As the Government motion correctly points out, the potential benefits of sport are far reaching and any current investment in youth sport will manifest itself in many positive outcomes in years to come, particularly, I hope, for the most disadvantaged in our society.

As other members have mentioned, and as I am sure that others who have yet to speak will mention, sport has benefits that reach well beyond sport itself: from building the confidence of a young person to developing social skills as part of a team, through to improved health and embedding exercise habits that will, we hope, last a lifetime. However, the Government's long-term objective of creating a healthier nation will not be achieved without the active participation of young Scots.

Like others, I therefore very much welcome the Scottish Government's decision to create a young

people's sport panel, which consists of 16 14 to 25-year-olds, to ensure that young people are engaged and at the forefront of maximising the impact of sport in their communities. It has been a consistent theme of this Government to ensure that young people are empowered, whether at the ballot box or in their community, and I believe that including young people in shaping the future of sport in Scotland ensures the continuation of that policy.

As a West Scotland MSP, I am delighted to see that my region is well represented in the young people's sport panel. Hannah Jolly and Matt McCormick of Bearsden are both members, and Kulbir Singh from Barrhead and Sophie Gibson from Giffnock will also help to increase the profile of sport in their communities. Kulbir—to pick out one person—is an example of how the involvement of young people in sport can create wider benefits. A badminton player in his own right, he has also volunteered at national and international sporting events, including the four nations disability badminton tournament and the national badminton championships. He runs a badminton club and is a member of the committee in his local Sikh temple that organises sports days in the community.

Through Scottish Government initiatives and the enthusiasm of people such as Kulbir, Sophie, Hannah and Matt, who work hard in their communities, Scotland is well armed for the battle against physical inactivity, with 70 per cent of children aged two to 15 now meeting the recommended levels of physical activity. We beat ourselves up in this place about statistics all the time, but frankly we should celebrate the fact that we are making progress in all these areas, including the battle against physical inactivity.

The 2013 healthy living survey shows that 89 per cent of pupils from first year to fourth year now meet the Government target of two periods of PE per week, which is a considerable improvement since 2004-05. The Scottish Government's recent announcement of a further investment of £5.8 million will ensure that we are able to build on the progress that we have made in creating a healthier and more active society. The youth sport strategy is another step forward in the development of sport in Scotland and a number of welcome measures are included in it, such as community sports hubs and ensuring that young people with a disability are fully involved in PE and sports provision.

It is not a straightforward or easy task to change a nation's outlook in terms of sport or healthy physical activity, but I believe that we are on the right path. Next year will be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity not only to raise the profile of sport in Scotland, but to encourage our young people to

live more active and healthy lives. It is therefore reassuring to see that the Scottish Government is already well prepared to take advantage of those major events and build on the existing opportunities that young people in Scotland enjoy.

17:28

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): Many of us are using this afternoon's debate to pay our own personal tribute to the life of Nelson Mandela, in particular his powerful and resonant message about the importance of sport, and I would like to do so, too. Both my colleague Patricia Ferguson and the minister began their speeches by referring to the speech in which President Mandela talked about the power of sport not just to change the world, but to unite it. Of course, he gave that speech at the final of the rugby world cup in South Africa in 1995. He was wearing his Springbok rugby shirt at an event that helped to unify that new and yet still-divided young nation and to redeem South Africa in the eyes of the international community.

Sport was clearly important to Nelson Mandela and I believe that the same feelings about sport hold true for most of us. It moves us, touches our emotions and stands out in so many of our memories and so many of our life occasions, from watching our kids at sports day to the joy of national and international sporting success. This year we had Andy Murray winning at Wimbledon, but I still remember as if it was yesterday when Ian Stewart and Lachie Stewart won the 5,000m and 10,000m at the Commonwealth games in Edinburgh. I am glad that the Presiding Officer is nodding; I think that the minister is way too young to remember such an occasion.

Our lives are littered with such memories, so why—when the topic is so important to shaping us as humans and when it brings us together round our club, our team, our town and our country—do we constantly treat the subject as second class? In public policy, funding, the school curriculum and our culture, we still seem to regard sport as something that is an add-on rather than core or central to our lives. I do not doubt the minister's good intentions or the good will that all sides have expressed today, but that is not being followed up with the action, the funding, the facilities or the drive to change the culture.

I believe that “transformational” is the political word du jour. There is probably no better moment to transform Scotland's sporting culture. We have had a series of high-profile sporting successes and, with the Commonwealth games coming up, the country is abuzz with sporting anticipation.

Shona Robison: I am not sure that I agree with the vision that Ken Macintosh painted of facilities.

When I look around me, I see fantastic new facilities not just in the west but in lots of communities. We have sports facilities like we have never had before. Surely there is a positive story to tell about that. More can always be done, but surely he recognises that we now have some fantastic facilities in our communities.

Ken Macintosh: I absolutely welcome new facilities every time that they are opened. However, I am conscious that we are still losing parks, playgrounds and tennis courts. Just up the road from me, in East Kilbride, a huge investment was made in a big building called Playsport, but it then lay empty and was not fitted out. It is being used for recreational activities, but not for the sport for which it was designed. This is a cold, wet, dark and wintry country half the time and we face a lot of challenges if we want to play sport. Much more than the rest of the UK, we need indoor facilities, which require investment and commitment.

On commitment, despite years of trying, we have still not been able to deliver something as simple as two hours of PE a week in each of our schools. Would we have taken so long to deliver two hours of maths? For that matter, what does it say when we tag on and squeeze in a short debate such as this at the end of a long parliamentary day?

On the one hand, some good work is going on. Whatever we might think about our national football side or the state of the professional game, there is great work in youth football—not just the fantastic work of Jim Fleeting, Andy Gould and all at the Scottish Football Association but the unsung voluntary effort of coaches.

On the other hand, how many of us have heard stories about what is happening in other sports—in badminton, tennis, wrestling, canoeing, basketball and many others—and about parents falling out with coaches, squabbles and infighting? Many good people work in sports organisations, but I do not believe that they have the governance, accountability or transparency of funding that is needed to build confidence. I am not convinced that some sports have the structures to develop a long-term strategy, never mind to deliver it.

Presiding Officer, this is an incredibly short debate and I should not have taken an intervention. I want to make a big point about what happens in our teenage years.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): You will need to make it quickly.

Ken Macintosh: In those years, a catastrophic falling-off occurs in participation in sport, particularly among girls. It does not have to be that way. If we take the example of the best schools, we can change our world and follow Nelson Mandela's example.

17:33

Aileen McLeod (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to speak and I welcome the launch of the consultation on the draft strategy. I thank the young people's sport panel for its work and I am pleased that some of its members have joined us for the debate. The strategy is for young people and has been guided by them; I congratulate them on that. I also warmly welcome the announcement that £5.8 million in funding will continue to support schools in delivering PE lessons.

Some members have reflected on the importance of sport in promoting health and wellbeing. We need sport for young people to function well at all levels so that we identify and support the champion athletes of the future and allow everyone to participate, whatever their ability level is.

As I am a South Scotland MSP, I will mention that the under-20 ice hockey world championships are taking place at Dumfries ice bowl this week. This morning, the Stanley cup—the most prestigious trophy in ice hockey—arrived in Glasgow ahead of celebrations in Dumfries later this week to mark 100 years of ice hockey in Britain. That is great for Dumfries because, like the Commonwealth games, it brings elite-level sport closer to home and such opportunities are very important for our young people. Indeed, a key message in the strategy is the importance of opportunities, whether it is the chance to see world-class sporting events at first hand or the chance to get involved in active participation.

Much of what is happening in Dumfries and Galloway to deliver opportunities is already aligned with the key areas that are outlined in the strategy. For example, the local council is moving ahead with plans to establish community sports hubs and has secured funding from sportscotland to create a new post that will concentrate on developing competitive school sport across the region. I understand that it is the first such post in Scotland.

Secondary schools throughout Dumfries and Galloway are part of the 2014 ambassador programme, and a lead 2014 conference is being planned for next February or March. The support and training that will be offered at that event will be linked to the Queen's baton relay as an opportunity to spread engagement in sport as widely as possible throughout the region.

Reflecting the importance of the great people strand of the strategy, Dumfries dolphins swimming club is one of the first swimming clubs in Scotland to have worked through all the elements of the positive coaching Scotland programme, and the council is working with

sportscotland on piloting the multiskill coach training to which the minister referred.

The Dumfries and Galloway branch of Scottish Disability Sport recently recorded a fantastic success at the national junior championships for swimmers with a sensory impairment or physical disability, with the region's swimmers well represented in the medals table. It is vital that we are inclusive and use the strategy to offer opportunities to all our young people.

On the great places strand, there is a great opportunity in the Dalbeattie schools project—a new learning campus that will be built through the Scottish Futures Trust—for us to test the early involvement of sportscotland in the design process and create a really first-rate facility.

There is so much that is positive both in the strategy and in what is already happening on the ground that it is impossible to do the subject justice in the time that we have. I will, therefore, close by reflecting on the minister's summary of what the young people's sport panel said that it wants: "great opportunities, supported by great people, delivered in great places and given a higher profile." The work that is already taking place is starting to deliver those things, and I am confident that the draft strategy will deliver on those ambitions and the aspirations of Scotland's children and young people. I look forward to the publication of the final strategy and the action plan next spring.

17:37

Margo MacDonald (Lothian) (Ind): I have an interest to declare—I am the Parliament's one qualified specialist PE teacher. I might have two sticks these days, but I would not even be going around on two sticks if I had not qualified in PE.

Although I greatly appreciate the work that the minister has done in promoting the additional modules of PE for general teachers at training colleges, nothing will beat a PE specialist and no money should ever be saved by having the shortage of PE teachers that Liz Smith alluded to. We cannot expect to improve the quality of our PE without quality teaching and the in-depth knowledge that comes from specialist PE teachers.

I pay tribute to the minister, who has been really good in her post. However, she talked about the quantity of PE teaching that we now have because there are statistics to say that more kids are doing two hours of quality PE. The phrase "quality PE" trips off the tongue, but I have not yet seen a definition of it. What about the quality of the teaching? Do we know whether that is improving? We cannot possibly judge that at the moment because we do not have an even playing field.

What is the idea behind the strategy? Is it that we should be better at sport and, as a by-product, produce healthier people, or is it to have a healthier nation and to achieve that through sport? There is a difference, and the priority must be established.

Shona Robison: The strategy is about giving young people the core skills so that they can go on to enjoy sport, a by-product of which will be a healthier life. The quality of PE is very important and the new money will focus on driving that up.

Margo MacDonald: Obviously, I am pleased to hear that.

We have not yet identified a strategic way to develop sports that suit Scotland. The figures show that fewer young people are taking part in sport of their own volition, and that cannot all be explained by the PC-in-the-bedroom generation, because the same generation exists in Scandinavia and elsewhere. Although some other countries find it difficult to get young people to take part in active sport, countries that are more like us than we care to remind ourselves of, such as Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the Baltic countries, have become experts in the sports that suit their terrain and climate.

We still try to be world beaters at sports that we can never be world beaters at, although every so often somebody good will pop up. We could have a greater number of people performing at a higher level if we chose the right sports. Why do we not concentrate on winter sports? We are world beaters at them. Why do we not choose sailing? Why not boxing? We are good at that, so we should sort out how we feel about it. Why do we not choose orienteering? We are made for sports like that, but we have not thought too much about it. We might get more people involved in those sports, but we have not tried. We have tried football, rugby and other commonly played field sports, but people do not hang on to them—only a minority of people continue playing them after they have left school. I ask the minister to take a wider look at sports.

Absolutely fundamentally, I want the minister to look again at PE in schools. She has done a great deal on that and much has been said about it. It is now fashionable to believe in PE but, as Ken Macintosh asked, why is it an also-ran or tack-on subject in educating our children? Why do some people still look at me and think that I am daft because I am just a drillie? It is because there has been and is a terrible snobbery in Scottish education and in school classrooms. The PE teacher has been derided as the thick one. Members have asked why PE does not have the status that it should have—

The Presiding Officer: Can I ask you to wind up, please?

Margo MacDonald: I have said my piece. Thank you, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: You are very welcome, Ms MacDonald.

17:42

Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP): I welcome the strategy for youth sports and in particular the input by the young people's sport panel. It is good that those whom we want to encourage to participate in sport have taken part in the direction finding that, frankly, we have required for some time.

As I see it, there are two issues. The first, which a number of members have dealt with, is how we get young people into sport. What is sport at a youth level? It was only in the latter part of the debate that the idea of fun has been introduced. People need to find a real sense of fun when they kick off—that is the only way that we will get youngsters in primary school interested. The transition between primary and secondary school has been mentioned, and there are the physical changes that happen during adolescence, which particularly affect girls' involvement in sport. Those are all issues, but they have been around for years. Dealing with them is the first part of tackling the problems.

Obviously, I am delighted with the £5.9 million that the minister mentioned and that 89 per cent of schools have met the PE target, although I would love 100 per cent of schools to have the full amount of PE. However, having read the report, I want to raise the issue of how we help people to continue when they identify the sport that they are interested in. At school, PE provides a taster to allow kids to get into sport and to find out what sport they like, what is good for them and how they can continue doing it.

Another issue is that we want high-level athletes. Ken Macintosh mentioned Ian Stewart. The first time that I ran a 5,000m for Edinburgh Athletic Club back in the 1970s, when I was 17, we stayed with the Stewart family in Birchfield. Those people are role models to us.

I get very despondent when I see that the last time that a Scottish record for a flat race between 100m and the marathon was broken was 19 years ago with Tom McKean. We have to go back to 1975 to the 400m record by David Jenkins. There is therefore an issue with role models. Those people have been and gone and a lot of people do not remember them—we were having a laugh at who remembers Ian Stewart—but I do. Graham Williamson, who holds the Scottish record for the 1

mile, was my captain in the Scottish schools cross-country team, but that is going back so many years. We have to get people involved now.

This is where the people aspect comes in. When I went to Craigmount school, it was great. The head of physical education was Peter Gallagher, a Scottish B international rugby player. At that time I had no interest in rugby, but my English teacher was the five times Scottish marathon champion, Colin Youngson. He got me into running and, through that, I became an international and carried on from there. It was absolutely fantastic.

People are the key. We have to involve people who inspire and really want the kids to do well. If we do that, people will have fun at sport and take it through their entire careers into adulthood and we will, I hope, start to see the results in future years.

17:46

Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab): The young people's sports panel is to be congratulated on its contribution to the draft strategy. Great opportunities, people and locations are what our young people demand. They want to participate in something that is attractive and first-class. As Margo MacDonald indicated earlier, a higher profile for physical education as a subject in its own right is essential and—to add another aspect—it needs to cost what people and their families can afford.

Today's debate is timely. This morning, the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* published a report from one of its contributors that the absence of a United Kingdom policy on physical activity is mass child neglect. Although I would not go so far in my own estimation of what that means, I understand the point that the writer is trying to make.

The minister has, quite properly, said a lot about the successes with the strategy thus far. However, within the healthy living survey, there is a statistic that indicates that children's participation in sport has decreased from 73 per cent in 2009 to 66 per cent in 2012. That is an important statistic that we need to take account of.

Schools' commitment to sport and a meaningful provision of physical education is vital to the links between wider education, PE attainment and the development of the individual. Although it is welcome that £5.8 million is to be dedicated to improving PE lessons, that £5.8 million is being given over a two-year period.

Margo MacDonald: Does the member have an answer to the question about why there has been that drop in the percentage of young people who are taking part in sport?

Graeme Pearson: I suppose a number of answers could be offered. Our computer generation and so on have all been alluded to, but at the end of the day it is about making sport attractive and meaningful to young people so that they will engage with it. It is about providing sports that are relevant to those young people.

As was indicated earlier, in this country it is dark for too many months, it is a bit wet on occasions, and it can be a bit cold. No doubt most members have acknowledged that, having become involved in sport, once people get out there they enjoy it, even in such circumstances, and they engage when their PE teachers are first-class and know how to bring out the best in their pupils.

Let us bear it in mind that the £5.8 million is to be spread among 376 high schools, 193 special schools and 2,153 primary school locations. I know that it will be invested at the top end, but once it is spread out among all the pupils in Scotland it does not amount to much. I know that some schools currently spend more than £600 per month hiring buses in order to get pupils to locations so that they can engage in the very education that we seek to support.

The youth sport strategy aims to ensure high-quality sports coaching, more competitive sport between schools and the full involvement of disabled pupils, but we should bear it in mind that many PE teachers are teaching to classes of 30. Those involved in community sports training for coaches have indicated that they would prefer that classes should be no more than 15 if that education is to be worth while in those circumstances.

I commend the minister for leading from the front. Today is a day not only to laud what has been achieved in the past but to note that there is much more to be achieved in future. If we are to give our children a future, we need to take those matters more seriously.

17:51

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): I have been both a participant in youth sport, as a member of my local athletics club when I was younger, and also a coach, having coached youth football prior to getting involved in elected politics as a councillor.

One thing that needs to be emphasised, as Colin Keir pointed out strongly, is that although PE teachers are important—it was through my PE teacher at secondary school that I was put in contact with the local athletics club—there are many more people who have a role to play in driving the sport agenda. It is not just the PE teacher at the school who has the capacity to run one of the school sports teams or to get children

inspired and involved in sport. That is something that is worth bearing in mind as we take the strategy forward.

In my constituency—indeed, in the city of Aberdeen—we have a number of good sporting facilities. The Aberdeen Sports Village is a shining example of the Government's commitment to delivering top-quality sporting facilities and it represents a strong investment in the city. Adjoining it is the Aberdeen aquatic centre, currently under development, which was brought forward by the council administration of which I was part. It provides a 50m pool for the city of Aberdeen that will allow for development and training for elite swimming clubs.

Margo MacDonald: Will the member give way?

Mark McDonald: I suspect that I may be about to cover the point that Margo MacDonald is going to raise, so perhaps she will let me develop it and see whether it goes where she thinks it might.

One of the key points is that those facilities are not just for elite sports people. Not everybody who gets involved with sport will be an elite sportsperson: not everybody who joins a football team is going to win a trophy and not everybody who joins an athletics club is going to win a medal or become a champion. It is important that we do not promote sport as being just about developing elite athletes for the future, but that we promote sport as something in which it is fundamentally good to get involved in and of itself.

Margo MacDonald: I thank Mark McDonald for giving way. That is not the point that he thought I might make.

The council is providing a top-class quality facility, and all the clubs—there are a lot of clubs in the Grampian area—will want to use it. My message to the council would be, “Don't put the prices too high,” because the clubs cannot afford to take the water time.

Mark McDonald: I should have learned by now that it is always a mistake to try to second-guess Margo MacDonald, but I take the point that she makes.

I recently visited Zariba, a synchronised skating club in Aberdeen that is currently the Scottish and UK champion in synchronised skating. One of the pressures that its members face is the cost not just of entering competitions—they often have to travel internationally to compete—but of using the ice rink in Aberdeen. That is a point that I took up on their behalf and there has been some progress in that regard.

I agree with Margo MacDonald because, having been involved in youth sport both as a participant and as a coach, I know that there are cost pressures for parents and for children—and for

clubs as well. Some clubs are phenomenally successful at fundraising, gaining sponsorship and advancing in that respect, but other clubs struggle. Perhaps we need to look at that issue and consider how we can assist the clubs that do not have the easy ins to gaining sponsorship and access to private funding. They might be based in deprived communities and not have the benefit of parents who can afford the most up-to-date equipment for their children or pay fees to enable their children to participate.

We perhaps need to look at such points going forward. However, I welcome the draft strategy and I am sure that it will be informed by the consultation.

The Presiding Officer: We now move to the winding-up speeches. I call Mary Scanlon. Ms Scanlon, you have four minutes.

17:55

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): First, I thank Margo MacDonald for her speech. It takes a qualified, highly specialised PE teacher to tell us what it is all about—well done, Margo.

I started reading the Government's draft strategy “Giving children and young people a sporting chance” after coming home from my Pilates class last night, so my first comment is that it is not only children and young people who need access to sports and exercise but people of all ages. I looked back at where our adult sport strategy was and I found the Labour-Liberal Democrat Government's publication “Let's Make Scotland More Active: A strategy for physical activity”, which was published in 2003 and which included both children and adults.

I understand that since the publication of that strategy, which set targets of physical activity for children and adults to be reached by 2022, we have tended to focus on children, which is reasonable and fair in terms of assuming that they will continue to be physically active throughout their lives. However, I hope that the targets set for adults in 2003, which I understand were reviewed in 2008, have not been abandoned. I ask the minister to give a progress update on that either in her summing-up speech or in writing later.

There is much that local and central Government can do to provide local facilities for exercise and other classes for people of all ages. The Health and Sport Committee carried out an inquiry on pathways into sport in 2009. We discovered that where there was a can-do attitude, such as in East Renfrewshire Council, the two hours of quality physical education by specialist PE teachers was delivered. However, in other local authorities there were plenty of excuses to be found, such as a crowded curriculum, lack of

facilities and transport, and staff issues. We heard, though, that physically active children were more alert and attentive in the classroom and that their level of fitness enhanced their learning abilities.

Margo MacDonald: Will the member take an intervention?

Mary Scanlon: No, I have only four minutes, Margo—sorry.

We welcome and acknowledge the progress that has been made towards achieving the two hours of PE, but I read in the SNP manifesto:

“To help Scottish children develop the habit of physical fitness, we will ensure that every pupil has two hours of quality PE each week, delivered by specialist PE teachers.”

I was a lecturer for more than 20 years before coming to the Parliament and if someone had said to me then, “Right. You take your students for PE this week,” I would not have known where to start. I think that my students would have been at quite a disadvantage if I had been expected to take them for PE.

As well as the obvious benefits of fitness from participation in sport, we are now much more aware of the positive link between participation in sport and combating obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, arthritis and depression.

I am looking at the clock, so I will just say of the strategy that I was pleased to note that in addition to the target of two hours of PE, the Government acknowledges that swimming and cycling are fundamental skills for life. I am not sure what

“37 per cent of eligible children receive on road training”

on cycling means, but I presume from the word “eligible” that it does not mean 37 per cent of all children. I ask that a little bit more than one paragraph for swimming and cycling be included in the main strategy when it comes out.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that they should address or refer to one another by their full names.

18:00

Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): Given the involvement of Mary Scanlon and me on the Health and Sport Committee it is not surprising that we focus on this subject as a health issue. There was a shocking headline this week about 20 people a week dying as a result of alcohol. The last time that we had a debate on this subject, the minister reminded us that 50 people a week die from inactivity and lack of exercise and that the issue costs the health service about £90 million a year. I view the strategies, with all their strands, as feeding into the healthy nation, which

Stewart Maxwell and Margo MacDonald referred to.

It goes without saying that sport has a significant role to play in encouraging young people to live more active lifestyles, which can improve their outlook. It is to be hoped that enjoyable experiences will boost their confidence and their physical and mental wellbeing, and that they will take that into their later years.

We have all been inspired by those people who are already involved. At St Joseph’s school, the key fitness initiative involved the Greenock Morton captain, Mark McLaughlin. I mention him because the power of good coaches is important. Those primary school children were not passive participants in a sports exercise; they were getting access to somebody who is a good coach. Part of the exercise that I witnessed was about the primary school pupils developing their ability to coach their fellow pupils. Taking a turn coaching developed their confidence no end, and it was really inspiring to watch.

During the Health and Sport Committee’s inquiry, some of my colleagues saw the work of basketballscotland. The young women involved go through the whole process and become ambassadors for their sport. Young primary girls were watching the older girls taking a class and they were in awe—there was a connection there. That can be made meaningful; it can be made to be really great.

Margo MacDonald: The member has given an excellent example of a sport that has far too much underfunding, but so much potential.

Duncan McNeil: It is also a question of what people make of it—in terms of money, and also the enthusiasm for the particular sport. Young people want to participate in that sport and it is really important that the strategy has been developed by young people, listening to young people.

We have spoken about the quality of teaching and coaching. We had PE teachers in my day, although PE was not very exciting. On a rainy day, they used to run us up Lyle Hill from Rankin park and run us back down again. It was not very inspiring. It is important that we listen to young people and, as Stewart Maxwell says, that we prepare for the legacy from and the enthusiasm that will be focused on the Commonwealth games. We need to harness that—and I will return later to what we need to do in order to do that. There is no doubt that such preparation could be an important step in developing a lasting legacy beyond 2014—as long as we listen to young people and we put in place the things that can provide encouragement. It was the Health and Sport Committee that

recommended setting up a young people's forum and we are glad that the minister took that advice.

The Government has plans to extend competitive sport between schools. That could really work for people. There is no doubt that the competitive experience as described by members such as Ken Macintosh and Colin Keir can be inspiring and can motivate young people to improve their skills. However, we must also bear it in mind that we are not developing elite athletes. We hope that young people take their enjoyment and fun into their teenage years—and indeed their adult years—if we are to meet the health targets.

As Patricia Ferguson said, the aim is to tackle discrimination and other issues to allow young people to be attracted to and supported in sporting activity, irrespective of their gender, race, sexuality or, indeed, class. Those are the issues that prevent young people from getting involved and we need to tackle them. The extra costs to ensure that young people with disabilities take part have been mentioned.

Volunteers are vital. Unfortunately, we need to tackle the barriers to volunteering if we hope to develop a legacy. The number of people who volunteer in Scotland to enable people to participate in sport is flatlining at best. International comparisons show that we are lagging behind Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany. We need to do better if we are to achieve a legacy.

What the minister said was right, particularly in respect of Inverclyde. We have never been best served by our facilities. We cannot build a strategy on the fact that only 40 per cent of the available outdoor space in secondary schools is used and only 28 per cent of it is used in the school holidays. We need to do better.

18:06

Shona Robison: This has been a very good debate and I thank everybody for their comments. I know that it has been quite short, but I am happy to come back to the Parliament on the issue. I will ask that the young people's sports panel consider all the suggestions that have been made in the debate as they take the draft forward to the publication of a final strategy and action plan in the spring of next year.

Some good suggestions have been made. I am certainly happy to look at Patricia Ferguson's scholarship suggestion and if we can go further on access for children with a disability we will, of course, do so.

Liz Smith made some useful suggestions, as did Tavish Scott, around travel costs. We have already committed to looking at that issue.

Stewart Maxwell reminded us of some of the more positive statistics. Two thirds or 70 per cent of children aged two to 15 meet the recommended levels of physical activity. However, we do not want to be complacent, which is why we have no difficulty in accepting the Labour amendment. We recognise that there is always more to be done.

Ken Macintosh talked about the requirement for more indoor facilities, particularly during the winter. I absolutely recognise that, which is why we have put such a focus on opening up the school estate. In many communities, schools provide the best sporting facilities. They need to be open beyond the school day. The recent research that sportscotland undertook shows that a lot of the school estate is open beyond the school day, but we need to ensure that it is all open beyond the school day. The hubs are a good way of doing that.

Duncan McNeil: Does the minister recognise that the hubs have many positive aspects and are a good model, but that we should also acknowledge what the sports clubs bring to our local communities—the sense of wellbeing and solidarity—and that they should not be forced into a hub model if they do not want to be in one?

Shona Robison: Obviously, the hubs are the clubs in many respects, but I agree that it is fine if clubs do not want to go into a hub. Many of them do, of course, because they can then share facilities, resources and people. That is a good model, particularly for the smaller clubs. I think that Mark McDonald mentioned them.

Ken Macintosh asked why it has taken so long to deliver the two hours of PE. Exactly. I wanted to take the matter by the scruff of the neck and make that happen because it was taking too long—to have only 10 per cent of schools in 2004-05 meeting the two hours of PE target was an absolute disgrace. By my estimation, getting to nearly 90 per cent of schools delivering those two hours in two periods is not a bad track record, but we are not complacent about that; indeed, I want to see all schools delivering that as the minimum. We are investing £11.6 million— £5.8 million over the past two years and £5.8 million over the next two years—to make that happen. Every local authority must come up with a plan for how every school in its area will deliver on that target and that money helps to oil the wheels.

Patricia Ferguson: As I said, we very much welcome the increase in the number of young people who are accessing physical activity through PE. However, I point out to the minister that the baseline figure was for two hours, not two periods, so we are not comparing like with like. In addition, we were originally talking about quality PE delivered by PE specialists.

Shona Robison: The member will find that, when it came to secondary schools, the count was not based on two hours; rather, it was based on the period system in the sector. However, let us just get the target met and more kids having more PE. I recognise that the quality of the activity is absolutely critical and the new funding will focus on driving that up.

I am absolutely delighted that Dumfries is, as Aileen McLeod mentioned, hosting the ice hockey tournament. That is a big deal for the town. I hope that that goes well.

Margo MacDonald, as always, made very good points. She talked about sport that we are successful at. The fastest growing sport is girls' football. A benefit from that is how fantastically well our national women's football team is doing. That success is no coincidence—it is because all those girls are enjoying football and excelling at that sport. She also made an important point about quality and the status of physical education. We are driving forward initiatives such as better movers and thinkers because they demonstrate that the academic performance of children improves with the enhancement of physical activity and education in schools, so there is also an academic benefit to it.

Margo MacDonald: Will the minister take on an even more fundamental issue and look at the idea of incorporating specialist PE colleges into universities? That was the position when I trained, but I fear that there is now far too much classroom work in the approach adopted.

Shona Robison: I want to ensure that the PE resource in its broadest sense is available. That may be done by PE specialists, well-trained confident classroom teachers or coaches working in partnership with teachers. However, the issue is really about children enjoying PE and wanting more of it. That is not always about the qualifications of the person but about their skills in enthusing the young person about PE and sport.

A number of other important points were made that I will touch on. Graeme Pearson mentioned affordability and access. Community sports hubs are important for that reason, which is why we have made it a condition on such hubs that affordability is key. We want the school estate and the community sports facilities to be not only open, but affordable to all.

I reassure Mary Scanlon on her point about adults. The debate was on youth strategy, so she will excuse me for focusing on young people.

Mary Scanlon: I am well aware of that.

Shona Robison: Adults are important, too, and our targets there remain. The latest statistics show that 62 per cent of adults met the recommended

physical activity levels. There is always more to do. We are investing in the Paths for All Partnership and are about to deliver a new walking strategy because we know that walking is a critical physical activity for the older population. We have not given up on the grown-ups at all, but the early development of good habits in the school environment is important because we know that active children and young people become active adults.

I thank members for the debate. We will look for other opportunities to come back to the Parliament for a debate on the final strategy.

Motion without Notice

18:15

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): I am minded to accept a motion without notice to bring forward decision time to now.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees, under Rule 11.2.4 of Standing Orders, that Decision Time be brought forward to 6.15 pm.—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

18:15

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are 10 questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that motion S4M-08559, in the name of Alex Salmond, on a motion of condolence for Nelson Mandela, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament records its sadness at the passing on 5 December 2013 of Nelson Mandela; celebrates the inspirational life of a prisoner who became president; recognises Nelson Mandela's role in the peaceful development of the modern South African nation and immense contribution to conflict resolution as a world statesman; celebrates his longstanding friendship with Scotland, and extends its deepest condolences and solidarity to Mr Mandela's family and the people of South Africa at this time.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-08544.1, in the name of Jenny Marra, which seeks to amend motion S4M-08544, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on human rights, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (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)

Abstentions

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 39, Against 62, Abstentions 11.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-08544, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on human rights, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of Scotland's first *National Action Plan for Human Rights*; recognises it as a historic milestone in Scotland's progress toward a vision, shared across the whole of Scottish society, of ensuring that everyone in the country can live with fundamental human dignity through the realisation of the universal and inalienable human rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and recognised in international law; commends the Scottish Human Rights Commission and all those from across the public, private and voluntary sectors, and from Scottish civil society at large who have contributed to the inclusive and cooperative process of developing this first *National Action Plan for Human Rights*, and looks forward to future opportunities over the lifetime of the plan to hear reports of the actions taken, and the progress achieved, in better realising the human rights of all in Scotland through realising the vision and achieving the outcomes mapped out in the plan.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-08540.3, in the name of Claire Baker, which seeks to amend motion S4M-08540, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on end-year fisheries negotiations, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-08540.2, in the name of Alex Johnstone, which seeks to amend motion S4M-08540, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on end-year fisheries negotiations, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-08540.1, in the name of Tavish Scott, which seeks to amend motion S4M-08540, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on end-year fisheries negotiations, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (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, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 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)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (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)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)

MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 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)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 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)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (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 Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 15, Against 97, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-08540, in the name of Richard Lochhead, as amended by Claire Baker, and as amended by Alex Johnstone, on end-year fisheries negotiations, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

That the Parliament supports the Scottish Government in its efforts to achieve the best possible outcome for Scotland across the range of ongoing annual negotiations and agrees that the negotiated settlements must have at their heart the interests of Scotland's fishermen and coastal communities while seeking to ensure the sustainable use of Scotland's marine environment and its natural resources; as part of the ongoing implementation of the reformed common fisheries policy, supports the drive toward regionalisation in European fisheries management; believes that every effort must be taken to ensure that Scotland's fishing industry is ready to implement the

discard ban, and urges the Scottish Government to continue to work closely with the UK Government and the fishing community to secure the future viability of Scotland's fishing industry.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-08546.2, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, which seeks to amend motion S4M-08546, in the name of Shona Robison, on the youth sport strategy, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-08546.1, in the name of Liz Smith, which seeks to amend motion S4M-08546, in the name of Shona Robison, on the youth sport strategy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)

Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (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 Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 51, Against 62, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-08546, in the name of Shona Robison, as amended by Patricia Ferguson, on the youth sport strategy, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

That the Parliament acknowledges the important role that sport plays in the lives of children and young people by providing them with skills and confidence now and for later life; recognises the potential of youth sport in improving physical and mental wellbeing, competences for work and establishing sporting success in Scotland; recognises that young people have been directly involved in the development of the draft youth strategy; agrees that this is an important step in delivering a lasting legacy in 2014 and beyond; voices concern at the findings of the Scottish Health Survey 2012, which highlighted that the proportion of children meeting physical activity guidelines 'has not changed significantly since 2008' and that, while children's participation in sport and exercise increased between 1998 and 2009, levels have been declining since; believes in the importance of promoting inclusion and solidarity through sport and physical activity, and believes that the Youth Sport Strategy should address these issues.

YouthLink Scotland

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-08016, in the name of George Adam, on YouthLink Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated.

That the Parliament congratulates YouthLink Scotland on the publication of what it considers the very positive recent inspection report by Education Scotland; notes the recognition in the report of the high quality contribution that YouthLink Scotland and its member organisations make to the achievement of Scottish Government outcomes; recognises the work that it undertakes in local authority areas such as Renfrewshire, where it considers the YMCA, the Scouts and Play the Game make an important difference on a daily basis to the lives of the young people of Paisley, Renfrew and Johnstone by working with particularly vulnerable groups of young people to provide them with opportunities to undertake new challenges and adventures and, as a consequence, help them toward recognising and fulfilling their potential as individuals and as active members of society, and considers that YouthLink Scotland and its member organisations from the voluntary sector, uniformed youth organisations and local authority youth services across Scotland that apply the principles and values of youth work, have been very successful in their engagement with young people through encouraging them to use a range of life skills, assisting them in their journey to adulthood and successful futures and making Scotland the best place in the world in which to grow up as a successful learner, a confident individual, an effective contributor and a responsible citizen.

18:21

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): The debate comes on the back of Education Scotland's very positive inspection report on YouthLink Scotland. One reason why I wanted to have the debate is that that report represents such an improvement on the previous report on our national youth work provider that was produced in 2007.

I have seen the difference that YouthLink Scotland can make to young people's lives at local level. By working with many vulnerable young people and groups in my area, it gives them opportunities for the future. As well as helping uniformed groups to do some great work in my area, it has worked with various other partner organisations. For example, in the voluntary sector in Paisley there is the street stuff project, which is run by Renfrewshire Council, the YMCA, St Mirren Football Club and McGill's Buses. That project—which we have discussed previously in the Parliament—goes into areas where there are meant to be police hotspots and puts on street football, among a range of other things. The important thing is that the project works with young people in the area and gives them an opportunity to avoid misbehaviour by giving them something to do and somewhere to go. I have witnessed how

getting the opportunity to participate in activities such as street football can make a difference to young people's lives.

We need more work like that. In my area, the project has brought antisocial behaviour by young people down to 25 per cent. A lot of it has been about talking to and working with young people and doing good old-fashioned youth work. As our national provider, YouthLink Scotland has played quite an important role in that.

As the national agency for youth work, YouthLink Scotland has the role of supporting the youth work sector and playing its part in young people's rights and wellbeing. The vision of YLS is to have a youth work sector that can help young people to become successful learners, confident individuals and effective contributors. That is one of the most important aspects of the project that I mentioned—the young people get the opportunity to design it and to ensure that it provides something that they want to do, instead of it being something that a bunch of older people such as ourselves thought that we would like to have done when we were younger.

Funding for YouthLink Scotland is obtained from an annual grant from the Scottish Government and through bids to other Government and charitable funding providers. In addition, YLS administers funding programmes such as cashback for communities and directs funds to local areas. This year, it has received funding of £258,420 from the Big Lottery Fund. In the past year, YLS has managed to increase its geographic reach and its ability to deliver programmes throughout Scotland.

I will give some key examples of work that YouthLink Scotland has been involved in. Girlguiding Scotland has developed a range of initiatives in relation to young women and mental health and wellbeing. The Scotland Yard Adventure Centre is an Edinburgh-based centre that is accessed by more than 1,500 children and young people with a range of additional support needs every year. It provides care, support, fun and friendship for all the young people involved.

There is also the Prince's Trust Scotland young ambassadors programme, which empowers young people actively to work in the Prince's Trust, engage with public decision making and inspire other young people. Such projects are extremely important. When we talk about young people not engaging in the political process, my answer is always that it is up to us to make ourselves relevant to young people and to make sure that they want to get involved. However, such programmes give them an opportunity and show what civic Scotland can do and what they can do to help and represent it.

One of the high-profile projects in which YouthLink Scotland has been involved nationally is the no knives, better lives education and engagement programme. I have seen how that has worked locally. It is not that every debate that I have goes back to Paisley or to St Mirren FC but, on this occasion, it is relevant. Working as part of the street stuff programme, St Mirren played a major part in the no knives, better lives campaign with YouthLink Scotland and many of the local student associations in Paisley. Because of the pull of St Mirren being a partner organisation, the campaign has been able to attract young people from diverse backgrounds.

When we are dealing with young people in general, we must think about credibility. YouthLink Scotland does that. We must ensure that we have something to which they can relate and which they want to be a part of. We must remember that all the time.

The Education Scotland report says a lot of good things about YouthLink Scotland. It concluded that the national agency for youth work is making a real difference in young people's lives in Scotland. It praised YouthLink Scotland's consistency, strong leadership and direction within and beyond the sector, which resulted in a high level of successful engagement with national and local government.

The report also put across how YouthLink has been able to strengthen its position, being the national agency in Scotland, putting it in a unique position. It is the only organisation that represents the needs, views and aspirations of youth work organisations at a national level in the whole United Kingdom.

The highlights of the Education Scotland report are that there has been considerable improvement in YouthLink Scotland since the previous review in 2007; staff morale is high and has improved considerably; and the organisation

"delivers on an increasing number of Government priorities in relation to young people."

The idea of having a national organisation is to deliver great ideas nationally. When we debate youth work in Scotland, many MSPs get up and talk about programmes that are specific to their local areas. I mentioned street stuff in Renfrewshire and someone else will mention something that has happened in Edinburgh. However, the good thing about YouthLink Scotland is that it should be able to engage in all of that, tap into it and ensure that approaches that work in one area can be used in others as well. That is the benefit of having a national agency.

I congratulate YouthLink Scotland on all the good work that it has done and wish it further

success in the future as it works in all of our communities with our children and young people.

18:28

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): I congratulate George Adam on securing tonight's debate. It is a real joy to be able to stand up and say that I agree with every word that he says. I cannot say that that happens often.

In my speech, I will talk briefly about three projects of which I am aware that do tremendous work, and then I will make some comments about youth work overall.

The first project that I will mention is the Canongate Youth Project. I know that the minister is familiar with it—certainly Angela Constance has been to it a number of times before. It is based in central Edinburgh.

I was delighted to be able to host the Canongate Youth Project in the Parliament a couple of weeks ago, when it put on a music concert in committee room 3. Never has Taio Cruz been blasted out of a committee room to quite the same degree. I was really impressed by two young people who were both care leavers and had been accessing the project for about a year. They took to the stage and played an incredible song that they had written together. One was rapping and the other was playing the guitar. They were brilliant. They were not just good at what they did; they could be selling the song now. They could be leading, cutting-edge artists and I wish them the very best in doing that.

The thing that struck me was the importance of music in their lives. Through the Canongate Youth Project, they had been able to record a song and that allowed them not only to express themselves and how they felt about the world that they lived in but to realise how talented they were. It gave them the skills and confidence to build on that talent, which they had perhaps been unable to do in any other environment, including at home and at school. I am really grateful to the Canongate Youth Project for the opportunities that it has given those young people.

The second project that I want to talk about is the youth bus, which is a mobile youth work project in the east end of Edinburgh. It moves around different parts of the east end every night and works with dozens of kids. There are loads of different facilities on the bus, including an Xbox where kids can just sit and play computer games, access to Skills Development Scotland advice about employability and, crucially, a c:card service, which is NHS Lothian's free condom service. It is a real mix of different services, all available on one bus, which moves around the city at night. I put on record how grateful I am to

Lothian Buses for its continued support for the project. At the end of the day, it is a bus that moves around parts of the city, and Lothian Buses parks, maintains, funds and secures it every week. The contribution that Lothian Buses makes is probably worth about £15,000 a year. It is worth recognising the important role Lothian Buses plays by doing that.

The third group that I want to mention is Girlguiding Scotland, which George Adam mentioned. I have been really impressed by the work that the girl guides have been doing in the past year on female body image and empowering young women to feel more positive about themselves. The guides are not just giving young women the confidence to speak up on their own behalf but are filling them with a degree of civic activism that is letting them campaign on a national stage. It was the girl guides who took to the airwaves recently to say why they wanted to back the no more page 3 campaign. It was not just about personal body image but about the girl guides turning round and saying to the country: "This is not okay any more in 2013. We are going to stand up for a more equal world."

It is important to remember that a lot of youth work relies on volunteers and increasingly stretched public funding. Although the youth workers will do everything that they can to keep things going under the most strained of circumstances, we need to recognise that without core funding, they are fighting a losing battle. If we, as politicians, believe in youth work and its powers, we need to fund it. We cannot just let youth workers go from one bidding process to another and hope for the best.

Another issue is capital investment. The more that youth projects' budgets are squeezed, the more tatty the minibus will become and the more the paint will fall off the church hall roof or the community centre. That will need to be addressed.

Ultimately, we need to remember about equality of access. Everybody should be able to access youth work whatever their surroundings—urban or rural—and whatever type of community they come from. If we value it, we must ensure that every young person can benefit from it.

Thank you, Presiding Officer, for letting me speak a little bit over my time slot and, once again, I congratulate George Adam on securing the debate.

18:33

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I, too, for the first and probably the last time can put on the record that I agree with everything that George Adam said. I congratulate him on securing the debate, which highlights the important role that

youth work plays in supporting our young people to develop.

In its role of representing the voluntary and statutory sector, YouthLink Scotland is at the forefront of youth work. As George Adam mentioned, that is why the recent inspection report by Education Scotland makes for such encouraging reading. The “clear direction” that has been exhibited by chief executive officer Jim Sweeney and the rest of the team has meant that despite a decline in overall staff numbers, YouthLink Scotland has managed to forge closer working relationships with local authorities. For that, and for maintaining excellent staff morale, it deserves to be commended.

George Adam also mentioned the success of the no knives, better lives campaign, which has done an excellent job of informing young people about the true risks of carrying dangerous weapons. At the last count, 233 staff and volunteers had been instructed in use of the training resources “Sharp Solutions” and “On a Knife Edge”, with another 102 young people across nine areas becoming peer educators.

Each of the 30,000 young people who cast a vote in the recent We-CTV competition, which was held to select the best short film that was designed to get the no knives, better lives message across, will have received an important lesson in the dangers of crime.

On a related point, YouthLink Scotland has consistently been one of the top beneficiaries—if not the top beneficiary—of the cashback for communities programme. Last year more than £600,000 was distributed to 204 projects. That is very encouraging and welcome news, although I add that the presence of such funding is no substitute for a consistent long-term financial commitment from central Government to YouthLink.

More than 300 volunteers, peer educators and managers attended this year’s national youth worker awards, which speaks volumes for the importance of their work. For too long, the terms “youth worker” and “unsung hero” went hand in hand, so I congratulate YouthLink Scotland on challenging that and on generating some much-deserved publicity via its awards. I note that the nominations for next year close on 19 December, so anyone who has someone in mind needs to move fairly quickly.

The best way to encourage more youngsters into volunteering is to recognise their achievements publicly. That can, in particular, challenge the damaging and wrong assumption that young people are somehow not investing in our communities.

I came across a submission from YouthLink to the Finance Committee that highlighted that young people who live in the most deprived areas are far less likely than their peers to participate in youth work, and in leisure, sport and cultural activities. One reason is the lack of adequate facilities, which is a problem that was also mentioned during this afternoon’s debate on the youth sport strategy.

YouthLink does a tremendous job and deserves cross-party support in Parliament. As I have said, I was encouraged by the Education Scotland inspection, which speaks volumes about the professional and dedicated nature of the organisation.

In the coming years, I fully expect that more will be done to ensure that Scotland’s religious and cultural diversity is better reflected and that self-evaluation will improve.

18:37

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): It is not insignificant that the debate follows a debate on sport, because sport is, of course, very important for youngsters in our society.

This debate is led by George Adam, so in homage to him I have my Paisley patterned galluses holding my breeks up. I thank him for the opportunity to participate in this important debate.

YouthLink is an important part of the infrastructure that exists to support our youngsters—not just in Paisley, but across Scotland.

The motion refers to a number of other organisations and, in particular, to the scouts. I spent probably something of the order of a year of my life under boy-scout canvas. If I benefited from that it is to the credit of the scouts; my faults are entirely my own. I acquired important skills in the boy scouts; I learned how to burn baked potatoes, which I did instead of chasing girls, so it probably was not a terribly bad thing to be doing at the appropriate age. Certainly my mother preferred me to be burning potatoes to carrying out other activities in which I might have indulged.

Alex Johnstone and I visited the conclave of the great and the good in the scouting movement in the north-east of Scotland recently, which was quite an illuminating experience. They had in the room a wide range of projects. Some were outdoor projects to do with self-development, such as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, for which people were working. Others were community-based projects in which the young people were learning to support people in their communities. I thought that it was a very good mix of projects indeed.

Alex Johnstone and I both left very much enthused by what we had seen but—this is important—there was clearly a lack of people who wanted to step forward and provide the administrative leadership that is necessary to make that infrastructure of grass-roots volunteers work. There is a clear role for organisations such as YouthLink that operate at national level and which can think about how we do that sort of thing.

In the town of Buckie in my constituency we have what is probably Scotland's biggest Boys Brigade group, with 250 members, so it is not just the boy scouts that are doing well in the north-east.

YouthLink also organises its own interventions, in particular among those who are in areas of significant disadvantage, and—as the inspection report confirms—it does well.

When I was a youngster—I will not be alone in this—I wanted desperately to be an adult, but now that I am an adult I wish that I was a youngster again. There is not much chance of that happening. However, if YouthLink and other organisations can tap into adult experience—good and bad, as it will inevitably be—to aid today's youngsters to make a successful transition to adulthood, it will absolutely deserve all the plaudits that we can give it.

George Adam talked about engaging young people in community decision making and Kezia Dugdale talked about civic activism. I will give a small example of something that happened in the little village of Maud, which was in my constituency for the best part of 10 years, until the boundary change took it out. A “planning for real” exercise on how the village would be regenerated was structured in order to allow eight-year-olds whom I saw there to go up to stick on a map of the village little Post-it notes with the things that they thought could happen. Old people—people who would not speak at a public meeting in a month of Sundays—were also able to participate. We can often learn ways to do things that we can take to others, especially to help the young. That is very important because, after all, today's youngsters will decide how I am looked after in my dotage, which some say is coming rather more rapidly than I would wish.

18:41

The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell): I am delighted that we have had the opportunity to debate the exceptional achievements of YouthLink Scotland and the youth work sector more widely, and I add my congratulations to George Adam on securing the debate and on securing such agreement across the chamber. As Mary Scanlon noted, the motion

rightly highlights YouthLink's absolutely glowing recent inspection report and points to the huge and wide range of activity that YouthLink and its many members undertake to help to improve the lives of young people. I am very pleased to see that some members of YouthLink Scotland are in the gallery.

I cannot emphasise enough the strength and significance of the contribution that youth work and community learning and development have to play in making Scotland the best place in the world to grow up. YouthLink Scotland and its 100-plus members are crucial partners in helping us to realise that ambition and vision, and in enabling our young people to be the successful, confident, effective and responsible individuals that our nation needs. Its members use their skills as youth workers to help young people to realise their own talents in many ways, including through music, as Kezia Dugdale pointed out when she talked about her experience of working with the Canongate Youth Project.

YouthLink's most recent survey highlighted that national voluntary youth work organisations work with a phenomenal 390,000 young people approximately at any one time. When we add the wider voluntary youth work sector and local authorities, the numbers are even greater.

Youth work represents great value and embodies the ethos of preventative spending and early intervention that is a hallmark of this Government. It helps young people to make positive choices in their transition to adulthood and it builds capacity and skills for further learning and employability.

It also enriches childhood and adolescence. The young-at-heart Stewart Stevenson talked about burning baked potatoes at the scouts instead of chasing girls. My experience of youth work includes being a member of the Girls Brigade. My mum and others ran the local club, supported by Youth Scotland, which was then Youth Club Scotland. I also attended a couple of young farmers club meetings, so while Stewart Stevenson burns the baked tatties, I can help with the stock judging, if he wants me to.

It is important that we recognise the importance of the uniformed groups that were mentioned by Stewart Stevenson and Kezia Dugdale, who highlighted the phenomenal work of the girl guides.

Members have enjoyed talking about youth work in their own constituencies. Youth work and community learning and development happen in almost every city, town, village and community in Scotland. I am grateful to George Adam for highlighting excellent practice in his constituency. Despite being a St Johnstone fan, I am happy to

endorse the work that St Mirren Football Club carries out in his area.

I am delighted that we have been able to support in some way the three groups that George Adam's motion refers to. We are supporting Renfrew YMCA, which is creating an exciting social enterprise project that is being developed and led by young people. We are supporting the 20th and 74th Renfrewshire scout groups to provide activity weekends for about 30 young people, who will learn new skills and gain qualifications in various outdoor challenges. The play the game initiative in Paisley has also received funding to develop the skills of vulnerable young people through a range of theatre-related activities. That is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the innovation, creativity and passion in the youth work and CLD sector, as supported by YouthLink.

During my time in my ministerial role, I have never ceased to be amazed by the talent of the sector and its ability to enhance young people's outcomes. In my constituency, I have seen first hand the excellent work of the universal connections programme, the uniformed groups, the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme, Covey Befriending and Biggar Youth Project, which deliver services that contribute to young people's wellbeing, confidence and life chances.

Let us not forget—from the comments that members have made this evening, I do not think that we will—that such opportunities for Scotland's young people are often delivered by a talented army of volunteers, who give up their precious time to support and nurture our young people. Some of those volunteers are young people who are supporting their peers and giving back to their communities. Mary Scanlon noted the importance of highlighting such work through our yearly celebration at the youth work awards.

The Scottish Government is committed to helping youth work and CLD to thrive. Over the next two years, we are providing grants that total about £6.9 million to national youth work organisations. That will support them to build capacity and improve outcomes for young people.

Since 2007, the cashback for communities programme has invested more than £74 million in projects and facilities for young people and the communities that they live in. More than £10.9 million of that has been channelled to youth work through YouthLink Scotland and Youth Scotland.

This year, the young start fund has allocated more than £3 million to youth projects from an indicative budget of £5.5 million. We continue to work with the youth work sector to deliver programmes such as active girls, stand up to

sectarianism, the no knives, better lives campaign and activity agreements. Education Scotland also distributes small grants for implementation of the CLD strategic guidance for community planning partnerships to a range of organisations, including those that deliver youth work.

At the heart of the draft youth work strategy, which will be published this week, is a desire to empower young people—such as those in Maud who were engaging in the planning process and whom Stewart Stevenson mentioned—as well as to respect, recognise and promote children's rights and to get things right for every child and young person. The launch will mark the beginning of a national discussion on the strategy's implementation with the youth work and CLD sector and—importantly—with young people.

The strategy will determine how best to realise our ambitions to maximise young people's life chances, to harness the value of youth work and to demonstrate how it contributes to the national outcomes and many policies across the Government. The strategy recognises youth work as a key and distinctive component of our present and future agendas for young people. The Government recognises that universal youth work and more targeted specific programmes have equal validity and importance.

We recognise that—in line with the Christie commission recommendations—more and more youth services are being delivered through partnership. As George Adam pointed out, in recognition of YouthLink's national role, I have asked it to lead the national discussion, in partnership with Education Scotland and the Government, and to work with us to develop an implementation plan.

Scotland's future and the future of its young people are bright. We are introducing new legislation to strengthen services for children and young people. We have a raft of exciting events next year to inspire and engage young people, such as the homecoming, the Commonwealth games, the Ryder cup and, of course, the referendum on our future, in which young people who are aged 16 and 17 will for the first time be able to vote.

We have a strong and imaginative youth work and CLD sector that supports and empowers young people. One of its leaders is YouthLink, and I congratulate Jim Sweeney and the entire YouthLink team on their recent Education Scotland review.

It gives me great pleasure to lend my wholehearted support to the motion and, in doing so, to recognise the invaluable contribution that YouthLink Scotland and youth work more generally make to the wellbeing and prosperity of

Scotland's young people. I thank everyone for
their comments.

Meeting closed at 18:49.

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