



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 14 August 2014

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## Scottish Parliament

Thursday 14 August 2014

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

### General Question Time

#### Independence (National Health Service)

**1. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will make a statement about the consequences for the NHS of a no vote and a yes vote in the referendum. (S4O-03451)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil):** Yes, I would be very happy to make a statement on the future of the national health service in Scotland as early as possible next week, but as Mr Chisholm will know, that is subject to approval by the Parliamentary Bureau.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** Will the cabinet secretary repudiate the disgraceful scares about NHS privatisation following a no vote, especially when the only evidence that he could produce last week at question time was a notional efficiency saving of 0.8 per cent of the English health budget, which even the Department of Health admits is highly problematic? Is he not ashamed to support ill-informed, politically motivated scaremongering about the NHS, especially when privatised services cost more public money, not less—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Is there a question there, Mr Chisholm? Members should please let Mr Chisholm finish.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** This is the final bit of my question—if Scottish National Party members have calmed down. Is he not ashamed when a 0.8 per cent efficiency saving, which will not materialise—

**The Presiding Officer:** Question!

**Malcolm Chisholm:** —is far less than the cabinet secretary himself spends on privatised services, or than the 3 per cent efficiency savings that he demands of health boards every year?

**Alex Neil:** I think that Mr Chisholm is at the wrong end of the chamber. He should be over with the Tories. Let me tell him that the fundamental problem is the impact on public services of the cuts being made by the Conservative-led Administration in Westminster and passed down to the devolved Administrations.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** There will be bigger cuts under independence.

**The Presiding Officer:** Mr Chisholm!

**Alex Neil:** He is guilty. That is a guilty conscience speaking, Presiding Officer.

“That is what the fundamental problem is here: we have a Westminster Government that believes in shrinking the state, which believes in doing less through the public realm, and passes less money down to us in order to be able to do it.”—*[Record of Proceedings, National Assembly for Wales, 17 June 2014.]*

That is a quote from the Labour health minister in Wales, Mark Drakeford, speaking in the Welsh Assembly on 17 June. Unlike Mr Chisholm, he has not sold his soul to the Tories.

**Aileen McLeod (South Scotland) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary share my deep concern about the adverse impact on Scotland’s budget that is likely to result from the cuts in public funding to the NHS in England as one consequence of the drive to privatise clinical services and introduce charging for NHS services and treatments south of the border? Does he also agree that that is why we need full control—

**The Presiding Officer:** I think we have got the question.

**Aileen McLeod:** —of Scotland’s finances, which only a yes vote can deliver?

**The Presiding Officer:** We have got the question.

**Alex Neil:** Absolutely—I am very concerned indeed. Everybody who cares about the health service in Scotland should be very concerned. As I said last week, the United Kingdom Government’s own assessment is that the impact of the English NHS reforms, including privatisation, could amount to a reduction in UK health spending of £1 billion a year over the next few years. Under the current funding system, which would stay under a no vote, if those moneys were to be removed from the health spend and otherwise used in another area that did not have Barnett consequential, that could see Scotland lose out on up to £100 million every year on public services including health up until 2020. There is no doubt that a no vote could destroy the health service in Scotland.

#### Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (Gender Balance)

**2. Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to address the gender balance in science and maths in schools to increase the number of female students studying science, technology, engineering and maths at degree level. (S4O-03452)

**The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan):**

When taken together, entries for the three main science higher subjects show strong interest in STEM learning from both genders. Added together, the total number of male entries for higher physics, chemistry and biology in 2013 was 14,056 and for females it was 13,026.

However, the Scottish Government is fully committed to creating opportunities for young women to undertake further study in STEM subjects and to progress to future careers.

A recent report from Education Scotland encouraged staff in secondary schools to recognise and act on gender imbalance in the science subjects, where necessary.

**Hanzala Malik:** In a recent letter of guidance to the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning challenged colleges and universities to improve the gender balance across subjects. I support that aim. However, how can colleges and universities influence the gender balance in subjects such as chemistry, physics and engineering, when the imbalance is firmly rooted in schools, such that only 29 per cent of physics higher students are female?

**Dr Allan:** Hanzala Malik has raised an important issue. I am sure that we all share an ambition to create maximum equality in the science sector. It is important to note that there is a specific issue to do with physics; 64 per cent of higher biology students in schools are female and the ratio is about 50:50 in chemistry. We are not complacent about that. The Wood commission considered the issue a great deal in the context of its comments on the role of science in our economy. A great deal is being done through promotion of positive role models for young women in our schools when it comes to taking science subjects, not least physics.

**Police Scotland (Information Technology Systems)**

**3. John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action the Cabinet Secretary for Justice is taking to address the reported delays in the development of a unified IT system for Police Scotland. (S4O-03453)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill):** The formation of Police Scotland has created an environment in which a unified IT system can be implemented for the first time, allowing officers to work seamlessly across Scotland. Such large-scale integrated IT solutions

could not be achieved under the previous legacy structural arrangements.

Detailed governance and oversight arrangements are in place for the project to ensure that its development and delivery are progressed in line with the project plan. I am confident that development of the i6 project is firmly on track and that when it has been completed it will assist significantly in the delivery of an improved service, as well as bringing sustainable efficiency benefits.

**John Pentland:** The lack of integration is constraining officers' ability to function fully at regional and national levels, and the routine arming of police has led Jim Sillars to refer to Police Scotland as

"the crassest error any politician has ever made."

Does the cabinet secretary accept that the growing crisis of confidence in policing is not an operational matter?

**Kenny MacAskill:** I am surprised that John Pentland takes that approach, given that he and his party supported the establishment of Police Scotland. That was the right thing to do, because under the previous arrangements it was not possible to get agreement between constabularies and authorities about what IT system to use.

Detective Chief Constable Richardson has been doing an outstanding job. The issue is complicated and technical, but in order to improve the service for the safety of our citizens, we must ensure that there is a seamless link across the whole of Scotland.

John Pentland should recognise why he supported a single police service in Scotland. He should acknowledge the hard work that DCC Richardson is carrying out, assisted by many others, and he should recognise that savings will be delivered and the project completed.

**Bus Investment Fund**

**4. Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the latest round of funding from the bus investment fund. (S4O-03454)

**The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown):** Following the success of the bus investment fund last year, I am pleased to announce that the second round of funding has launched and is open to applications until the end of August. This year £3 million is available for projects over a two-year period. The approach will promote the continued improvement of bus services across Scotland. An announcement on winning bids for this year's fund is expected to be made before the end of this calendar year.

**Jamie Hepburn:** A project that benefited from the first round of funding was the North Lanarkshire connector, but North Lanarkshire Council failed to ensure that the new service connected with Cumbernauld—the biggest town in its area—or Kilsyth, despite many local people reporting to me problems about accessing decent bus services. Does the minister agree that it is incumbent on North Lanarkshire Council to address that failure, and that the new funding round presents an opportunity for it to try to do so?

**Keith Brown:** There is no question: the on-going funding presents an opportunity.

Jamie Hepburn knows that bus services in North Lanarkshire are primarily a matter for Strathclyde partnership for transport and the council. Last year, SPT supported 41 local bus services in North Lanarkshire, which carried 1.4 million passengers in total. As he said, in the first round of the bus investment fund SPT was successful in securing funding for the North Lanarkshire connector bus project. SPT will be happy to discuss with Jamie Hepburn, the council or other interested parties any concerns about bus services in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth and how they might be improved. SPT is currently preparing bids for the second round of the fund, and we will consider any proposals carefully against the fund criteria and in light of the available budget and level of demand.

### Childcare Costs

**5. Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to reduce the cost of childcare. (S4O-03455)

**The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell):** The Scottish Government is investing more than £280 million over two years to expand funded early learning and childcare from August 2014, to a minimum of 600 hours for three and four-year-olds and the most vulnerable or disadvantaged two-year-olds: 15 per cent this year rising to 27 per cent from August 2015. That represents an increase of almost half from the 412.5 hours we inherited in 2007, and it will deliver a saving to families equivalent to up to £707 per child per year, which will benefit about 121,000 three and four-year-olds this year.

In the long term, we have set out in “Scotland’s Future—Your Guide to an Independent Scotland” our ambitious plans to transform childcare, which would bring huge benefits to young children and their families.

**Richard Lyle:** Recent Scottish Parliament information centre research shows that families in the United Kingdom spend 27 per cent of their income on childcare, which is more than double

the percentage of income that is spent on childcare in many small independent countries. What action will the Scottish Government take to remedy that in an independent Scotland?

**Aileen Campbell:** I am pleased to confirm to Richard Lyle that we intend to do a great deal with the powers of independence to enhance children’s life chances and to help families. As set out on page 194 of “Scotland’s Future”, in our first budget we would provide 600 hours of childcare to approximately half of Scotland’s two-year-olds. By the end of the first parliamentary session, we would ensure that all three and four-year-olds and vulnerable two-year-olds would be entitled to 1,140 hours of childcare per year. By the end of the second parliamentary session, we would ensure that all children from the age of one to school age would be entitled to 1,140 hours of childcare per year.

Those proposals represent a transformation in childcare that would bring huge benefits to young children and their families. What a great prize to strive for following a yes vote, in contrast to the coalition’s welfare reform measures that will push an additional 100,000 children into poverty.

### Older People (Support)

**6. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support older people who live alone. (S4O-03456)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil):** More than 77,000 vulnerable older people in Scotland receive free personal care. Nearly 48,000 of those people receive their care at home. The Scottish Government also funds a number of projects, such as the Silver Line, which received funding of £210,000 in November 2013 and provides a free 24/7 helpline and befriending service for older people.

**Sarah Boyack:** A key fear of many of my constituents, and of older people in general, is the prospect of being stuck in hospital once they have had treatment without access to the right care or rehabilitation services that they need to lead an independent and good-quality life at home.

On Tuesday the cabinet secretary said that he hoped to release £100 million during the next two or three years to reduce delayed discharges. Does he have the figures for what it costs the national health service to fund keeping older people in hospital as opposed to their being at home? Does he have a breakdown by NHS board of those figures? Do the figures equate to that £100 million?

**Alex Neil:** Just to clarify, what I said was that if we are able to achieve our objectives of effectively eliminating delayed discharges, it would save the

health service about £125 million a year and that money would then be available for reinvestment in other priorities. It would also produce better health outcomes for those who are subjected to delayed discharge.

The average cost across Scotland of keeping someone in an acute hospital for one week is of the order of £4,000. Keeping someone in a community hospital costs around £1,800 a week, in a nursing home it is £600 a week, and the average cost of home care is £300 a week.

### **Private Rented Sector (Reform)**

**7. Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government when it will announce plans for reform of the private rented sector. (S4O-03457)

**The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):** In May last year, the Scottish Government published its strategy for the private rented sector. As part of the strategy, I established a stakeholder group to examine the suitability and effectiveness of the private rented sector tenancy regime. The group reported in May and recommended that the current assured and short assured tenancies should be replaced by a new private tenancy. I accepted the recommendation and plan to consult on proposals for a new private tenancy this autumn. The consultation will also explore issues that relate to rent levels.

**Marco Biagi:** My 30,000 constituents who live in the PRS, as well as those who share streets and stairs with them, will be glad to hear of the proposals and the consultation. Does the minister envisage legislation coming out of the consultation in the current session of Parliament, or would that be for a subsequent session?

**Margaret Burgess:** As I said, we intend to consult in the autumn. We are developing the detailed proposals for consultation, which will be based on the findings of the review group's report. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, my intention is to introduce a bill in this parliamentary session.

### **Rural Schools (Safeguards)**

**8. Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it will provide safeguards for rural schools. (S4O-03458)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell):** The Government is committed to safeguarding rural schools, which is why we have strengthened the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 to establish more rigorous and specific requirements before a local authority may propose closing a rural school. We have also strengthened the

requirements for all school closure proposals by requiring that those reach high standards of transparency and accuracy and by safeguarding schools from recurring closure consultations. Those changes were brought into force on 1 August.

**Mike MacKenzie:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that some local authorities still fail to recognise the educational value of smaller rural schools or to understand their socioeconomic importance and the key role that they play in maintaining rural communities?

**Michael Russell:** Mike MacKenzie has raised the key issue. A rural school's central purpose is undoubtedly educational, but it is a key facility in a community and it plays an important role in the economic and social life and development of the community. That is why the Government's proposals and legislation insist that the issues be taken into account when closure is considered. It is not optional for local authorities to look at economic and social issues—it is compulsory that they do so, and no closure proposal can go ahead without their having proved the case on those issues.

**John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** Does the cabinet secretary have any plans for greater involvement of local communities? I understand his desire to involve local authorities, but local communities are vociferous about the issue, too.

**Michael Russell:** I entirely agree with John Scott and I am grateful for his support on the matter on a number of occasions. It is extremely important that communities recognise that their school is an asset and that, if it were to disappear, that would diminish the way in which the community operates. I am glad that almost all communities that I know recognise that and argue strongly and effectively for local education.

**The Presiding Officer:** Question 9, in the name of Neil Bibby, has not been lodged. I have an explanation.

### **Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route**

**10. Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress is being made on the construction of the Aberdeen western peripheral route. (S4O-03460)

**The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown):** We are making good progress and remain on target to have construction completed by spring 2018. We announced the preferred bidder—Connect Roads—on 11 June 2014. On Monday, at a visit to see some of the advance works that are already under way, I confirmed that we have now entered into a pre-start contract with Connect Roads to allow it to get



its preparatory works started ahead of the contract award, which is expected later this year.

**Maureen Watt:** I was pleased to join the minister in my constituency on Monday for that announcement. Can we have an assurance that the work will be accelerated where possible, as part of the commitment to provide decent infrastructure for the north-east, which previous Governments have failed to do?

**Keith Brown:** I can give that assurance. As well as bringing forward preparatory works through the pre-start agreement, I am determined that we continue to look to deliver the benefits of the scheme—which will be about £6 billion over its lifetime—as early as possible. The project is vital for the north-east's economy, and people in the north-east have waited far too long for it, with some having been campaigning for decades. This Government will deliver the scheme in partnership with our local authority partners.

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** The minister will be aware of the rapid rate of economic growth, particularly in the Dyce area around the airport and on Dyce Drive. When does the minister expect to come to a decision about timetabling of the priority work on the western peripheral route, particularly that which will connect Aberdeen airport to the surrounding roads?

**Keith Brown:** As Lewis Macdonald knows, we have had discussions with the airport. We have said consistently that the issue will require discussions with the contract winner. We are now in the process of coming to financial close. During that process, we can have discussions with the contractor to see which parts of the project may be brought forward. Of course, top of the list would be the work around the airport and in the Dyce area.

## First Minister's Question Time

11:59

### Engagements

**1. Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what engagements he has planned for the rest of the day. (S4F-02249)

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

**Johann Lamont:** Yesterday, the governor of the Bank of England said:

"Uncertainty about currency arrangements could raise financial stability issues."

The First Minister is not getting his currency union—an option that Jim Sillars called "stupidity on stilts"—and is now implying that he will use sterling without agreement. John Swinney hints that a separate Scottish currency will be used, while Dennis Canavan specifically backs one. The First Minister's former adviser Professor John Kay says that it would be stupid for him not to have a plan B.

Mark Carney talks about confusion with the currency. Can the First Minister tell us where that confusion could be coming from?

**The First Minister:** I welcome yesterday's statement by Mark Carney, which I think was a very effective statement to calm the financial markets and speculation. We should all appreciate the fact that, in fulfilling his responsibilities, the governor of the Bank of England made it clear that the duties of the Bank of England would be fulfilled. That was excellent.

I also welcome the fact that Mark Carney reiterated that the suggestion by some in the no campaign that he was against a currency union was not true and that he had not said that. He has now reiterated that a number of times. The Bank of England, quite properly, is neutral on the matter and will implement the proposals that are agreed.

Johann Lamont asked where the uncertainty comes from. Might it be because the United Kingdom Westminster parties seem to have a vested interest in causing as much uncertainty as they can? If that is not the case, why—of all the subjects on which they said that they would not pre-negotiate—have they combined to rule out the proposal for a currency union? Was that not about trying to create uncertainty? I welcome the fact that, thankfully, the Bank of England governor has moved to put an end to the unionist campaign's plans.

**Johann Lamont:** The First Minister may, as usual, impugn the motives of the Westminster parties, but it is not the leaders of the Westminster parties whom the women of Scotland are describing as dishonest. They also describe the First Minister as arrogant, and they describe Nicola Sturgeon as ambitious—but we knew that last week.

The First Minister needs a reality check, because he welcomed Mark Carney's statement, but he did not listen to what it said. Let us look at what was actually said yesterday. The governor of the Bank of England made it clear that a crucial element of sharing a currency is sharing fiscal risk. He said that there would need to be "some form of fiscal arrangements."

In response, the First Minister told Jackie Bird last night:

"What we will control is 100 per cent of our fiscal policy."

That is simply not true. No, we would not. Mark Carney says that we would not. Is the First Minister not deliberately misleading the people of Scotland on the fundamental issue of the currency?

**The First Minister:** In relation to the suggestion that I made that the unionist parties were trying to create instability, I will cite what the principal of the University of Glasgow, Professor Anton Muscatelli, said in an article in the *Financial Times*. He said:

"The most damaging prospect to the rest of the UK from rejecting a sterling currency union is what it will do to its own trade and business activity. Whatever the political tactics involved, it would be tantamount to economic vandalism."

Therefore, it is not just the yes campaign that detects from the behaviour of the no campaign a deliberate attempt to create uncertainty and fear; the academic observers, the impartiality of whose commentary on these matters cannot be impugned, detect exactly the same thing.

As far as the Survation poll is concerned, I suppose that we have an opportunity each month to look at the Survation poll to find out what did not seem, for some apparent reason, to get into the *Daily Record* poll. I think that the answer might be on page 10 of the poll document. The 1,000 women who were polled were asked their voting behaviour. The poll found that the Scottish National Party could expect support from 43 per cent of the women, whereas the Labour Party could expect support from 27 per cent.

Many people consider it unlikely that the SNP could ever repeat the landslide of 2011 but, according to the Survation poll that Johann Lamont seems to be so pleased about, SNP support among women has increased since then and Labour support has declined. If there was an

election now, on the basis of the poll of women voters—it is only one poll, but they are a very important part of Scotland's population—the SNP could expect to have even more MSPs and the Labour Party would have considerably less.

**Johann Lamont:** And they wonder why people call the First Minister arrogant. He did not answer the serious question that he was asked about the currency.

The First Minister quoted one person. I would be here all day if I quoted all the independent experts who say that his lack of a plan B is creating grave uncertainty for families across the country.

John McFall, a former chair of the Treasury Select Committee—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Order.

**Johann Lamont:** Forgive me—we are supposed to quote only people who agree with the First Minister. Sadly for him, in a democracy the rest of us are entitled to an opinion.

John McFall, a former chair of the Treasury Select Committee, said:

"Governor Carney was asked specifically about the potential of capital flight in the event of independence and said that he has contingency measures.

It's clear that the Bank of England is putting plans in place to prevent a run on Scotland's banks that would be caused by Alex Salmond's complete failure to set out a credible position on currency. This would put the livelihoods of millions of Scots at risk."

Does the First Minister care that his plans for separation could lead to the devastation of the Scottish economy? Is Andrew Large, a former deputy governor of the Bank of England, right when he describes the First Minister's currency plan as a "huge deception"?

**The First Minister:** Rather than quote John McFall—he is an estimable man, but he is a Labour politician—on what Mark Carney said, why do we not quote Mark Carney directly? I welcome what Mark Carney said yesterday, because he was impartially fulfilling his responsibilities as the governor of the Bank of England to calm financial markets.

Johann Lamont suggests that all this uncertainty has nothing to do with the better together campaign. She did not like the quote from Professor Anton Muscatelli, the principal of the University of Glasgow, so shall we quote the better together website? Of course, better together has no interest in creating instability or fearmongering and no interest whatsoever in project fear.

The better together website says:

"Financial market speculation could lead to capital flight and higher interest rates. Ultimately, if markets weren't calmed, Scotland"

would

“have to adopt its own separate currency in a time of crisis.”

Johann Lamont and the better together campaign are trying to create uncertainty. They tried to create uncertainty on inward investment but, unfortunately, that has moved to an all-time high since 1997. They tried to create uncertainty on jobs—they said that jobs would be lost because of the referendum—but Scotland now has a record employment figure and a record figure for women's employment.

Just as the attempts on inward investment and jobs failed, so will the attempts to generate instability in the financial markets, thanks to the resolute intervention and action of the governor of the Bank of England—the person who is charged with a responsibility, which he has fulfilled. I welcome Mark Carney's intervention.

**Johann Lamont:** The First Minister must understand that his prospectus for independence, without knowledge of what the currency would be, is what is creating uncertainty. Only the First Minister would blame those who point that out to him as being those who are causing the uncertainty. The rest of us want the best option for the people of Scotland: keeping the pound—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Johann Lamont:** Keeping the pound in a currency union with economic stability and political representation within the United Kingdom—that is the best option. That is why the majority of doctors, the majority of women and the majority of the people of Scotland are proudly voting no to protect families across the country and in the future.

The governor of the Bank of England was answering a question about savers taking their money out of Scottish banks and investing it in other countries because Alex Salmond cannot tell us what Scotland's currency would be after a yes vote.

Mark Carney clearly thinks that the risk is real, because he has revealed that the Bank of England has contingency plans for it. Before the financial crisis hits—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Johann Lamont:** If it was only their own future that SNP members were putting at risk, we would expect that kind of answer. This is a risk for families and their futures across the rest of the United Kingdom and in Scotland, and it deserves better than cat-calling from SNP back benchers.

Let me ask the question again. Before the financial crisis hits, should the First Minister not

end the currency uncertainty by simply telling us: what is his plan B?

**The First Minister:** The point about scaremongering has just been made for me by Johann Lamont's question.

Of course, we should all bow to the Labour Party's expertise on financial crises hitting. We should remember that the financial crisis was analysed by the former governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King, who said that the failure of the Labour Government to act made the financial crisis much, much worse. Financial crises are not the strongest suit of the Labour Party or of Johann Lamont.

What is certain is that the governor fulfilled his responsibility yesterday in seeking to ensure that he was doing his job and fulfilling his responsibility by stopping the instability that I believe is caused as a deliberate campaign tactic by the unionist parties.

I pointed out that the unionist parties said that inward investment was going to be deterred—it has not been. They said that jobs were going to be lost, but we have record job numbers. Just as those tactics have failed, so will all the tactics.

Johann Lamont asks what currency we will use. We shall use the pound. That is why we have made it clear and why we are adamant. We are saying that because we do not want to get drawn into the game of the unionist parties, which are attempting to create instability.

I welcome the intervention by the governor of the Bank of England. Another of the unionist campaign's foxes has just been shot.

### **Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)**

**2. Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con):** To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland. (S4F-02247)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** No plans in the near future.

**Ruth Davidson:** The First Minister has heroically tried to spin the words of the governor of the Bank of England as a win for him. They are not. We are the side that is advocating the best solution for Scotland, which is keeping the pound in its current stable form. We are the side that backs our banks having a trusted lender of last resort and we are the side that knows that you cannot get divorced and still keep the joint account.

The First Minister is the one who is throwing a hand grenade into that mix. He is the reason why the governor is now being forced to prepare contingencies, and he is the reason why the headlines this morning are talking about capital

flight and chaos. He demands independence and claims that nothing will change, but when there is a fallout he protests that somebody else should have to clear it up.

We know that the First Minister hates taking responsibility for anything, but is he really suggesting that this is the fault of everybody else?

**The First Minister:** No, I am suggesting that it is the responsibility of the no campaign, which is deliberately trying to create instability as a campaign tactic. I am not blaming other people—I am allocating that responsibility to the Labour Party and the Conservative Party, and their alliance in the no campaign. I am applauding the action of the governor of the Bank of England in fulfilling his responsibilities and recognising that those responsibilities continue after September 18. That is exactly what a governor of the Bank of England is meant to do.

For the unionist parties to deny, given the evidence that I have quoted, that they are engaged in trying to engender fear and instability is extraordinary. Why did the Chancellor of the Exchequer say that there would be no inward investment? Why did the Conservative Party say that there was already a loss of jobs? Is the evidence not that that scaremongering has been confounded, just as the attempt to create instability in the financial markets will be confounded as well?

**Ruth Davidson:** The issue for the First Minister is that he knows that the currency union that we have right now—one that works only because we are part of the United Kingdom—is the very best option for Scotland. The stability and security of the UK pound is trusted and understood the world over and that is why he is desperate to salvage as much of it as he can.

The First Minister's problem is not that he does not get it; it is that he cannot sell it. Every option that he has on the table—from a currency deal without a willing partner to sterlingisation or an 18-month transition to who knows what—is less than we have now and the people of Scotland understand that. Why should we settle for second best on the currency when a simple no vote will let us keep everything that we already have?

**The First Minister:** Well, I have to say that the people of Scotland who are watching will not believe that a David Cameron Government is worth keeping for Scotland.

We have had substantial evidence from the social attitudes survey that having a sterling union is the overwhelming choice of the Scottish people. We have also had—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** We are advocating a currency union because we think that it is in the best interests of the people of Scotland. A majority in that survey also believe that that is what will happen after independence, and they are right to believe that, because we know the consequences of the unionist parties attempting to keep all the financial assets of the UK for themselves. If they keep the financial assets, they end up with the liabilities—they end up saddled with the UK's debt.

It is incredible, as we discussed last week, to believe that George Osborne or Ed Balls wants to say, "We are not going to take the up to £5 billion a year that the Scottish Government has responsibly said it will finance"—our share of the UK debt—"We don't want that. We will saddle it on English taxpayers." That is the inevitable consequence of the refusal to countenance the currency union.

Then we come to where people will say the decisions should lie. I thought that, when we had Jackson Carlaw manning the barricades and the comment from Ruth Davidson—which we all know, incidentally, was that she would support a currency union if it was in the best interests of the Scottish people—we had an acknowledgement from the Conservatives that they regarded the vote and verdict of the Scottish people as important.

I say to Ruth Davidson that, on September 18, if people in Scotland vote for what is in the white paper and the proposals to keep the pound, that is exactly what will happen and any Scottish politician who does not recognise the sovereign choice of the Scottish people will pay a heavy price. Incidentally, that is something that the Conservatives are long used to in political campaigns in Scotland.

### Cabinet (Meetings)

**3. Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Cabinet. (S4F-02245)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** The meeting will discuss matters of relevance to the people of Scotland.

**Willie Rennie:** Bank of England governors tend to be cautious. [*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Willie Rennie:** Bank of England governors tend to be cautious, so Mr Carney being open about crisis plans for a run on the banks is serious. The First Minister has, as usual, spent the past 20 minutes ducking and diving, so let us see whether he can give a straight answer to this: can he

confirm that those crisis plans will be needed only with a vote to leave the United Kingdom?

**The First Minister:** I can do better than that because, yesterday, the governor said that his plans were in place regardless of the outcome of the referendum. That is exactly what the central bank will do in its continuing role. It makes such contingency plans to stabilise financial markets.

If I can put it this way to Willie Rennie, it is really quite simple. The better together unionist campaign—himself, Labour and the Conservatives—is trying to destabilise financial markets. That is why that is on its website. The governor of the Bank of England—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order. Let us hear the First Minister.

**The First Minister:** —seeks to stabilise financial markets. That is because it is his responsibility. That is why people in Scotland will, like me, welcome the actions of the governor of the Bank of England and deprecate the politics of Willie Rennie and his colleagues.

**Willie Rennie:** Only the First Minister could claim that a warning of a run on the banks was a triumph for his cause. Claiming credit for a crisis that he caused makes him look like the old pretender.

The governor of the Bank of England is a cautious and learned man, whom the First Minister has just praised. The governor has been open about his crisis plan B. Is it not about time that the First Minister tells us his?

**The First Minister:** Of course, when the governor was asked about his contingency plans he said that it would not be helpful to spell out what those plans were. That is because he is a responsible governor of the Bank of England. Willie Rennie should accept that, in shooting down the fears, Mark Carney has done a very effective job of stopping the instability that Willie Rennie and his colleagues were so interested in creating.

The governor said:

"In terms of the financial stability questions - whatever happens in the vote, the Bank of England will continue to be the authority for financial stability for some period of time".

He was making the obvious point that the bank will discharge its responsibilities.

Let us enjoy the next five weeks of the campaign in which we will all take part vigorously. However, there is a responsibility to explain the campaign to the people of Scotland. Everyone in this chamber should be acting in Scotland's best interest. That is what this Government will do. I really wish and hope that the unionist parties could bring themselves to believe that this prosperous,

independent nation is well capable of independence. We agreed that unanimously in the chamber last week; let it be reflected in the campaign rhetoric.

### Independence (State Pensions)

**4. Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to reports that an independent Scotland will not be able to support the state pension. (S4F-02251)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** As one of the richest countries in the world, there is no doubt that an independent Scotland could afford a high-quality state pension system. Social protection spending as a percentage of both gross domestic product and tax revenues is lower in Scotland than in the rest of the United Kingdom and has been for each of the past five years.

I was interested in the responsible comments of the UK pensions minister, Steve Webb, who confirmed that state pensions built up prior to independence would continue to be paid to the people of Scotland. On 6 May, he said:

"It is what you have put into the ... national insurance system prior to independence ... They are entitled to that money."

For the first Parliament of an independent Scotland, existing pensioners will have their state pensions updated by the triple lock. That means that their pension will increase by 2.5 per cent, in line with the increase of inflation or in line with the increase in average earnings, whichever of those three is the highest. I hope that Christine Grahame welcomes that reassurance as we seek to explain to the people of Scotland that yet another of project fear's favourite stories is based on no foundation whatsoever.

**Christine Grahame:** As a pensioner, I welcome that assurance and thank the First Minister for his comprehensive answer. However, the issue remains of private pensions—paid now or in the future—which many pensioners fear will be under threat with independence. Does the First Minister agree that those pensions are a matter of contract and payable under the terms of contract, whether in an independent Scotland, the rest of the United Kingdom or elsewhere? Does he agree that with a yes vote we have an opportunity to use Scotland's wealth to develop sustainable and better pensions for Scotland's pensioners now and in the future?

**The First Minister:** I think that I can claim an unimpeachable authority for that point: the *Daily Mail* newspaper, of course. There have been a number of speculations in that and other newspapers about the position of private pensions. One of the yes campaigners, who wants

to remain anonymous—probably because he is an ex-employee of the *Daily Mail*—wrote to the *Daily Mail* pension provider, Daily Mail and General Trust, asking about such claims. He received the following reply:

“I can confirm that should there be a yes vote in the 2014 Scotland referendum the benefit that you have accrued in the scheme will be unaffected. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to telephone me”.

We should all telephone the *Daily Mail* to ask why its pension provider is giving its pensioners the reassurance that, as yet, it is unfortunately not prepared to give to its readers.

**Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** Whatever the *Daily Mail* has said, we have all read what the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth said to his Cabinet colleagues when he warned that the volatility of oil revenues would compromise the affordability of pensions in an independent Scotland.

Yesterday, we saw that the previous year's oil revenues were half what the Scottish Government had told us that they would be. Does that not just show us how right Mr Swinney was to flag up the threat to pensions from a yes vote next month?

**The First Minister:** With his unerring sense of timing, Iain Gray has managed to make that point on the day that Sir Donald MacKay, 25 years an adviser to successive Labour and Conservative secretaries of state for Scotland and a doyen of oil economists in Scotland, has described the Office for Budget Responsibility's figures as “precisely wrong” and produced forecasts that back the Scottish Government's assessment of oil revenues.

I welcome the fact that Iain Gray mentions oil and its forecasts. The difficulty for the unionist parties is their apparent suggestion that oil and gas are some tragic burden on the people of Scotland whereas, for every other country in the world, they are substantial assets. Those substantial assets will continue, and the best thing about it is that, at last, the resources of Scotland will benefit the people of Scotland, not the London Treasury.

**Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con):** The official Scottish Government pensions paper contains 30 key proposals but only four of those proposals are costed. Given the importance of pensions to the people of Scotland, will the First Minister agree to update his pensions paper and put costings next to all 30 proposals?

**The First Minister:** I do not accept the premise of the question. The white paper was quite specific about our proposals on pensions; the guarantee that pensions would continue to be paid and why they would continue to be paid; our explanation of affordability; the proposal for the triple lock; and

our consideration of the retirement age, which is an important issue for the Scottish population. That is a significant body of work, and I suggest that the member reconsult it. He will see that the Scottish Government's proposals on pensions give more guarantees, more assurance and, above all, more fairness than anything that has come from Tory or Labour Governments.

### **Independence (Food Banks)**

**5. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister whether there will be food banks in an independent Scotland. (S4F-02254)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** As one of the wealthiest nations on the planet, we will seek to eradicate the need for food banks. The powers of independence can shape a fairer welfare system and ensure that many more of our people feel the benefit of that wealth.

Jackie Baillie will be aware that the Trussell Trust has seen a 400 per cent increase in the number of people who are using food banks in the past year, including more than 22,000 children. Yet, on Sunday, Labour suggested that, when the Deputy First Minister raised that hugely important issue, she was just creating a distraction. I saw today that another well-known Labour commentator has described the debate on the national health service and independence as another distraction. Has Labour really got to the point that it cannot face issues such as food banks and poverty in Scotland without calling them a campaign distraction? Labour should address the issue, as it tells us that thousands of our fellow citizens are suffering and being covered in poverty because of the policies of a Westminster Government that we did not vote for.

**Jackie Baillie:** I point out to the First Minister that, rather than just talking about the issue, we on this side of the chamber are engaged in doing something about it. [*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Jackie Baillie:** On Monday morning, in an interview with “Good Morning Scotland”, Nicola Sturgeon acknowledged that there would be food banks in an independent Scotland. By lunch time, she was saying that there would not be any food banks at all if people voted for independence. Is it not the case that countries such as Ireland have food banks and one in 10 people living in poverty despite being independent? Does that not demonstrate that tackling the problem is a matter of political will rather than constitutional change? Is it not the case that, as long as the Scottish National Party offers vague and uncoded promises on welfare at the same time as it gives tax cuts to big businesses, Nicola Sturgeon's first answer is the right one?

**The First Minister:** Are we meant to believe that a policy that seeks, over a period of time, to eradicate the need for food banks in Scotland is being criticised by the Labour Party? I suspect that that is the position that the no campaign has got itself into.

Let me quote better together Aberdeenshire:

“Food banks are Scotland becoming a normal European country. ... Far from being a sign of failure they are an enriching example of human compassion, faith and social cohesion.”

Everyone salutes the work of those who are going to the assistance of their fellow citizens, but those in the yes campaign do not believe that the huge growth in food banks in Scotland is a sign of Scotland

“becoming a normal European country.”

We seek and aspire to have a society in which justice and fairness are at the centre of our social policy, and we know that that will not be implemented from Westminster—not by the current Tory Government and certainly not by a Labour Party that has said that it will accept the Tory party’s spending plans. Is the Labour Party so far gone in the debate that it is prepared to defend the expansion of food banks as a sign of the success of the union?

### **Free Childcare (Workless Families)**

#### **6. Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):**

To ask the First Minister how many two-year-olds from workless families will receive free childcare at the start of the new school session. (S4F-02248)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** Around 3,400 two-year-olds from workless families will take up their new entitlement to a free nursery place this month. Indeed, the first two-year-olds to benefit from the policy started in Renfrewshire nurseries on Tuesday this week.

In total, we expect that more than 8,000 two-year-olds from workless households will benefit from the free nursery place over the course of this year, giving them a better start to their education and their parents a much better chance of finding work.

**Liz Smith:** I think that every political party in this chamber is on record as supporting improved childcare provision. However, it is clear that the Scottish Government has had to admit that several local authorities cannot deliver the full commitment for two-year-olds from workless families in the timescale that they were promised. What information process is being used to advise the parents who were expecting to access the places now what will happen and when they will get access to those places?

**The First Minister:** Again, I do not agree with Liz Smith. On 4 August, she issued a press release that claimed that there were significant problems in six council areas: Edinburgh; South Lanarkshire; Angus; Aberdeen; Midlothian; and Moray. However, there is no lack of capacity in any of those councils. The City of Edinburgh Council and South Lanarkshire Council have the capacity that they need. In Angus, Midlothian and Moray, private nurseries will be used to deliver the places. Some councils have already done that. There is no requirement for councils to use their own facilities. Aberdeen City Council is using family centres—facilities that, in my opinion, are perfectly suited to vulnerable young children in particular.

In her role as Conservative education spokesperson, Liz Smith raised a number of issues concerning education. She said that the curriculum for excellence would be a curriculum for confusion. Two months later, the curriculum for excellence was successfully introduced. She doubted whether the examination diet this year would be a success, and she wanted to have two diets of exams running simultaneously. As she may have noticed, the exams went forward over this summer with some considerable success.

I know that Liz Smith has been replaced as education spokesperson by the sunny optimism of Mary Scanlon—we all welcome that replacement, I think—but, given that she was wrong about curriculum for excellence and the examination diet, is it not possible that she will also be wrong in her predictions about a lack of nursery places?

The councils of Scotland are working hard to fulfil their statutory responsibilities, and that is exactly what they will do. Let us just welcome this significant expansion of nursery places to the people of Scotland.

## Scotland's Pollinator Population

### The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-10368, in the name of Angus MacDonald, on Scotland's pollinator population. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### Motion debated,

That the Parliament acknowledges that pollinators are essential to healthy ecosystems in Falkirk East and across the rest of the country but are fragile and can therefore be easily damaged or diminished; believes that there should be sustainable populations of all pollinators and notes calls for society to save and sustain them; understands that the principles highlighted in the Buglife manifesto, *Get Britain Buzzing*, call for action by the Scottish Government to develop and implement action plans, coordinate pollinator monitoring programmes, reduce pesticides that harm pollinators and conserve pollinator species while maintaining places for pollinators to feed and breed; notes the recent ban on damaging pesticides, and notes calls for similar work emphasising the importance of sustaining pollinators for Scotland's agricultural and horticultural economies.

12:34

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** I am delighted to have secured this debate, which acknowledges the importance of pollinator species to the agricultural and horticultural industries of Scotland. I thank all the members who signed my motion and who support the cause, and those who have stayed to contribute to the debate. I realise that it is all very hectic at the moment, so their time is appreciated.

I note that, sadly, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment and the Minister for Environment and Climate Change have been called away on other business, but I am pleased to see the Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs, Roseanna Cunningham, standing in, as I know that she has taken a keen interest in the issue in the past in her previous life as an environment minister.

As a member of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, I have become increasingly aware of the challenges that Scotland's pollinators face. I thank Craig Macadam of Buglife—the Invertebrate Conservation Trust and Dr Maggie Keegan of the Scottish Wildlife Trust for their help and advice on the subject, which is more complex the more we investigate it.

Buglife actively works to conserve the 40,000 invertebrate species in the United Kingdom, many of which are under threat as never before. Invertebrates from bees to beetles are vital to our planet and precious ecosystem. They underpin life

on earth and are therefore pivotal for our own survival.

Insect-pollinated crops rely on invertebrates to carry pollen from one flower to the other, producing crops for many fruits, nuts and seeds. Buglife estimates that 84 per cent of European Union crops rely on insect pollination. To put that into perspective, it is estimated that every third mouthful of food that is consumed could be linked to pollination by bees.

Insect-pollinated fruits and vegetables that are grown in Scotland contribute significantly to our economy as well as to our ecosystem. For example, the output value of vegetables in 2012 was £102 million, and the figure for fruits was £62 million. In addition, the pollination that is provided by insect pollinators to wildflowers and garden ornamentals makes insect pollinators a vital component of our great biodiversity in Scotland.

Without pollinators, we could see a depletion of the foods that we grow and the beauty that we see in our wider countryside. Pollinator insects ensure food security and the continuation of biodiversity across Scotland. However, the fragility of pollinator populations means that, if they are not cared for, they will be easily damaged or diminished, or can become dysfunctional. The decline of pollinator insects in recent years is not easily determined by a single driving force, but has been caused by a multiplicity of factors, including environmental pressures, pests and diseases—for example, reductions in wildflowers, the intensification of land use, fertilisation, and harmful pesticides.

Unfortunately, I know a bit about harmful pesticides, having used without proper protection the organophosphate pesticide carbofuran on my father's farm in the Western Isles when I was younger. I have paid the price health-wise. Carbofuran has long since been banned, but it is still used illegally to kill birds of prey.

That said, it is neonicotinoids that seem to have had a major impact on bees, so it is encouraging that the EU has imposed a two-year ban on them. Ideally, a permanent ban in Scotland would help pollinators such as bees to recover, it is argued, although, as the NFU Scotland highlighted in its briefing, any ban should be based on realistic field-based research.

Over the past 50 years, declines have been noted in the number of not only many pollinator insects but wildflowers across our countryside. The sustainability of the ecosystem depends on maintaining pollinator populations and their habitats. That is why the EU's integrated pest management directive is so important. If we want our future generations to live in a Scotland that is buzzing—excuse the pun—with vitality and rich in foods and flowers, we must act now to preserve



our landscapes and save our precious pollinators from extinction.

In “Get Britain Buzzing: A Manifesto for Pollinators”, Buglife outlined seven key principles that can guide our battle in rescuing our valued ecosystem, and 27 actions that can arrest the alarming decline of the pollinator population. Principally, all pollinators should be valued for the service that they provide to Scotland. They should also be properly monitored and understood, and there should be a commitment to conserve and incorporate them in our green infrastructure.

Unfortunately, I do not have time to list all the principles and actions that Buglife is calling for, but I commend “Get Britain Buzzing: A Manifesto for Pollinators” to members. If members would like to contact me, I can provide them with a copy of it.

Good work has already been done. I congratulate the Government on the excellent work that it has done so far in undertaking initiatives to halt bee decline over the past few years. For example, there was the Scottish Government project in 2009 that invested up to £10 million in research to help to identify the main threats to bees and other insect pollinators. Government-backed agri-environment schemes that have offered payments to farmers to help them to maintain flower-rich areas for bees and other wildlife have also been an encouraging step forward in sustaining our pollinator habitat.

Recently—in June this year—the Scottish Parliament welcomed a new buzz to this busy and hectic environment by installing two beehives on site, demonstrating the real and practical way in which the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament have been committed to the nation's environment. I am sure that other speakers will touch on our Parliament bees during the debate.

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** Not literally—they would get stung.

**Angus MacDonald:** Yes. I am not asking members to do that personally.

Although previous actions that have been taken are commendable, we must do more to address this serious issue. The Government actions that have been prescribed must be taken in conjunction with a responsibility for local government, for example, to facilitate initiatives in their areas that preserve Scottish wildlife and conserve our pollinator population.

As MSP for Falkirk East, I have seen at first hand in my constituency the great work that communities can undertake. The Jupiter urban wildlife centre is a fantastic example of how wildlife can be preserved. What is unique about the centre is that it is an urban green space that has been

created from wasteland in the middle of industrial Grangemouth. My constituents, together with non-governmental organisations, have done an excellent job in constructing a reserve that both facilitates pollinator populations and encourages the community to invest in sustaining the pollinator habitat. Providing both educational and community resources, the Jupiter urban wildlife centre is an invaluable hub that we hope to see replicated in many other parts of Scotland. I very much look forward to visiting the centre tomorrow morning to officially open, along with local schoolchildren, the upgraded wildlife gardens there.

In closing, I encourage all my fellow MSPs to add their support to the Buglife cause. Collapses in pollinator populations in China and parts of the United States have had big and visible impacts on their ecosystems and economies, but Scotland could lead the way in conservation and the sustenance of pollinators if we choose to act now and refuse to let species struggle to survive. Our rich, beautiful and vast countryside and vegetation depend on us to actively work to protect them. I therefore hope that stakeholders, including scientists, farmers, regulators, beekeepers and environmental NGOs will all work together to ensure that Scottish farming and bees can co-exist and have a sustainable future.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Many thanks. I have a number of requests to speak. If members could keep to their four minutes, I will try to call everyone.

12:42

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** I am delighted that the Parliament can still find time this week to discuss issues other than the referendum, because yes or no, we will still all need to eat.

Securing the health of our pollinator population really is at the foundation of our agriculture. The stark stats in the Buglife briefing tell us that 84 per cent of EU crops rely on insect pollinators. We can sometimes suffer from a focus on direct economic gain in this area, and we really must widen that. Many of the efforts that I have seen to look after the health of bees end up with a focus on honey bees. Honey bees and the beekeeping, honey-producing economy are important, but we must not be tricked into thinking that keeping the honey bees healthy means that we will be keeping our pollinator population at large healthy. The majority of pollination is by wild pollinators such as bumblebees or the 250 other species of bee in the UK, as well as flies, moths, wasps, beetles and butterflies. Many of our pollinators are in crisis, and that is no surprise when they have lost so much natural habitat in the past 60 years, including 97 per cent of wildflower meadows.

Pollination is one of those processes that are largely hidden from the public consciousness. The insects just get on with it and we enjoy the fruits, flowers and food of their labour. However, if we lose our pollinators, we might lose many of the plants that they pollinate and the animals that rely on them. The impact on the food chain would make sustaining the global human population massively challenging.

The campaign over the past few years to ban neonicotinoids—a highly damaging class of neurotoxins—was heartening but also infuriating. Millions of people joined organisations such as the Scottish Wildlife Trust and others to protect our pollinators after scientific evidence showed the effect that such nerve agents were having on pollinators, and the EU has put in place a temporary two-year ban for three of the most damaging insecticides. However, the big pesticide companies such as Bayer CropScience and Syngenta are continuing with cynical attempts to pursue short-term profit at the expense of the health of the agricultural economy, and indeed our health.

The precautionary principle states:

“Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.”

As Friends of the Earth says, our pollinators are seriously

“under assault from pesticides and intensive farming.”

We do not know what will happen after the two-year ban is up, but along with my colleague Angus MacDonald I urge the cabinet secretary to continue the ban that is currently in place. I would also welcome a response from the Government to the Buglife pollinator manifesto and would like to know what steps the Government will take to ensure that the planning process helps to create and manage a network of pollinator habitats.

12:45

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** I am glad to be able to take part in this debate on Scotland's pollinator population and I thank Angus MacDonald for securing it. As he said, it depends on us. I also thank the SWT and Buglife—their representatives are in the gallery—for their work.

I declare an interest, as I am a species champion for the Forester moth—which is one of the many pollinators in Scotland—whose habitat I visited earlier this summer.

Like many environmental causes that come before the Scottish Parliament, protecting biodiversity—in this case, specifically pollinators—enjoys broad cross-party support. The issue has

certainly been very important to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee. I believe that that support has allowed us to move forward and address the concerning decline in pollinator numbers that is being highlighted today. Indeed, as Angus MacDonald said, the Scottish Parliament has taken steps in our own backyard, as it might be called, to promote the importance of pollinators through the new bee hives.

In my own South Scotland region, as in other parts of Scotland, there are a number of reserves that play an important role in conserving pollinator populations. The Falls of Clyde, Garrion Gill and the Upper Nethan gorge all contain essential grassland areas that host many of Scotland's most productive pollinators, including various species of bees and butterflies. Such pollinator-friendly environments should act as prime examples of what communities and farmers can do to preserve pollinator numbers and improve biodiversity in general. As we heard, there are also some examples in urban environments, such as the Jupiter project to which Angus MacDonald referred. We can all make a difference individually. As MSPs we can encourage our constituents to do that by planting in gardens of whatever size and even in window boxes.

Of course, we are all aware of the huge contribution that pollinators make to Scotland as a whole. Those insects play a central role in crop production, as Alison Johnstone said, contributing roughly £43 million to the economy, as well as helping Scotland's rich ecosystems to flourish. However, as pointed out in Angus MacDonald's motion, that vital role is being put in danger. There has been as much as a 65 per cent decrease in certain pollinator populations over recent decades. I am sure that members will agree that we all have a responsibility to do something about that.

A large factor in the decline of pollinator numbers is of course the overuse of pesticides. The Scottish Wildlife Trust in particular has been campaigning for a moratorium on neonics so that the evidence base regarding their impact can be built up. As we have heard, that view has been taken on board by the EU, which has recently imposed a two-year ban—but only on three types of neonicotinoid. Of course, pesticides are used for a reason, but it is important that they are used in a sustainable manner and only when required, rather than being applied to seeds before they are planted.

We must identify alternative methods of protecting crops from pests through an integrated pest management plan. That is now an obligation on EU member states; perhaps the minister will be able to provide us with details of how the Scottish Government is addressing that obligation. Can she also indicate whether there are plans to have a

ban in Scotland on neonicotinoids, given the risk of the ban in the EU being only temporary and ceasing to exist after 2015? We heard from Angus MacDonald about research that the Scottish Government has already done, and it would be very helpful if the minister could let us know what research is going on in Scotland.

The minister will be aware that the Scottish Wildlife Trust has made suggestions on how to protect pollinators within the common agricultural policy, including providing funds for farmers to provide ecosystem services. I believe that those suggestions merit further consideration.

I hope that the debate will help to draw attention to the importance of pollinators and the contribution that they make not only to our economy but to the vibrant and wonderful colours of all types of habitats in Scotland. I believe that we must all contribute to making the situation better for the pollinators' habitats.

12:50

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** I congratulate Angus MacDonald on securing the debate. His previous members' business debate was on potatoes; this is on pollinators. He can move off the letter P and on to something else.

I will touch on the Parliament bees—not physically, of course. I have found out that the much-praised bees in our hives here at the Parliament are Buckfast bees, which are known

“for their calm temperament and productivity”—

perhaps not attributes associated with their political neighbours in this building.

It is of course an unfortunate name, although it is linked to their breeding history and in no way predicates the taste of their honey—perhaps regrettably. By the way, they may not remain so friendly. I understand that if they are within 3 miles of other bees they will subsequently mate with a different species, being somewhat promiscuous. Some beekeepers recommend that the queen—not Her Royal Highness, that is, but the queen bee—is changed every year.

I am launching a plea and a criticism at one and the same time. The big question is why the Scottish Parliament hives were not populated by the indigenous and under threat Scottish black bee, which I am advised was wrongly labelled as aggressive. Not all things Scottish are aggressive. I have a proverbial—wait for it—bee in my bonnet about this. The minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment know that, because I corresponded with them some time ago on this matter on behalf of apiarists in my constituency, in particular Joyce Jack of Peebles,

who is secretary of the Newbattle Beekeepers Association and my unofficial tutor in all things bee connected. She alerted me to and educated me on the threat to the indigenous species from imports. Mrs Jack is in the gallery today, so I must be particularly careful with my facts.

As in “Blackadder”, my beekeepers have a cunning plan, and a good one at that, especially after the decimation of hives a few years back through bad winters and springs. The plan was to provide local beekeepers—after training—to increase the Scottish black bee population through breeding queens. That can be done—you learn something every day—by artificial insemination, although I think from correspondence with the cabinet secretary Richard Lochhead that it is more coyly referred to as artificial instrumentation. It is done in other countries and, although it takes time, it is very cost effective.

I recognise the black bee project on Colonsay, which is to be welcomed. It need not stop there and I hope that the Scottish Government will again consider the proposal from individual beekeepers.

In the meantime, although there is a requirement to ensure that imported bees do not import viruses, councils and the public can be encouraged to plant spaces with bee-friendly wild flowers and cultivars, such as buddleia and sedum, to assist not just the honey and bumblebees but the insect population at large.

Honey is not the only product, of course. My tomato flowers are pollinated by bees and insects and give me fresh and tasty tomatoes, and the bird life in my garden thrives on the supply of fresh insect protein.

I will mention the referendum. Once the Buckfast bees have outlived their stay or migrated to form another hive, can we give the Scottish black bee a chance? Perhaps on September 19th—that will do, as a patriotic gesture.

12:54

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** In every language under the sun and in every generation since time began, the importance of birds and bees has been emphasised. That has been echoed by poets, including Robbie Burns, because birds and bees are the things that keep our humanity and our world going.

The role of pollinators to the economy and environment is vital and makes the decline of a broad variety of pollinators a matter of huge concern. I congratulate Angus MacDonald on bringing such an important topic to the Parliament.

I am proud to declare that I am a species champion for the marsh fritillary butterfly, which unfortunately has been in decline for the past 150

years due to loss of habitat and parasites. That is only one of the many examples of pollinators whose existence is under severe threat.

Pollinators such as honey bees and bumblebees play a key role in the majority of ecosystems. They are essential for parts of our agricultural economy. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that of the 100 crop species that provide 90 per cent of all food worldwide, 71 are animal pollinated. The number for Europe is even higher, at 84 per cent, valued at £12.6 billion per year. The production value of pollinator-dependent crops is roughly five times higher than that of crops that are not dependent on insects. That shows our reliance on pollinators, thus making the decline of those species a matter of huge concern. Governments should have a plan bee.

Although it is hard to determine accurately the precise economic benefit that pollinators provide, they have a very significant impact. Their role in the commercial production of soft fruit, such as raspberries and blackberries, as well as oil-seed rape, to mention just a few, cannot be overestimated.

Unfortunately, the trend in Scotland is clear: the abundance of pollinators has gradually declined over the past 50 years. That has especially been the case for bumblebees, which are the only pollinator of potato flowers in the world. Scotland's potato crop is estimated to be worth £160 million, so the decline of a staggering 60 per cent in the abundance of bumblebees must be very concerning for us.

Other reasons for the decline involve the destruction and fragmentation of natural habitat. The European Union demands that all farmers set aside 5 per cent of their land for "greening", which falls under the first pillar of the common agricultural policy. It is important that a compromise is found that ensures that there is enough natural habitat for our pollinators to not only survive but flourish, while ensuring the sustainability and successes of our agricultural production.

The sources of decline are many and diverse, as well as differing between different species of pollinators. Other invasive species, such as parasitic mites, are in themselves a major threat to apiculture; they also spread a number of diseases. They have decimated honey bee colonies across the world, from the middle east and Japan to Europe and the US, where up to 85 per cent of colonies have been wiped out due to mites or diseases spread by them.

It is important to find the balance between environmental interests and commercial interests, but it is clear that we must take urgent action to

avoid widespread environmental and economic implications. We must take heed of this warning, which is like the canary in the coalmine.

On a note of perhaps slight optimism, my local pharmacist told me that there has been an explosion in the number of stings by bees and wasps this summer. So, if we get stung, we must remember to be thankful for small mercies and for small things.

I will conclude with a quote from the United Nations Environment Programme:

"The health and well-being of pollinating insects are crucial to life, be it in sustaining natural habitats or contributing to local and global economies."

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Mr McGrigor. That makes me feel better about the sting that I got at the weekend. I call Liam McArthur, to be followed by Rob Gibson.

12:58

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** Like others, I thank Buglife Scotland, the Scottish Wildlife Trust and, in particular, Angus MacDonald for playing the invaluable role of keeping this issue on the parliamentary agenda. It is a role that was performed in the previous Parliament by my good friend and former fellow Highlands and Islands MSP Peter Peacock, who seemed to delight in standing up for invertebrates, as he said. He almost became his party's spokesman for the birds and the bees and I think that he would unequivocally have welcomed the bee hives in the parliamentary complex, although he would probably have drawn the line at volunteering to artificially inseminate any of them.

On the importance of bumblebees, honey bees and other pollinating insects, I recall that in the debate that we had on this issue in 2009 we heard fairly striking figures. Some 84 per cent of EU crops are pollinated by insects, 80 per cent of wild flowers depend on insect pollination and two out of every three mouthfuls of food that we eat come from plants pollinated by all pollinating insects, which is even more than Angus MacDonald suggested.

Therefore, the fact that numbers have dropped so dramatically—I think that the figure is around 60 per cent for the bumblebee population over the past 50 years—matters a great deal. It matters economically, as members said, and it matters environmentally—Alison Johnstone reminded us of the need to maintain biodiversity. It should therefore matter politically, and if further persuasion is needed on that, I point to the mention in the SWT's briefing of a YouGov poll that found that 85 per cent of people put the issue right at the top of the environmental agenda.

The decline in bee numbers is not unique to Scotland or the UK. It appears to be a worldwide phenomenon. The reasons for the decline are complex and include the loss of floral diversity and nesting habitat, climate change, the presence of invasive non-native species, intensive farming practices and the impact of pesticides. Like other members, I welcome the ban on neonics over the next two years. There is an argument for going further, but in the meantime the rules on sustainable use of pesticides and the guidance on integrated pest management are welcome steps forward.

The two-year ban also presents an opportunity for research into alternative practices. I would be interested to hear from the minister what might be achieved through the new CAP rules in relation to greening requirements and agri-environment schemes—she might ask her ministerial colleague to write to us on that in due course. Research is an area in which Scotland can probably punch above its weight, through the Moredun Research Institute and the James Hutton Institute. I understand that researchers at Newcastle University are looking at ways of bringing together natural toxin from spider venom and plant protein to produce an insect-specific pesticide. Excellent research is going on.

I was struck by a couple of initiatives to which the SWT referred. The SWT's flying flock of sheep and herd of cattle, which are used to lightly graze trust reserves and thereby help to maintain habitat, conjure up all kinds of images—there is no sign yet of a flying litter of pigs. The trust runs demonstrations on gardening for wildlife. We all have a role to play in that regard, and with all due modesty I will claim some success, given the explosion of rampant nettles, thistles and other assorted plants in the land around my house, which has created a number of no-go zones for humans but a haven for bees.

Orkney is fortunate to be one of the few parts of the UK that can still lay claim to having great yellow bumblebees in some numbers, but bee populations in Orkney are under threat. The honey bee population is under threat from the varroa mite. The minister will know from experience in her previous role that the protection that was afforded previously by the islands' not having statutory infected area status has been lost, but I still think that the Pentland Firth is an ideal barrier to a variety of animal and insect diseases and that even a voluntary ban on the import of hives and bees could mean that the destruction caused by the varroa mite and other diseases is less of a problem in future, although such an approach will not be easy. I hope that the minister will encourage her colleagues to take the matter forward.

I congratulate Angus MacDonald on securing the debate and giving us a bit of a breather from matters constitutional. Einstein is supposed to have said that if the bees go, mankind will follow within four years, which perhaps puts into perspective our deliberations on our constitutional future.

13:03

**Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP):** I declare an interest. I am a member of the Soil Association, Slow Food Scotland and the Scottish Crofting Federation. I am happy to thank Angus MacDonald, who deserves every credit for securing this timely debate. There are many things to be said about the bee crisis.

There has been a decline of perhaps more than 60 per cent in pollinators—bees, moths, butterflies, hoverflies and many other invertebrates. The bumblebee population alone has declined by more than 60 per cent in the past 50 years—the black bee in Scotland is a bumblebee, not a hive bee. That statistic cannot be repeated often enough if we are to wake up to multiple causes of the problem and seek long-lasting solutions that restore pollinator diversity.

The causes are multifactoral. Hedges have been grubbed up, robbing land of its wildflower margins and its blossoms, hawthorns, geans and nesting sites. That has disrupted pollinator corridors. The impacts of climate change and agricultural intensification are increasing. Invasive non-native species, pesticides, bee diseases and the varroa mite have also taken their toll, as members said.

A fortnight ago, I met Robin Inglis, who is secretary of the Orlig and District Beekeepers Association, in Caithness. He was dismayed by the arrival of varroa mite in Halkirk, near Thurso. The disease has taken 20 years to spread across Europe, and I have been monitoring it for more than 15 years as beekeepers from further south have rashly imported bees to the Highlands from infected hives. Robin Inglis stresses that the Scottish Government's bee health programme is welcome and that the free tests that are available from the science and advice for Scottish agriculture division in Edinburgh help beekeepers to plan and reduce the impact of the disease, which is only one of the many that they encounter. On 25 July, the *John O'Groat Journal* reported that 2,000 varroa mites can kill a colony of 30,000 honey bees. That is how serious the problem is.

The Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee has discussed the threat to honey bees from the neonicotinoids that have decimated bumblebees and led to the EU directive placing a two-year ban on their use, including in

oil-seed rape. International scientific evidence suggests that integrated pest management plans and an extended ban on neonicotinoids are essential. The UK guidance was skewed by the anti-EU stance of the previous UK agriculture secretary, Owen Paterson, who claimed that field trials would be needed to verify the European Food Safety Authority ruling. However, mounting international evidence needs to be applied soon.

The Scottish Government's precautionary principle has been influenced by the NFUS and its call for field trials. I note that the NFUS suggested in its briefing that unrealistically high doses of plant protection products had been applied in lab tests. However, an article in *The Guardian* on 7 August on food self-sufficiency pointed out that

"Yields of wheat and oil seed rape, for example, have flatlined since 1998".

It is interesting to note that neonicotinoids were introduced in 1995. They do not seem to have helped to increase the yield of oil-seed rape. Indeed, in some areas, oil-seed rape, like other cooking oils, is produced without the use of neonicotinoids. For example, Robert Mackenzie of Cullisse in Easter Ross produces award-winning oil-seed rape oil without them.

The need for integrated management plans to protect pollinators has never been more urgent. The Scottish Government's moves in that direction are widely welcomed and the science has been applied so that farmers and the wider community can have peace of mind. The NFUS has said that it would

"welcome any further opportunity to work with stakeholders including scientists, regulators, beekeepers and environmental NGOs in order to ensure that Scottish farming and bees can co-exist in a sustainable manner."

In order to end the threat to bees in Scotland and solve the problem of pollinator decline, we need to promote scientific research as soon as possible in greater amounts in our outstanding colleges and institutes. This debate is a wake-up call.

13:08

**Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I join my colleagues in congratulating Angus MacDonald on securing the debate. I also congratulate Buglife and the Scottish Wildlife Trust on their consistent work in highlighting the importance of the pollinator population to maintaining the biodiversity of our countryside and our urban environments.

We have learned how vital pollinators such as bees, hoverflies and other insects are to our ecosystems and what an essential part of the food chain they are. The loss of pollinators and the potential impact on the food supply for humans as well as wildlife is quite daunting, and it is easy to

feel powerless in the face of such devastating statistics. Yes, we must take precautionary steps such as banning neonicotinoids, as the EU has done for the next two years, but we must also have measures in place that support habitats and rebuild pollinator populations.

Among the worrying developments of the past few years and the decreasing pollinator population, it has been especially heartening to see the simple contributions that every person can make to improving and increasing the habitats of pollinators. Buglife's campaign to get Britain buzzing is a great example of that, and I am pleased to see it getting the recognition that it deserves in today's debate.

The Parliament has considered biodiversity previously and, during my time on the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, I have welcomed the opportunity to participate in debates on the topic. Looking back to my contributions on the issue, I note that I highlighted the huge range of biodiversity in Fife and the excellent work being carried out by projects across the region, including at Lochore meadows. Of course, many other projects across Mid Scotland and Fife are helping to lead the fight back for our pollinator populations. Fleecefaulds meadow wildlife reserve near Ceres in Fife benefits from the wonderfully named flying flock of sheep, which the Scottish Wildlife Trust uses to manage grasslands across Scotland through conservation grazing.

In mentioning bugs, bees and even sheep, it would be remiss of me not to mention the brown long-eared bat, as I am the proud species champion for that great wee creature. We need to remember how it and many other species are reliant on a healthy population of pollinators and a diverse range of habitats. The Bat Conservation Trust has highlighted how important wildlife corridors can be for bats and other creatures by linking up different habitats across Scotland's landscape.

It is not just the environmental importance of pollinators that has been calculated. Impressively, the Scottish Wildlife Trust has been able to quantify the economic impact of pollinators on the economy, which is estimated to be at least £43 million annually in Scotland alone. It is not just our agricultural and food sector that is reliant on a diverse and healthy pollinator population—given the importance of Scotland's landscape to our visitors, the tourism sector should surely be considered, too.

We know that the threat to biodiversity from the loss of pollinators crosses borders, so I am pleased that the UK Environmental Audit Committee has strongly voiced its concerns about the reservations of the Department for

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs over the European Commission's ban on neonicotinoid pesticides. I welcome the precautionary principle that the EU has followed on the matter and I am interested in hearing from the minister about the Scottish Government's view on making the ban permanent once the EU temporary ban has lapsed. We have only to look to countries where the pollinator population has already collapsed to see how vital it is that we get this right.

I support the principles that are outlined in Buglife's manifesto.

13:12

**The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs (Roseanna Cunningham):** I congratulate Angus MacDonald on securing this debate on Scotland's pollinators. I am encouraged by the impressive level of cross-party support that he obtained for the motion, although that was also the case when the Parliament debated bees previously. As members may know, my colleagues Paul Wheelhouse and Richard Lochhead are currently at different ends of the country making important announcements, so they turned to a former environment minister to step into the breach.

I was toying with some justice-related bee puns, but the only thing that I could come up with was to say that the police have been training crack bee squads in order to help with their sting operations—I do not know where that fits with members' puns on the issue. I responded to the motion when we debated the issue in 2009. The discussion then was as informed as it has been today. I have been flicking through the *Official Report* of that debate, and I see that there were also an equal number of puns—it is unavoidable.

Members will forgive me if, this time, I have to refer some of their more specific questions to my colleagues. I know that they will come back on some issues. During that debate, I highlighted the Scottish Government's intention to launch a 10-year honey bee health strategy. That strategy has enhanced partnership working. We are halfway through the period, and the strategy is helping us to make steady progress towards the common goal of creating a sustainable and healthy population of honey bees in Scotland. I am encouraged by the strengthening of bee health initiatives and the improved biosecurity in response to that honey bee health strategy. It is nonetheless important for beekeepers to appreciate the significant role that they play in disease management and control within their apiaries.

The economic importance of the honey market in Scotland is self-evident, as it has an average

annual value of around £9 million. Initiatives such as the Bee Farmers Association's apprenticeship scheme help to strengthen this important industry by supporting young people to take up the enterprise.

The Bee Keeping (Colonsay and Oronsay) Order 2013 is an important step to ensuring that we have a reserve of black bee colonies that are free from disease and hybridisation threats. I am sure that, had Peter Peacock been in the chamber, he would have welcomed that, too.

As we have heard from a number of members, including Angus MacDonald and Alison Johnstone, the issue is not just about honey bees. In the UK, there are at least 1,500 species of insects that pollinate plants. I will have to ask Jayne Baxter to forgive me, because I do not have specific lines on bats. I am indebted to her for bringing to my attention the fact that bats, too, play a role in this area, and I will reprimand my officials for not at least including some reference to them in my briefing. There is increasing evidence that wild bees and hoverflies are particularly important pollinators in Scotland, and the value of insect pollination services in Scotland—which, as Jayne Baxter said, is estimated to be £43 million per year—was acknowledged in the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity".

We share members' concerns about the declines in the number, diversity and geographical range of pollinators, especially those with more specialised habitat or forage needs, and we recognise that we need to improve our understanding of the distribution and abundance of, and changes in, pollinators in the countryside. That is why we are contributing to a new UK-level initiative to design and test a national pollinator and pollination monitoring scheme. The future monitoring effort will include an important people engagement element, which will build on the contributions that can be made through citizen science.

The Scottish Government continues to support initiatives that improve our understanding of the range of factors that affect pollinators. For example—this partly answers Claudia Beamish's request for information about research—we are investing £560,000 in the insect pollinators initiative, which is a major research initiative that will involve investment of a total of £10 million in nine projects over five years. It is being led by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, and it draws together a number of partners. The initiative includes studies on managing bee and other insect pollinator diseases, understanding the impact of land use changes on pollinators, understanding the ecology and conservation of urban bees, and pollinator efficiency.

As I would have expected, a number of members have mentioned the problem of neonicotinoids or neonics. The Scottish Government will scrutinise the emerging research evidence on the effects of neonic use, and it continues to support advisory work by Scotland's Rural College that informs farmers on the safe use of pesticide products and alternatives to pesticides.

Our activity is, of course, much broader than simply evidence gathering. There is much that we already know, and there is a lot that we can do, and indeed are doing, to help pollinators in Scotland. That includes maintaining and re-establishing wildflower-rich grasslands and pasture. In the next Scotland rural development programme, pollinators will continue to be one of the beneficiaries in the arable options. That might not answer the highly specific question that Liam McArthur asked, but I will ask my colleagues to get back to him with any further information.

Appropriate management of our hedgerows and road edges by local authorities and land managers is also important, as it ensures that the wild flowers along them are allowed to flourish during the main flowering period between March and September. In the green spaces in urban areas, many of us can make a contribution by planting pollinator-friendly plants in our gardens. It is important that those plants span the seasons, from the early-flowering bluebells to summer thyme to the late-flowering honeysuckle, lavender and sunflower plants. I reiterate a point that I made in the 2009 debate: allowing some wild areas in urban gardens is an enormous help. It is also an excuse to be a lazy gardener, and I do not think that people need excuses for that.

We need to build on successful initiatives such as the Bumblebee Conservation Trust's bees for everyone project, which is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Scottish Natural Heritage. We recognise the range of activity that is required to enhance and improve pollinator populations, and we are working with SNH to produce towards the end of the year a pollinator strategy that will help to consolidate the partnership and collaboration effort that is already in place. The principles of the Buglife manifesto will be taken forward through that strategy, and it will frame future surveillance and monitoring needs, as well as the crucial research that is required to help improve our understanding of the complexities of the issue. A contribution of £100,000 has been made to the scheme—that is another aspect of the spend.

I thank members for their speeches on the importance of Scotland's pollinators. Raising awareness of the issues and the steps that we can all take to help pollinators is important, and I hope

that it is not another five years before there is another debate on bees in the Parliament.

13:19

*Meeting suspended.*



14:30

*On resuming—*

## Scotland's Festivals

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is a debate on motion S4M-10784, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on Scotland's festivals, festival 2014 and culture 2014.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** I am delighted to open this debate on Scotland's festivals and the success of festival 2014 and culture 2014, which are the two strands of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth games cultural programme.

It is fitting that we are holding this debate at this time of year. For many people, August in Edinburgh is inexorably linked to the Edinburgh festivals and the excitement and energy that they bring. They electrify every nook and cranny of the city. The festival of politics will, of course, open tomorrow in the Parliament.

I would also like to take the opportunity to celebrate the many festivals that take place throughout the year across Scotland, which add just as much inspiration, colour and joy to our lives.

I am sure that members will share my belief that this is the perfect time to reflect on the great success of festival 2014 in Glasgow, which ran alongside the Commonwealth games, and the on-going work of culture 2014 across Scotland, which will run until the end of August. Both have done much to share the great cultural riches of the Commonwealth across all Scotland through dance, song, theatre, literature, music, visual art, comedy and much more. Indeed, although 2014 will be remembered as a momentous year for many reasons, we should not forget that it has, arguably, been the greatest year ever for Scotland's festivals.

The Edinburgh festivals have woven their way into the very fabric of the city to such an extent that it is sometimes almost too easy to take them for granted. Throughout the year, the festivals bring Edinburgh alive for residents and visitors alike, as the city hosts more than 25,000 international artists, more than 1,000 accredited media, and audiences of more than 4 million. That benefit is felt far beyond Edinburgh. The economic, cultural and social value of the festivals generates £261 million to the Scottish economy, with £41 million spent on accommodation and £37 million spent in our cafes and bars.

We know that 77 per cent of visitors from outside Scotland said that the festivals made them

more likely to visit Edinburgh again in the future. That means that the festivals are one of the country's great tourism gateways. They open visitors' eyes to our wider tourism offer, and they benefit businesses and communities across the whole country.

We must not forget that Edinburgh's festivals are a source of astonishing opportunity and inspiration for our artists as well. They provide them with the platform to develop, present and promote their work in perhaps the greatest showcase of international performing arts and culture in the world.

The Scottish Government's Edinburgh festivals expo fund supports the costs of new productions, events or exhibitions that involve Scotland-based participants and are premiered at any of the 12 Edinburgh festivals. This year, a total of £2.25 million will take the overall level of investment to £14 million since 2008.

The Edinburgh festivals are a platform for the wider world. I recently enjoyed a Mandela day performance at the jazz and blues festival in which the incredible Mahotella Queens from South Africa held the audience in rapture with their vocal harmonies and age-defying dancing. If I tell members that the Mahotella Queens were founded in the year in which I was born, that may give them a perspective. I also heard young people from townships near Cape Town perform jazz as part of Artscape's youth band. We hope to work more with them.

We are not resting on our laurels. I am pleased that the festivals forum, which includes key Edinburgh festivals stakeholders, will undertake a new forward-thinking study to consider the future sustainability, success and development of Edinburgh's major festivals.

I want to recognise and pay tribute to Sir Jonathan Mills in his final year as director of the Edinburgh international festival. I welcome Patricia Ferguson's amendment, which mentions him. It is fitting that he has just successfully overseen the second international culture summit in the Parliament, because throughout his stewardship he has not only brought many memorable productions together but shown great leadership in keeping the founding spirit of the Edinburgh international festival alive. He will leave a strong and lasting legacy, and I am sure that all members join me in wishing his successor Fergus Linehan great success in his tenure.

It is, of course, important that we appreciate the full spectrum of festivals and events that make Scotland such a vibrant place to live in and to visit, with our cities, towns and villages playing host to well over 200 festivals each year. From Up Helly Aa in Shetland to this year's Royal National Mòd in Inverness and the Peebles arts festival in the

Scottish Borders, festivals and events cover the length and breadth of Scotland all year round.

I enjoyed speaking at the launch of this year's Glasgow comedy festival, which this year marked its 12th birthday and has emerged as the biggest event of its kind in Europe, with more than 100,000 tickets on offer for over 400 shows in nearly 50 venues. I was also delighted to attend several events at this year's 21st Celtic Connections festival in Glasgow, which truly came of age with a vibrant programme that celebrated not only the incredible array of traditional and contemporary Scottish music, but its connections to cultures around the world.

Some of our most vibrant and exciting festivals are our music festivals, which are as diverse in their styles and genres as they are wide in their reach. I recently had the pleasure of attending the St Magnus international festival in Orkney, where I attended a remarkable lute concert in the magical setting of the Italian chapel. I am sure that Liam McArthur will join me in noting the success of this year's Orkney folk festival, which is an exemplar of the collaborative, community approach that lies at the heart of so many of our festivals.

It is also an opportune time to congratulate perhaps our premier music festival, T in the Park. In what was a landmark year with brilliant performances from Paolo Nutini and Biffy Clyro, not only did the event turn 21 but it saw the last ever festival to be held at Balado come to an emotional close in front of 85,000 festival goers—including my 17-year-old son, in what is now seen as a rite-of-passage event in Scotland.

This has also been a momentous year with Scotland embracing the Commonwealth games. The Commonwealth games highlights, which were published this very morning, report on the games being the largest multisport and cultural event to be held in Scotland in a generation, with Glasgow being transformed to provide a festival of culture for its games-time visitors.

Alongside the sporting action, the Glasgow 2014 cultural programme is a national programme of new work by world-leading and emerging Scottish and international artists—the most ambitious national cultural celebration that has ever taken place in Scotland.

I congratulate Glasgow Life, Creative Scotland and all the other partners who worked so hard to bring the festival together, as well as the partnerships that have been formed throughout Scotland to help to deliver the Scotland-wide programme. By the close of the programme on 31 August, around 1,500 events will have taken place involving thousands of artists, performers and participants across hundreds of locations and venues the length and breadth of Scotland.

The nationwide culture 2014 strand has showcased the best of Scotland's rich and vibrant cultural life. The year started with some stand-out performances including the premiere of the new music biennial commissions at Celtic Connections, the restaging of the National Theatre of Scotland's "Glasgow Girls" and the celebration of diversity through Janice Parker's "Glory".

The get Scotland dancing initiative got thousands across the nation active. In May, the big dance pledge, which was created by Scottish Ballet, saw 67,000 people in 24 countries dance along to special choreography created by Scottish Ballet, including 250 dancers performing on the Skye bridge. I had the pleasure of seeing the big dance take place in my home town of Linlithgow, with 750 schoolchildren owning the square in my town. It was a great celebration of them as well as of the Commonwealth and of dance.

On midsummer's day, people across the world joined hands in a global celebration of Scottish dance in the 24-hour Commonwealth ceilidh, and the get dancin' initiative is continuing to show that dance is for everyone, with free dance classes on offer in hundreds of locations across the country. It is recognition that, in terms of legacy, not everyone can be Usain Bolt or be an athlete, but everyone can dance, and the get Scotland dancing initiative is part of the activity to try to make sure that all of Scotland is active.

The Big Big Sing has inspired thousands of people to sign up to enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits of singing. I heard some choirs singing earlier today in the Parliament, and a great, infectious enthusiasm for choral singing has been seen both from international visitors and with the Big Big Sing inspiring people here in Scotland. The huge range of opportunities to take part included singing days, workshops and flash-mob choirs, culminating in a 14,000-strong crowd singing their hearts out on Glasgow Green on a Sunday in the rain during the big Big Big Sing, which I had the pleasure to join.

Of course, the visual art world has been well represented through the quite remarkable landmark "Generation" project: an incredible programme of exhibitions celebrating 25 years of contemporary art in Scotland that features more than 100 artists and takes place at over 70 venues the length and breadth of the country, exhibiting many of our Turner prize winners and so many artists who have contributed so much over that 25-year period. So far, I have seen shows by Walker and Bromwich in Orkney and exhibitions at the national galleries in Edinburgh, including works by Steven Campbell, Ciara Phillips and Alison Watt.

During the Commonwealth games, festival 2014 proved to be an enormous success, transforming Glasgow with an invigorating mix of entertainment,

culture and enjoyment and filling the streets, spaces and stages of the city. When people said that Glasgow was buzzing during the games, a key part of that was the cultural vibrancy at almost every street corner. There were over three quarters of a million visits to the live zones at Glasgow Green, Kelvingrove band stand, the merchant city and the BBC at the quay, while more than 6,000 performers were involved in more than 1,000 performances in 100 venues around the city.

It was a hugely diverse programme. My personal highlight was “Boomerang”, which was a celebration of indigenous cultures with 21 artists from Scotland, New Zealand and Australia mixing Gaelic song and pipes with the haka, Maori vocals and traditional aboriginal music. The “Empire Café”, based in the Briggait, explored Scotland’s relationship with the North Atlantic slave trade through a thought-provoking programme of music, academic lectures, poetry, debate and workshops. In “The River”, which I had the pleasure of seeing, a 150-strong community cast of dancers, singers and musicians of all ages, together with Barrowland Ballet’s small professional cast, told stories of migration and danced and sang along the banks of the Clyde as the audience followed them.

Those examples additionally demonstrated the rich new international connections that have been developed through the cultural programme: 109 programme projects have stated connections with Commonwealth countries, 27 of which have artists or participants visiting Scotland. The important thing about culture 2014 is that it was not just about broadcasting what Scotland has to the world; it was an invitation for the world to join in that celebration.

It has truly been a momentous few months of activity, but it is not quite finished yet. Culture 2014 is picking up the baton again and bringing it to Edinburgh to mix with the festivals here before climaxing in a final weekend of activity that includes “The King of Ghosts” at the Edinburgh mela; “East End Social” at Richmond park; Scotland’s first international inclusive dance festival, “Gathered Together”, at the Tramway; and Hanna Tuulikki’s “Away with the Birds” on Canna.

The cultural programme has been delivered by a partnership between the Glasgow 2014 organising committee, Glasgow Life and Creative Scotland, as well as hundreds of artists, cultural organisations and communities across Scotland and beyond. I want to emphasise my thanks to all the partners for organising this unique, exciting and diverse programme of cultural activity, which has placed artists at the centre.

In our reflection with representatives of the 23 Governments that were here over the past few

days as part of the international culture summit, great interest was focused on the Commonwealth games cultural programme, with many countries looking to learn what we do. For example, the Japanese city of Tokyo, which is hosting the Olympics in 2020, is very interested in what we are doing, and Brazil, which has the next Olympic games, is also very interested in what is happening here.

Of course, what I have just described is only a snapshot, for this is perhaps the greatest year ever for festivals in Scotland, both in the number and in the sheer breadth of the festivals that are taking place. They range from the long-established and internationally renowned to small community events that have risen up, buoyed by this year’s feel-good factor. I want to thank all the volunteers who help make festivals happen the length and breadth of Scotland. Their enthusiasm, dedication and commitment is often the lifeblood of the festivals in our communities.

Our festivals are vibrant, often challenging and always exciting. They provide a chance for both audiences and artists to step out of the everyday and come together in new spaces and under new terms. They provide windows for transformation, both personally and for our communities. They bring neighbours together, they promote understanding of other cultures and other experiences from all over the world, and they improve our sense of who we are and why we matter.

I look forward to hearing members’ reflections on the value of festivals to Scotland. I hope that through consensus on the motion this afternoon Parliament will recognise what a groundbreaking year this is for our festivals, acknowledge that success is often based on the motivation, passion and commitment of local communities, and recognise and, indeed, celebrate the great success of culture 2014 and festival 2014.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that Scotland’s culture is in vigorous health and that this is reflected in the continued success of Scotland’s festivals, including the Edinburgh festivals, which are internationally renowned for their excitement, vision and artistic ambition; congratulates all of those involved in the successful Festival 2014 and the ongoing Culture 2014 on enabling people across Scotland to share in the cultural celebration of the Commonwealth Games; celebrates the vibrancy and diversity of Scotland’s music festivals; acknowledges the importance of all of Scotland’s festivals, both large and small, across all the country, and notes the enjoyment that they bring and their impact on tourism and local economies, and is especially appreciative of the hard work that communities contribute to ensure that smaller regional festivals are a success.

14:45

**Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab):** It is only right that we discuss in Scotland's Parliament the Edinburgh international festival and the other important cultural events that are taking place this summer.

I hope that we will consider the importance of festivals to our country and its artistic and cultural life. We should recognise the ways in which our lives and culture are strengthened by the contribution of visiting artists and performers and celebrate the cross-fertilisation that keeps our culture dynamic and inspiring. We must also acknowledge the impact that our festivals have on the economy, particularly their contribution to our tourism and hospitality industries.

I was reminded when thinking about this debate that we do not ask much of our artists and performers and those who work in the creative industries at festival time. After all, we only ask that they be the best they can be in their chosen field or practice and that they perform, day after day and night after night, to audiences large and small in a diverse range of venues—I use the word “diverse”, because it is the politest way to describe some of the venues that I have visited in festivals over the years.

Year after year our artists and performers deliver and they come back, because they know that Edinburgh in August is the place to be. It is where opportunities arise—sometimes unexpectedly—and where those people will be received by knowledgeable audiences who, more often than not, are on their side and willing them to succeed.

For established artists it is a showcase and for new artists it is a place to serve an apprenticeship—or perhaps undergo a baptism of fire. For the audience it is a chance to spot the next big thing; to spend an afternoon listening to clever, witty and challenging people discussing a variety of literary genres at the book festival; and in the evening perhaps to watch stand-up at the fringe or opera at the international festival.

On the walk from Waverley station every day I am mesmerised by the number of adverts for performances that are attached to the railings on Jeffrey Street, and I am often distracted as I look at them and think of the scale of what is happening in this city at this time.

We talk about the Edinburgh festival particularly to describe the events that take place in August, but of course Edinburgh's festivals are spread throughout the year, with the hogmanay events in January, the science festival in April, the Imagine festival in May, the film and jazz festivals in June and July and the storytelling festival in October—to name but a few.

As the cabinet secretary said, there are 12 festivals in total, which between them host 25,000 international artists, more than 1,000 accredited media representatives and audiences of more than 4 million people. Those numbers are quite staggering, so I make no apologies for repeating them. The festivals' effect on the Scottish economy is staggering, too, generating some £261 million. Bed occupancy in Edinburgh's hotels reaches 93 per cent in August and £37 million is spent in cafes and bars alone. That truly is part of the energy and dynamism of this city. Many of those who come to Edinburgh then journey on to other parts of Scotland and the United Kingdom.

In 2006 the “Thundering Hooves” report was published, which identified many of those important figures and suggested that more could be done. One of its main recommendations was that the individual festivals needed to work more collaboratively and to have better relationships with other agencies.

In early 2007 I had the privilege of chairing the first meeting of the festivals forum, which went on to become Festivals Edinburgh, which enables strategic planning and decision making to be undertaken. I am delighted that it is now planning a further “Thundering Hooves” report, which I think will help set out the direction of travel for the next 10 years and beyond and will help Edinburgh to retain its jealously guarded pre-eminence in the field. My colleague Sarah Boyack will say more about that in her contribution.

Before I move on from the Edinburgh festivals, I think that it is right, as Scottish Labour's amendment suggests, to mark the departure of Sir Jonathan Mills as director of the Edinburgh international festival. Jonathan Mills came to Edinburgh from Australia with an established reputation as an artist of renown in his own right but also someone who brought his fierce intelligence and love of the arts to the role of artistic director of the Melbourne international arts festival. Over the past seven years, he has stamped his mark on the international festival here, too, and he will be missed—thankfully he is not leaving us entirely, as I think that he plans to stay in Edinburgh—but he is leaving the festival in good heart and, importantly, in good finance, which his successor, Fergus Linehan, will no doubt be grateful for. Sir Jonathan tells us that while he is in Edinburgh he plans to finish an opera that he is writing, and I am sure that we all wish him well in that endeavour.

As the motion identifies, it is not only in Edinburgh that we find artistic and other festivals and the efforts of EventScotland to promote, encourage and help to fund many of the events are welcome. I think that we are lucky to have organisations as professional and highly regarded

as VisitScotland and EventScotland working with local authorities and organisers to make Scotland a year-round destination for those with a love of and an interest in the arts. From Edinburgh's hogmanay to Celtic Connections in Glasgow, T in the Park, the Wickerman festival and Hebtember—which I must admit was a new one on me—the calendar of events is packed.

The fact that the Commonwealth games incorporates an arts festival is one of the things that I think makes it so special. In its original iteration, the Olympic games also had a cultural festival—indeed, there was a time when medals were awarded for artistic endeavour, too. The fact that the effort has continued to this day with the Commonwealth games is one of the things that make it so special.

Because I was a Clyde-sider, I did not have as much opportunity during the games as I would have liked to experience what was happening in Glasgow, let alone around the rest of the country, but what I did see was remarkable. It is always invidious to compare these things, but, if I may say so, I attended a lot of cultural events in Melbourne in 2006 and I think that we did it a bit better.

From the work done by Depot Arts in my constituency on the day that the baton came through Possilpark, to the live zone at Glasgow Green or the performance of our friend and colleague Pauline McNeill with the band Mc4 in the merchant city, there was some wonderful work going on. Of course around Scotland there were exhibitions such as "Generation" featuring people such as Alison Watt and Toby Paterson. All of it was interesting and challenging—and free.

We saw Glasgow and its people at their best during the Commonwealth games. Indeed, somehow the entire country felt more invigorated and joyful than usual. If Edinburgh can host an arts festival every year, could Glasgow host a festival of sport on an annual basis? Before my colleagues and indeed the cabinet secretary get too worried about that, I stress that I am not talking about anything on the scale of the Commonwealth games, and I am not necessarily talking about an event for our elite athletes—and, yes, I do realise that the sporting calendar is already cluttered. Could we host an annual event for young athletes, very amateur athletes or indeed for veteran athletes? Perhaps it would not work, but it just seems to me that we need to find a way to capture that enthusiasm and spirit. Perhaps a festival of sport would be an option and, indeed, a fitting legacy of the sport and the culture that we enjoyed so much in 2014.

There are so many festivals around the country that it is always invidious to mention some without mentioning others. I am sure that my colleagues will mention those that they are particularly aware

of in their local areas. One thing that they all have in common is that they would not happen if it were not for the imagination and ingenuity of people who care about what happens in their communities, who care what happens to art and culture in our country and who are determined to make a difference, and to make sure that they, along with their local communities, friends and neighbours, can enjoy the very best of what Scotland has to offer, wherever it happens to be.

I move amendment S4M-10784.1, to insert at end:

"; congratulates EventScotland on the contribution that it made to Scotland's thriving festivals scene; considers that the initiative of Festivals Edinburgh in commissioning a further edition of the report, *Thundering Hooves*, will be an important and helpful contribution to the continuing development of the Edinburgh festivals; congratulates Sir Jonathan Mills on his major contribution to the Edinburgh International Festival and to the cultural life of Scotland as he prepares to hand over to Fergus Linehan, and wishes both men well for the future".

14:54

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** We are happy to support the Scottish Government's motion, which endorses the outstanding contribution that festivals make to the cultural, social and economic life of Scotland and its communities. We are also happy to support the Labour amendment, which congratulates EventScotland and Sir Jonathan Mills, as he completes his distinguished career at the Edinburgh festival.

Festivals are all about the celebration—or commemoration, in some cases—of a unique aspect of a community and its traditions. They are about a sense of belonging and purpose, and they usually have their origin in the identities of social, religious or geographical groupings. As the cabinet secretary and Patricia Ferguson said, festivals are full of enthusiasm and, particularly this year, bring a feel-good factor that invigorates the whole community.

Some festivals in Scotland have their history in early agriculture and celebrations of the change of seasons. The Gaelic Beltane fire festivals were all about encouraging the summer crops to grow, the Lammass festivals were about the power of the sun and the breaking of the first new bread following the harvesting of the grain, and the Gaelic interpretation of the Saturnalian festivals, which the Latin poet Catullus described, was all about celebrating the bounty of the land. Of course, in more modern times we have the very Scottish interpretation of the autumn celebration of Hallowe'en.

Many early festivals, particularly in the middle ages, grew out of religious crusades and the

pilgrimages that people made to celebrate the life and work of saints. Many such festivals continue today. For those of more pagan views, there were other festivals, some of which dated from much further back in time. For example, archaeologists think that the standing stones at Callanish are there because some of the earliest inhabitants believed that the stones would act as a kind of astronomical observatory that would allow them to watch and worship the movement of the sun and the stars. Like some of the other festivals that I have mentioned, they were a monument to the link between man and his environment. Next week, when we debate the Historic Environment Scotland Bill, we will be thinking about how we understand all that in a more modern setting.

The cabinet secretary mentioned the traditional music festivals, many of which have their foundations in iconic Scottish instruments, such as the harp and the bagpipes, or the very best of Celtic and Gaelic songs and poetry. The festivals are a key means of understanding Scotland's rich history and how it has shaped our environment.

Festivals that have a sporting edge also have a rich history—I was interested in Patricia Ferguson's suggestion that we establish a new sports festival. The oldest Highland games come from Ceres, in Fife, and are of particular interest this year, because they were the result of a charter that was awarded to the villagers because of their loyalty to Robert the Bruce at the battle of Bannockburn. Highland games are Scottish in character but international in outreach—and increasingly so, as we see when we look at the countries in which they are copied and the lists of competitors in Scottish events, who come from all over the world. Indeed, at the Crieff highland games, on Sunday, I understand that that great Lancastrian, Freddie Flintoff, will proudly wear his kilt as he tosses the caber.

The cabinet secretary was absolutely right when she said recently that culture has a worth in itself, which should not be subservient to economic or financial gain. That is an important context as we consider the intrinsic value of our festivals, which define who we are and the relationships that we have with our past, as well as the relationships that will help to mould our future.

Nowadays, as the cabinet secretary said, our festivals are as diverse and vibrant as those anywhere else in the world. In the fields of music, art, science, film, food, leisure and religion, they reach far and wide, well beyond our local communities and into every corner of the world. As such, they are an increasingly popular attraction for visitors as well as Scots.

The Edinburgh festival epitomises that breadth and depth of cultural experience. Since its inception in 1947, it has grown in size and stature,

and it now encompasses just under 3,000 shows every August. It is still, for the most part, capable of attracting world class artistes on every stage.

When I was growing up in the 1960s and 1970s—I am older than the cabinet secretary—I was privileged to hear a great deal about the Edinburgh festival and its musical direction, because Dick Telfer, who, along with Alexander Gibson, Ian Rodger and Ainslie Millar, founded Scottish Opera in 1962, was a family friend of my parents and grandparents. The ethos on which they went on to found Scottish Opera is one that continues to be admired around the world and that has always had the ability to ensure that Scotland is looking outward as well as nurturing the very best of our home-grown talent.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I am interested to hear about Liz Smith's connection to Scottish Opera. This year, Scottish Opera performed "Anamchara", which brought together New Zealand and other countries from all over the Commonwealth. The link to that outward perspective is still strong.

**Liz Smith:** Yes, indeed, and it can be enhanced, because it is very much in Scotland's tradition to be outward looking as well as to do our best for our home-grown talent.

I hope that that mix is something that we can always have, particularly, dare I say it, in the context of whatever happens in the referendum. Whoever we are, whatever political party we support, that mix is something that binds us all together. These are very important strands.

Culture is always at its best when it can make Scotland relevant in the international community in a way that celebrates the best of our nation while challenging our imagination and creativity and strengthening our cultural and social future. If any proof were needed, one need look no further than Glasgow this summer. Not only did that city lay on a highly successful Commonwealth games, it laid on a terrific cultural experience through festival 2014 and culture 2014. Much of it was free to enter and it went hand in glove with the traditions and colour of the Commonwealth nations.

Glasgow excelled itself in so many different ways this summer and we debated the legacy in the Parliament last week. The cultural legacy is part of that and I have no doubt that those two festivals will be a reason why many visitors will return to Glasgow in the years ahead.

Festivals are an integral part of any nation, whether they are held in very small communities and organised on a shoestring or in large communities. They are often the means by which communities bind themselves together. They matter to the economic fabric of Scotland and, more than that, they define who we are and, as

such, we must celebrate them and do everything we can to support them.

15:02

**Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I am pleased to have been called to speak in the debate this afternoon. Scotland is simply one of the most exciting places in the world to be this year. As someone who enjoyed the ydance youth festival during the Commonwealth games and George R R Martin at the book festival, I pay tribute to the tremendous work that has been done across Scotland to make 2014 one of the most exciting and successful years in Scotland's festivals history.

I was lucky to be an observer at the second Edinburgh international culture summit that was held in the Parliament at the weekend and earlier this week. It was an incredibly interesting and informative summit attended by delegates from more than 20 countries around the globe. They examined some of the cultural challenges that face us.

The summit was brought together by the Parliament and the United Kingdom and Scottish Governments with support from the British Council, and it was a fitting swansong for Jonathan Mills, who was part of the culture summit's steering group. There were some compelling and interesting presentations that examined the key themes of advocacy and identity in culture, cities and culture, and, controversially, the value and measurement of culture.

Jordi Savall performed with a collective of international medieval musicians and spoke about how his music had informed his peace work across the world. Ea Sola, a French Vietnamese choreographer, talked about how her work in Vietnam had helped to heal the elderly population and allow them to deal with some of the traumatic experiences that they had had during their lifetimes. Perhaps one of the most compelling presentations was from Nandi Mandela, who talked about cultural identity and a source for positive change in the global environment. As she spoke her grandfather's words, it had a profound effect on me and made me think about how important cultural identity is to nation shaping and to our understanding of one another.

A Polish delegate summed up the measuring and values discussion by saying that not everything that can be measured counts and not everything that counts can be measured. The cabinet secretary summed that up in the Talbot Rice lecture last year when she said:

"We can't discuss the economic benefits of culture without also acknowledging the contribution that our cultural work makes to help build long-term relationships

and trust overseas. As a country, we continue to punch well above our weight internationally, using heritage, culture and creativity to attract other nationals to live, work, study, travel and do business in Scotland—all of which contributes to growth. Culture helps support engagement with the priority countries and regions identified in the Government's International Framework and we have some good stories to tell."

I hope to enlighten members with a good story from this afternoon in this very Parliament. On Tuesday, we had a compelling debate about Gaza, which began with a moving opening speech by Drew Smith. That debate and all the deliberations during the international culture summit could have been summed up by a few minutes of sublime singing in the Parliament's Robert Burns room this afternoon. We had the absolute delight of listening to one of the most emotionally powerful shows at the fringe, courtesy of the Dloko high school choir, who come from the Umlazi township in South Africa. That 30-strong choir of incredibly talented young people who sang and danced for us is all the more remarkable because they hail from a desperately poor township outside Durban in an area where violence and sexual crimes are all-too commonplace.

The choir is making its international debut at Edinburgh's festival, funded by crowd sourcing through an online campaign by the Scottish charity the Iris Initiative. It was fitting that, in the room named after Robert Burns—the man who penned the words

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

the choir included in its repertoire a stunningly beautiful tribute to Nelson Mandela. One young man stepped forward to speak about what their beloved Madiba means to them. In doing so, without blame or accusation and despite their own struggles and experiences of life, they expressed solidarity with the people of Palestine.

The choir was accompanied by Mr Wallace, a retired teacher from Edinburgh who has been involved in the Jabulani Project for eight years. Jabulani has taken the John Byrne award—a Scottish award that is aimed at young people in Edinburgh—out to Durban and has been using it to work with schools there. It is an incredibly important prize, because it involves young people expressing their reactions to other works of culture. Just as in Edinburgh, the aim in South Africa is to stimulate discussion of values and ethics. What a wonderful example of cultural exchange and understanding and of how festivals can contribute to a greater understanding of other cultures and in so doing create a more peaceful and prosperous world.

15:08

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** I welcome the debate. I will focus on Edinburgh and the importance of our festivals to our culture and economy. The Edinburgh international festival was established in 1947, in the wake of the second world war. Its founders believed that the festival should

“enliven and enrich the cultural life of Europe, Britain and Scotland”

and

“provide a platform for the flowering of the human spirit”.

That ethos is alive and well today. Sixty years on, the Edinburgh international festival is as exciting and challenging as ever. However, the world has changed and many other cities, jealous of Edinburgh’s success, are keen to emulate our international festival and generate the economic and cultural benefits that come from such a flagship event.

We have had only nine directors of the festival since 1947, and it is appropriate to acknowledge the work that Jonathan Mills has done. It is a significant commitment that someone makes when they become the director of the Edinburgh international festival, but it is a magnificent, unrepeatable experience for a person. Over the years, the festival has grown—and this is what I want to focus on—into a series of nearly year-round events. Festivals Edinburgh alone is comprised of 11 different annual festivals, each of which adds something special to the life of the city. Each of those festivals is important on its own terms, whether social, artistic, scientific or economic.

The “Thundering Hooves” report, which was published in 2006, was commissioned to address the fact that other cities were beginning to get their act together, and that other festivals and big cultural and sporting events were being held around the globe. “Thundering Hooves” has been hugely important for all the various stakeholders and everyone who is involved in the festivals. The construction of the forum has been hugely important, too. As well as enabling us to have strategic co-ordination and strategic discussion of all our festivals, and some sense of collective interest in them, it has been crucial in looking at the challenges that exist and thinking about what needs to be done.

Given that a refreshed version of the “Thundering Hooves” report will be produced next spring, I want us to think about progress on investment and leadership, not just for the international festival but for all the festivals. We need to consider who comes next, who the next performers will be, how the productions are managed and what investment is taking place in

research and development and, crucially, programming. The nuts and bolts of the festival need investment. We see the stars and the globally successful people who give the festival a face, but all the work that is done underneath the brilliant surface needs to be invested in if Edinburgh is to retain its pre-eminence as a festival city.

I highlight the issue of support for artists in the future. At the moment, there are simply not enough places for artists to develop their skills, their crafts or their arts. We have one or two hugely important venues in the city, such as St Margaret’s house and Wasps studios, but there are not enough spaces available to meet the demand that exists in the city among artists who are drawn to Edinburgh and those who grew up here.

In addition, we need a lot more investment in venues. Over the year, the City of Edinburgh Council has had to make some extremely tough decisions and has not been able to invest in as many venues as it would have liked as quickly as it would have liked. Major venues still need more investment, including the King’s Theatre and the Queen’s Hall. Although our venues are expensive, they are hugely important from the point of view of the character of the festival. The Edinburgh Filmhouse has aspirations for the future, too, and it needs investment.

A key suggestion in the “Thundering Hooves” report was about the need for the Scottish Government to continue its support. That is essential. Many of the initiatives that the cabinet secretary mentioned are crucial to the long-term success of the festivals. I am referring to investment in galleries such as the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, in the National Museum of Scotland and in the work of Creative Scotland. Those institutions are important because they all underpin the capacity to put on the international festival. Without that national investment, the international festival just would not exist in its current form, nor would the fringe or the range of other festivals that we have.

I add a plea for support for contemporary music. We have recently lost the Picture House on Lothian Road, which was a hugely important all-year-round venue, and we do not have a replacement in the city.

“Thundering Hooves” also made some extremely difficult recommendations. It recommended that, as a start, the City of Edinburgh Council should increase its cultural spend from 2.8 to 4 per cent of the budget, but it had aspirations for a much bigger increase than that. As the report noted, Edinburgh faces the challenge of having a relatively small tax base to draw on compared with competitor cities. The city



is actually quite small. In population terms, it doubles in size during the international festival and the fringe, but we do not have the tax base to generate all the investment that we need.

There is cross-party support on the council for the concept of a tourist levy, which is one of the key ideas that came out of “Thundering Hooves”, but the Scottish Government has not yet given its support to that. Today, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities commission on strengthening local democracy argues for much more financial flexibility and scope for local decision making. I leave that as a challenge for the cabinet secretary to pick up on. If she does not do so this afternoon, I hope that she will have a private discussion on the matter with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth. That would be a very practical way to empower the city to do a great deal more.

I flag up the fact that we have new festivals springing up all the time, and an all-year-round approach would be great. We have the interfaith festival, the just festival and the take one action festival, which I particularly love. It starts on 19 September, which is a day that we can all look forward to. It is a campaigning festival. We also have the Scottish history festival in November.

The international festival and the fringe—our official festivals—are fantastic and need more support. We need to think particularly about the next generation that is coming through our universities, colleges and schools—our next playwrights, set designers, programmers, artists, musicians and singers. All the young people who are coming through need support. We need the infrastructure, the money, the marketing and the support from the Scottish Government, but we also need to think about our schools, colleges and universities. The future of the festivals is crucial.

15:15

**Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP):** As an Edinburgh MSP, I agree with quite a lot of what Sarah Boyack said.

Scotland is a nation of festivals. All through the year, up and down the country, a local festival can usually be found. As the cabinet secretary said, 2014 could be the greatest year that we have had for events, culture and sport.

As the MSP for the Edinburgh Western constituency, I am delighted that the debate is happening at the same time as the world’s best and most famous culture extravaganza—the Edinburgh festivals. For that reason, and with respect to festivals across the country, I will, like Sarah Boyack, focus my comments on Edinburgh. That is only because lessons that are learned in the capital can help other areas.

As a resident of the capital, I have grown to love the atmosphere, the colour, the diversity and the opportunities that present themselves at this time of year. However, only after I was elected to the City of Edinburgh Council did I become aware of how vital the Edinburgh festivals are to the economy of the city and beyond.

The global reach of the Edinburgh festivals is phenomenal. We can consider the amount of free international advertising that Edinburgh and Scotland obtain when shots of the castle, Princes Street or the Royal Mile are shown on television screens around the world. It would probably take the Scottish Government’s entire block grant to pay for the equivalent advertising space globally.

The 2013 review of Edinburgh’s festival fringe said that there were 45,465 performances in 273 venues by 2,402 companies, which included some 24,107 performers from 41 countries. Those figures are just for the fringe; when the official festival, the book festival and others are included, we can see how successful the festival is.

The festivals must overcome logistical problems, some of which are similar to those that Glasgow overcame recently during its magnificent Commonwealth games. Local authority transport officials will have to deal anyway with issues of transport management, particularly from the west of the city to the city centre, but things can get crazy during festival time, when thousands of performers and visitors come to the city.

Another problem is festival inflation, whereby accommodation costs soar as lodgings become more difficult to obtain. That is one of the main problems that festivals have in achieving sustainability. If they are not to be seen as elitist and if they are to allow people to break through into the performing arts, to show exhibitions and to be able to see shows, we must find a way of keeping the costs down.

Another plus side to the festival is Edinburgh airport obtaining more direct flights. As Edinburgh becomes more accessible, it is vital that we identify and address the logistical problems.

On the less glamorous side are performance costs and venue safety. When I was the convener of the City of Edinburgh Council’s regulatory committee, one of the most difficult things that I had to do was find ways of keeping the cost of public entertainment licences down.

The arts, culture and sport should not be only for those who have money. I am delighted that the Scottish Government’s expo fund has helped with increased investment of £2.25 million from 2012, which has helped to lever in another £1.5 million from other sources.

In terms of strategy, there has been much success in that the advertising and sales pitch for the Edinburgh festivals has been linked with other events including the Commonwealth games and the Olympic games. The events are working not in isolation but in partnership, and are feeding off each other and offering tourists an option that allows them to take in many events around the whole country—not just in Edinburgh. That is an example of team Scotland in action.

Although Edinburgh's and Scotland's festivals are absolutely first class, there cannot be room for complacency. As has been mentioned numerous times today, the City of Edinburgh Council commissioned the "Thundering Hooves" report back in 2006. The threat from emerging festivals throughout the UK and Europe in terms of artistic prestige, patronage, affordability and accessibility required to be looked at seriously. I welcome the news that the festivals forum will review how things are done.

In the years since the "Thundering Hooves" report was published, the City of Edinburgh Council, Festivals Edinburgh and the individual festivals have taken up the challenge. I will mention five of the many people who have worked to maintain Edinburgh's prominence as the world's leading festival city. Faith Liddell is the director of Festivals Edinburgh, whose work brings together in a coherent unit the festivals here in the city. Kath Mainland is the chief executive officer of Edinburgh Festival Fringe, whose magnificent work earned her a CBE in the Queen's birthday honours this year. If ever anyone was perfectly placed in a job, it is Kath Mainland.

Other members have mentioned Sir Jonathan Mills, who has left his mark on the festival over the years. In addition I must mention two local politicians—that is not something that we hear very often in the chamber. The first is the Edinburgh festival and events champion, Councillor Steve Cardownie. It is fair to say that Councillor Cardownie has developed a sometimes controversial image in the city, including through playing a cadaver in a Ukrainian play at the festival some years ago. However, his work over a number of years has shown an incredible commitment to the Edinburgh festivals' profile at home and abroad. I also commend Councillor Eric Milligan, from the Labour group, who has shown the same passion for the festival, for a number of years.

I am deeply proud to have been involved with many people who are a part of the festival. We can look forward to many successful years of Scotland's festivals, and not just in Edinburgh.

15:22

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):**

The debate is welcome, but we should all remember that festivals are not just social occasions for enjoyment and recreation: they can have a huge impact on local economies. That is especially true in areas such as the one that I represent. In remote and rural areas where populations are much smaller, the benefits can be huge as festivals draw in visitors from other areas.

There are not just festivals, as such; there are county shows, highland games and agricultural shows. We can see the impact that the Royal Highland Show has on Edinburgh; up north we have the Black Isle show, which is our answer to the Royal Highland Show. It brings people in from the whole of the Highlands and Islands and beyond, and boosts the local economy.

We also have pipe band competitions—the world championships, for instance, which has unfortunately gone to Glasgow rather than Dunoon this year. That is a disappointment for the people in Dunoon—I hope that they will win the competition back, because it had a huge impact on the economy there. We have to be careful when looking at festivals and their movement, and in encouraging more festivals in.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I think that Rhoda Grant is confusing some of the competitions. The world pipe band championship has been in Glasgow—which regained it—for the past few years. The Dunoon championship is a different competition. Perhaps I could write to her to explain that.

**Rhoda Grant:** I would certainly appreciate that, because I know that the competition has had a big impact on Dunoon, and it is really important that we try to get it back for the local economy, which has been disadvantaged over a period of time.

We have had additional events this year such as the Commonwealth games and the Bannockburn re-enactment for homecoming 2014. Although I welcome those additional events, we need to be very careful about their impact on other events. I do not want to bring down the debate, which has been a great celebration of festivals, but in my area the RockNess music festival was cancelled this year because of competition from other events. That is unfortunate, because an awful lot of those events have been in the central belt rather than out in the more remote rural areas. RockNess was a prime music festival for young people, and losing it has had an impact on the economy not only of Inverness but of the south side of Loch Ness, which was very dependent on the festival.

**Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** In our area, we had the Commonwealth games and we always have the merchant city festival. We moved

the dates of the merchant city festival to coincide with the Commonwealth games. Is that something that might be considered in the areas about which Rhoda Grant is speaking so that events would not clash with other festivals and so that we can get the best of both worlds?

**Rhoda Grant:** Sandra White makes a good point, but the problem was that, this year, the calendar was so packed that there was no opportunity to move the RockNess festival. I ask that, when we push forward and consider groundbreaking events, some thought be given to ensuring that we do not push out other events that have the ability to become annual and to have an impact on local communities. I ask for careful planning to ensure that an increased number of events does not impact on our more remote rural areas that cannot compete to the same extent.

We have wonderful festivals in the north. For example, the Hebridean Celtic festival—Hebceltfest—has been running for a number of years and has had a huge impact on the local economy. It attracts big names and spreads throughout the Western Isles with traditional and modern music. There is something for everybody. It happens not only in Stornoway but in community halls throughout the islands, allowing everybody to have an opportunity to attend and enjoy it.

I ask the cabinet secretary to have discussions with her colleagues about transport for such events. Events that happen on islands are very dependent on transport by boat. There are concerns in the Western Isles about the new MV Loch Seaforth. Many folk had hoped for two smaller boats that could have increased capacity during peak times to provide additional sailings and allow people to come and go. There are concerns that the one boat is dependent on the linkspan at Stornoway and Ullapool. If there was a problem with the linkspan in Stornoway, it could not be used at all to ferry people to the islands. I ask the cabinet secretary to raise that matter in discussions with her colleagues to ensure that there are contingency plans for such times. Last year, the boat from Scrabster to Orkney was cancelled for a number of weeks ahead of the Orkney folk festival and then bad weather ensued when folk went back on, leading to big pressure on all the sailings from Scrabster and Aberdeen and some people missing out on the festival because of the transport issues.

I will also mention Belladrum. I should, perhaps, register an interest to do with that because I was invited to perform—I say that because that is what it said on my wrist band—or, certainly, to speak at the verb garden tent there. Belladrum is very much a family festival with all kinds of different music. We see people of all age groups. Indeed, I saw wee cots on wheels that wheeled very young

people around, especially in the evening when their parents were enjoying events.

Belladrum also has debates, conversations and discussions with experts and campaigners in the verb garden tent, which is interesting for a politician, who can go in and advance views and ideas. That is probably unique in all the festivals that we have throughout the country.

We also have other festivals throughout the area. Up Helly Aa is one, but there are many more—too many to mention in the debate. We need to recognise their importance not only for enjoyment, but for the impact that they have on our local economy and, especially, the fact that the economies in remote rural areas are disproportionately dependent on them.

15:28

**Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP):** I welcome the motion and much of the debate that has taken place on the festivals that we can celebrate around the country, which enhance life in our small country in many different ways. I will concentrate on some of the aspects of festivals that go on from year to year—in particular, those in my part of the world.

The large and small festivals throughout the country are the backbone of the festival movement. If we are lucky, we can rely on them taking place if the funding can be found through the systems that exist to pay for part of their existence. I make a plea to Creative Scotland to ensure that it does not always seek new ways to spend money but that it recognises that having festivals from one year to the next is in itself a creative activity.

I want to talk about the fèisean, the festivals that promote the Gaelic language. About 13,000 young people participate each year, with another 4,800 taking part in the youth music initiative that is organised. Benefits for Gaelic culture and history flow from the festivals.

After 10 years of the fèis movement, a report by Comedia in 1996 pointed out, in the case of the adult fèis, which takes place in May in Ullapool, that

“the fèisean make a hugely valuable contribution to their communities at very little public expense”.

It cited the example that, in 1996, the fèisean provided a considerable amount of year round activity for

“less than half the public subsidy allocated, without hesitation, to a single swimming pool and sports hall in Ullapool.”

In other words, many very valuable—and growing—cultural events are supported with a lot less money than many other events are.

We must remember that Fèisean nan Gàidheal is increasing its reach around many parts of the country. A 2001 Highlands and Islands Enterprise report stated:

“The original vision of a community-led festival that passes on the skills of traditional music, song and dance, has developed into a highly effective network of volunteers, tutors and supporting organisations with centres of activity across most parts of Scotland where there are active Gaelic communities.”

That is a tremendous volunteer-led effort, which has public recognition and which contributes to some of the widespread festivals that I have mentioned.

I turn to another very important aspect of festivals. I congratulate the cultural festivals of the Commonwealth games. Last night, Jim Sutherland and Fiona Mackenzie presented a smidgeon of the struileag show. As they said, Gaelic used to be spoken all over Scotland and its speakers' descendants are spread across the world.

“This scattering of people is the Scottish Gaelic diaspora. Struileag/Shore to Shore is mapping the farthest reaches of this amazing diaspora, connecting with people who feel the call of a culture that is etched into their DNA.”

The show, “Children of The Smoke”, was presented in Glasgow. That major element of creativity arose from the call to ensure that we had a vibrant cultural outpouring at the same time as the sports activities. Jim Sutherland, its creator, must be hugely thanked for creating that opportunity in festival 2014. We must ask about supporting future performances, so that many other people can see the show, too.

It is in that context that we must draw support. In June 2013, Fiona Hyslop, when speaking at the Talbot Rice gallery in the University of Edinburgh, said:

“Scotland’s cultural life and heritage cannot be reduced to a single style or image; rather, they are a wealth of what we might describe as ‘stories’ that take many different forms, as diverse as the land, peoples and places of this complex country.”

When one builds on that vision, one must ensure that culture—in all its forms—is supported by our Government. It must be recognised that that can happen not only when one has the powers to promote it, but when one has the money to make the best of those cultural outpourings that are as innate in our people as they are in the peoples of every other country in the world.

15:34

**Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):** I very much welcome this afternoon’s timely debate,

which follows the hugely successful Commonwealth games and associated festival 2014 and culture 2014, and which is taking place during this year’s Edinburgh international festival and festival fringe. I am delighted to take part in the debate and make no apology for devoting my speaking time to celebrating another important Scottish festival that is very close to my heart—the Aberdeen international youth festival, or AIYF as it is known, of which I have been a trustee and friend for a considerable number of years. In connection with that, I refer members to my entry in the register of members’ interests.

The AIYF has just finished its 42nd successful season and is now recognised as one of the best celebrations of youth arts that is held anywhere in the world today. It has had Government backing in recent years, with successive ministers, including Patricia Ferguson and the current culture secretary, Fiona Hyslop, attending its opening ceremony. Unfortunately, Ms Hyslop was unable to be in Aberdeen this year because of her Commonwealth games commitments, but AIYF is very appreciative of her on-going support.

The festival was created in the late 1960s by the late Blyth Major, the music director of the midland youth orchestra, and the late Lionel Bryer, the chairman of the International Youth Foundation. They conceived the idea of bringing together youth orchestras from all over the world, using music as a unifying bond to promote international understanding. The first festival of youth orchestras was held in 1969 in St Moritz, in Switzerland.

Invited by the British Tourist Authority, the festival moved to the UK and established bases in both London and Aberdeen for the following five years, during which the festival was able to expand to incorporate all forms of dancing, jazz and choral music thanks to the excellent facilities and local support in the city of Aberdeen. Such was the support within the city—from the council, the university, local businesses and great audiences—that the decision was made to focus the event entirely in Aberdeen and the north-east, and in 1980 the name was changed to the AIYF, as we know it today. The festival now embraces dance, theatre, world music—both traditional and modern—choirs, orchestras, opera and jazz. This year, we even had a large Chinese marching band from Beijing.

In recent years, audience numbers have increased steadily, and the AIYF has continued to expand its educational and community projects. It is able to select the most talented individuals and groups from all over the world, giving them a platform on which to show their talents in a celebration of youth culture that is recognised universally as one of the best in the world. The

festival is held in high regard by Aberdonians, and the extended festival performances in towns and villages in Aberdeenshire are enjoyed by capacity audiences wherever they take place.

The AIYF lives up to its founding principle of using music and other art forms to promote international understanding, which is so important in the divided and strife-ridden world that we inhabit today. At this year's opening ceremony on 27 July, when the participants' national flags were paraded into the music hall to the accompaniment of the national anthems, it was moving to see young attendees from the Ukraine, the Netherlands, Russia, Azerbaijan, the Czech Republic, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United States of America, Mexico, China, Japan, Scotland and England all applauding one another's anthems, and the saltire and the union flag, with everyone standing for the British national anthem. Their faces were a picture, as always, when the renowned Bucksburn and district junior pipe band entered the hall to conclude proceedings. I know that the current and previous ministers have experienced that.

The ensuing week of performances within and beyond the city brought a colour and atmosphere to Aberdeen that we see only when the AIYF is in town. This year, we were blessed with the same wonderful sunshine that was enjoyed at the Commonwealth games—except when we entertained the American schools orchestra from New York to a pre-performance barbecue at Braemar castle, when it simply poured with rain. It was hard to believe that the talented performers in evening dress who entertained us to Beethoven's eighth symphony just an hour later had been dripping wet in the type of Scottish weather that they had previously just heard talked about. Perhaps my sherry trifle had something to do with their good humour—certainly, their conductor appreciated it.

To see choirs and orchestras performing magnificently together after the scantiest rehearsal time is quite humbling, and I know that that experience was repeated across many different venues where audiences were delighted by dance, theatre and international music.

The performers are catered for in the university's halls of residence and, every evening, the young people who have not been performing that day provide an impromptu concert for the others and have a great time socially. In that way, over many years, friendships have been made across language and political divides—a number of visiting groups are now brought to Aberdeen by directors and leaders who first came to the festival as teenagers.

One group that has come to Aberdeen for many festivals since 1977 is the Saiga ballet company

from Tokyo. This year, it was accompanied once again by its founder and choreographer, fondly known to us as Toshi, now a fit and sprightly 82-year-old who, I am told, still dances. Toshi is an honorary friend of the AIYF and is an enormous fan of Aberdeen. Of course, we were delighted to see her back again.

I was particularly pleased on Tuesday this week to attend the event in the Parliament that was sponsored by Christian Allard to showcase the North East Folk Collective, who also performed at this year's AIYF. The group was formed in 2009 by Sharon Hassan, a local fiddler from Inch in Aberdeenshire, and plays traditional music from the north-east and other parts of the world. There were 22 members of the band with us on Tuesday, and we all had our toes tapping to their talented performances. I was delighted to hear from Sharon that a large number of even younger children are coming up through the ranks of her group, safeguarding the future of traditional music for many years to come.

I could go on all afternoon, but suffice it to say that the AIYF is going strong and that its current director and chief executive officer, Stewart Aitken, is doing a splendid job of leading it, despite limited staff resources and a budget that is ever tighter, as is the case with most cultural festivals. The core funding from the city council and the University of Aberdeen and the financial support of many sponsors who are too numerous to mention individually but who are led by the oil majors, BP and Shell, are absolutely essential. That money has to be vigorously pursued every year.

There are on-going discussions about the future governance and development of the AIYF, but I have no doubt that there is a will to ensure its future for many more years to come, and plans are in hand for that.

Time precludes me from saying more, but I can assure members of a warm reception and an exciting cultural experience if they come to Aberdeen between 24 July and 1 August next year.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Stewart Stevenson, to be followed by Fiona McLeod. *[Interruption.]*

I beg your pardon. I call Willie Coffey, to be followed by Liam McArthur. My mistake—my apologies.

15:42

**Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley (SNP):** I am a poor substitute for my colleague Stewart Stevenson, but we will hear from him in a minute or two.

It is appropriate to have this debate and celebration of Scotland's culture in the middle of the Edinburgh festival. The fringe is the biggest arts festival in the world and, when you walk up the High Street, you would think that the whole world has come to Edinburgh.

As Kath Mainland says in her welcome in the fringe programme, the fringe is

"the greatest cultural event on the planet"

and we should expect the unexpected. With what looks like around 4,000 fringe events to choose from, it certainly is "unboring", as the programme says, and there is something for everyone to enjoy.

I have managed to see two events so far. One is called "And the Goat Remained a Goat", about one Harry Price, ghost hunter and man of mystery, by Professor Richard Wiseman and the fabulously talented musicians, the Creative Martyrs. The show was so weird and so funny that it is a must-see for colleagues in the chamber.

The other show that I have managed to see, which played to a packed-out audience, was by the Scottish Falsetto Sock Puppet Theatre. I have not laughed so much in years. Seeing adults in knots at a puppet show was entertaining in itself, and it seemed to lift everybody's spirits. We all felt like kids again, for a wee while.

Anyway, enough of the plugs. The festival in Edinburgh is a massive event for Scotland, and the city is the perfect stage for what must surely be the best festival in the world, which brings in huge numbers of visitors and provides an incredible boost for the city's economy.

Of course, it is important for Scotland, too. We have been blessed with some major festivals and events, including Celtic Connections, which I think celebrates its 22nd year next year and now attracts well over 100,000 visitors to Glasgow in January. As the cabinet secretary said, we have had a huge T in the Park this summer, starring, once again, the equally huge Kilmarnock band, Biffy Clyro. With Bannockburn, the Edinburgh festival and the major events around the Commonwealth games—of course, we will shortly host the Ryder cup, too—surely 2014 will prove to be the biggest and greatest year ever for Scotland. From Glasgow to Edinburgh and from Shetland to the Borders, Scotland has opened its doors to the world. Visitors have come in huge numbers to sample the best of what it can offer, and the Scottish people have been the most fantastic hosts.

The Lonely Planet, *Wanderlust* and Rough Guide travel guides have put Scotland way up there among the top recommendations for places for people to visit this year. I am sure that, when

the figures come out, we will see what a hugely successful year it has been for Scotland.

The events are, of course, important in themselves for the economic benefits and international prestige that they bring to our country, but we all want to see the positive impact that they will have in our communities in the long run on things such as health, participation in sport and increasing general quality of life and job opportunities for our citizens. Those will be the real markers of success.

There have been a number of local festivals and events of note in my constituency over the summer.

Our Stewarton Bonnet Makers Guild festival has been on the go since 1933, and the Corsehill queen this year shared the limelight when the Commonwealth games baton came into town.

Only last weekend, I attended the Newmilns community gala, which has, I am told, been on the go since the days of King James I. If that is true, other festivals have a wee bit of catching up to do.

Our dearly beloved Darvel music festival is now in its 14th year and is attracting an increasing number of visitors and fantastic bands under the dedicated guidance of Neil and Sheila McKenna.

To make all the festivals—whether national or local—the successful events that they are, a rich variety of ingredients is needed, of course. Funding from the Scottish Government, the local councils and private investors makes it all financially possible. The artists and sportsmen and sportswomen need a stage on which to showcase their talents, but what really makes those festivals and events tick for me is the people on the ground who make them happen. I mean the people with a smile on their face when a person is lost and cannot find their way to a venue, and who answer the same questions day in and day out without complaining and go out of their way to ensure that our visitors have a wonderful time. I mean the people in our local communities, such as Stewarton, Newmilns and Darvel, who put endless time and energy into organising those local events, celebrating their local history and culture, and keeping up the traditions that are loved by all and help to define us as a nation.

That is what turns festivals into great events. It is not just about the shows and performances; it is the warmth of the welcome that is afforded to the people who come to visit us that makes the difference. That is what our visitors treasure, and we cannot fund or buy that.

Scotland has been the most exciting place in the world to visit this year. Our people know how to celebrate, put on a show and have a great time doing it. We are a nation that is re-emerging with

greater confidence than ever in our history. I hope that the greatest celebration is shortly to come.

15:48

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** For a moment, I thought that I was about to be thrown out with the Willie Coffey bath water.

I certainly welcome the debate and wholeheartedly support the motion and, indeed, Labour's amendment. In fact, the debate is quite a welcome antidote to the debate on welfare that I sat through yesterday.

I give due warning that I will concentrate most of my remarks on the excellence and vibrancy of what is going on in my constituency—in Orkney—and, like other members, make no apology for doing so. I will touch on some of the themes that I raised during the recent youth arts strategy debate.

I pay tribute—as Patricia Ferguson's amendment does—to what is being achieved in the capital, notably by Festivals Edinburgh. It is truly a world-class celebration of culture that demonstrates its intrinsic value, as Liz Smith pointed out. The variety is truly astonishing, and that is a fitting legacy from Sir Jonathan Mills, to whom others have referred.

Despite that intrinsic value, we should not be embarrassed in any way by the economic value of the festivals. Edinburgh is testimony to the extent to which culture and festivals drive tourism and generate economic benefit directly, but also by providing the sorts of places in which people want to live and work. By extension, economic benefit is delivered in that way.

It is unusual for us to be here in Edinburgh during August. It is not, as colleagues may be surprised to learn, all upside. Nevertheless, it gives those of us who travel from further afield a first opportunity to attend the festival of politics this weekend, and also to immerse ourselves a bit in the festival and fringe that are going on at the moment.

Those who know me will know that I am no expert or necessarily aficionado of modern dance; nevertheless, earlier this week, I found myself at a production by Black Grace, a New Zealand dance group with Samoan roots, which produced something that was truly exhilarating. The cabinet secretary suggested that everybody can dance. If I had tried half the moves that the dancers made, I would be in traction. However, I put on the record my thanks to Creative New Zealand for its efforts in supporting Black Grace and a number of other New Zealand artists who are present in the festival. They enrich the experience for all of us.

My conversion to modern dance theatre can be attributed to the powers of persuasion of fringe chief executive, the oft-quoted Kath Mainland. As Colin Keir suggested, her CBE is richly merited and is recognition of her achievements in building on the success of the fringe. I congratulate her and her remarkable team on what looks set to be another record-breaking season for the fringe.

It is no surprise, of course, that Kath is a native Orcadian. I recognise that it is not a competition, but surely few places can lay claim to the range and quality of festivals that take place each year in the islands that I represent. Like Edinburgh's, Orkney's calendar is packed almost throughout the year. In the one-act play festival in February, Orkney groups reached the national finals in both the adult and youth categories, and there is real excitement that Orkney arts theatre will play host to the Scottish finals next year. That is a reward for the hard work that has been put in by far too many people to mention, and it is also recognition of the healthy state of drama in the islands.

We move on to the Orkney folk festival, which is internationally renowned, as the cabinet secretary kindly acknowledged. It attracts acts from all over the world, but it is firmly rooted in the folk music traditions of Orkney. Stromness was again alive with the sound of music from every bar and hall spilling out into the street. It really was a wonderful atmosphere. I declare an interest as the brother of somebody who is integral to organising the festival, but it has been particularly gratifying to see the number of young acts in recent years who have gone on to star at Celtic Connections and other festivals in Scotland, in the UK and further afield.

The St Magnus international festival in June similarly enjoys an international reputation, blending quality and variety exceptionally well while also taking steps to engage with the wider community through concerts in the smaller isles and rural parishes and workshops in schools.

Agricultural shows then take centre stage for a couple of months before the science festival gets under way at the beginning of September. It is a truly eclectic mix of talks, workshops, concerts and gatherings of every conceivable sort based, often rather loosely, around particular scientific themes. There is something for everyone, as the organiser Howie Firth observes, and, quite rightly in my mind, it is one of the small number of festivals that receives support through Government funding.

If I may, I will start the process of post-referendum peace and reconciliation by inviting the cabinet secretary up to Orkney again for the Orkney blues festival. It runs from 19 to 21 September and, perhaps even more than the festival that Sarah Boyack mentioned, it may be

an ideal opportunity to harness the cabinet secretary's mood at that time.

As the nights close in, we settle down for Orkney's storytelling festival at the end of October.

Given that array of festivals, as well as the wider cultural and artistic activity that takes place in Orkney during the year, I was delighted but not surprised to hear earlier this week that a two-day creative Orkney event is planned for the end of September. It will be hosted by the centre for Nordic studies and is a celebration of Orkney's vibrant cultural and creative scene. It will include everything from field trips round neolithic Orkney and tours of the Pier Arts Centre to jewellery workshops and a discussion on the work of photojournalist Gunnie Moberg, whose photos have adorned the walls in this Parliament.

That is all positive, but I will sound a slightly discordant note before I conclude. Those festivals thrive—and perhaps only survive—by being able to attract visitors to the islands. It is therefore disappointing that such significant cuts were made to the lifeline ferry services across the Pentland Firth under the current contract, which was negotiated by the Government. I know that some sailings have been put back this year to coincide with the year of homecoming but, if we are really to be successful in growing the festivals, extending the shoulders of the tourist season and capitalising on the wider economic opportunities, ministers need to review the decision.

I very much welcome this debate. I acknowledge the wonderful story that Orkney and indeed Scotland have to tell with regard to our festivals—in this year, perhaps, more than ever before—and I look forward to seeing a number of colleagues at the festival of politics in the Parliament over the weekend.

15:54

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** I suspect that my cultural horizons are a little closer in than some who will participate in this debate. Indeed, when my wife discovers that I have spoken in a debate on culture she will no doubt express considerable astonishment. However, from where we live it is a three-hour round trip to get to the nearest cinema, a three-hour round trip to get to the nearest professional theatre and a two-hour round trip to get to the nearest amateur theatre—and a very good seasonal offering it is.

However, that situation does not mean that we do not have culture in my part of the country, because culture is often small scale and local. I was slightly surprised that the culture secretary did not mention in her speech the Linlithgow folk festival, which this year is inadvertently taking

place in the week immediately before the referendum, thus restricting some people's ability to go to and participate in it. Part of the event next year will be a celebration of Matt McGinn's life and contribution to Scottish culture. In Linlithgow, and in communities all round Scotland, we have smaller-scale but very effective and focused festivals that engage a large proportion of local people.

Rob Gibson talked about the fèisean. I would have said more than I am about to say on this, but the Fèisean Bharraigh on Barra and Vatersay has been going since 1981 and it makes a terrific contribution to sustaining Gaelic culture and many instruments that are perhaps not much used in other parts of Scotland. I was a great fan of "The Tales of Para Handy" when I was a youngster. I have probably bought that book six, seven, eight or nine times, because I keep giving it away and not getting it back as it is a compelling read. Much of it was written over 100 years ago, but a lot of the political discussions in it still echo today, interestingly. Para Handy's instrument of choice was the trump—the jaw harp—which the player just sticks in their mouth and flicks away at, and changes the shape of their mouth to make music. Even that is probably beyond my musical abilities, and it is the simplest of all instruments. I have not heard the trump played for a very long time, so perhaps we should have some Government money for that and keep alive Para Handy's favourite instrument.

Rhoda Grant suggested that local festivals cannot compete, but I am not so certain. What I heard was a sort of corporatist view of life that there should be great overarching co-ordination of dates and activities. I take an entirely contrary view and appreciate the anarchy that comes from grass-roots activity and a little bit of survival of the fittest but with some focused financial and organisational support. Platforms such as that which was offered by homecoming 2014 publicise local events—that is the kind of help that happens. However, by no means should we be interfering in any way, shape or form with that helpful anarchy that comes from a few enthusiastic individuals in communities across Scotland.

What actually is a festival? It comes from the Latin words "festum" and "festa", which just mean "feast". We have not heard much about festivals of food, but in the north-east we have festivals of food, which I very much welcome. Of course, coming from that Latin derivation and being applied across Scotland in many different ways means that a festival can cover almost anything. However, getting co-operation and engagement from across our communities is what sustains our festivals.



How many festivals do we have in Scotland? The answer is quite interesting. I put the term “Scottish festivals 2014” into Google and I got 38.5 million hits. I thought that that might be slightly too many, so I refined it down and the lowest figure that I could get with the most restrictive hit for 2014 was 3,500. There is a lot going on in Scotland.

Not everyone is a great fan of festivals. Detective Inspector Rebus is the creation of Ian Rankin, and members will know if they have read his books that Rebus drinks in the Oxford Bar in Young Street. That pub used to be owned by a guy called Willie Ross, who was a homophobe, an anglophobe, a misogynist—he hated almost everybody. He used to shut his pub for the three weeks of the festival and put a notice on the door that said, “Shut due to festival.”

Thankfully, Willie Ross—who is now deceased, so we can be as rude about him as we want to be and should be—was the absolute exception. I have a Giles cartoon book from 1948 that includes a cartoon about the fringe; that was the first year that the fringe sputtered into life. The fringe has been around a long time and it very quickly travelled across the world and across public discourse.

In my constituency the most important festival of all takes place: the Scottish traditional boat festival. It started 21 years ago, when 200 people came to Portsoy, and it now attracts 20,000 people. Occasionally they get good weather.

We have lots of festivals. I have a huge long list. I suppose that we hope that politicians do not get greatly associated with the Scots fiddle festival—think about it.

The whole point about festivals is not about levelling down great international events, but about raising up local aspiration and achievement and preserving local culture.

16:01

**Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** It is important and fitting that we are having this debate about the major national and international festivals that are being held across Scotland this year. I very much want to talk about how our major festivals encourage, raise the profile of and raise participation in local festivals and themed festivals across Scotland, not just this year but every year.

I will give members a personal anecdote, if I may. In 1947, at the first Edinburgh international festival, my mother-in-law, Elizabeth Watson, was the soprano for the Orpheus choir and sang for the king and queen of the day. My family is very proud of that piece of history.

We are talking about festivals and culture. I was thinking about why we were having this debate and about why we all enjoy festivals. Are they not about us being able to indulge our passions and at the same time stretch our horizons? We almost have a cultural work-out when we attend festivals. They are about community as well, which we have heard about from other speakers; the cabinet secretary, Patricia Ferguson and Willie Coffey spoke about that.

A festival is a community of itself. It is a community of those who attend and those who perform, and very much a community of those who produce the festivals, especially when we are talking about small, local festivals. I was delighted that members such as Liam McArthur and Willie Coffey paid tribute to our many local volunteers who work so hard to produce our local festivals.

Members will not be surprised that I want to use a fair bit of my speech to talk about the festivals that we have in my constituency of Strathkelvin and Bearsden and those who work so hard to produce such fantastic events for our communities. Liam McArthur beat me, because his list of events and festivals for his Orkney Islands constituency covered every month of the year, I think. There are four festivals—out of a large number—in my constituency that I thought were important to highlight in this debate.

A festival that has been running for a few years in Bishopbriggs in my constituency is the festival for Thomas Muir. Many members will know that Thomas Muir has the title of the father of democracy—not just in Scotland but across the world. He was born and lived in Huntershill house in Bishopbriggs, where we have had a Thomas Muir festival for quite a few years. We now have a Thomas Muir trail. We do not just listen to the history and debate the philosophy; we actually walk the streets and byways that Thomas Muir walked. Next year will be the 250th anniversary of Thomas Muir’s birth. I hope that we will be able to have an event here in the Parliament to celebrate that most important of births in the democratic calendar.

A new festival that started just last year in my constituency is the Bearsden festival. It was held over one weekend in September last year and it was incredibly successful. Bearsden has about 9,000 households. For the craft festival over that weekend, 1,500 people turned up. Given the millions that we talked about earlier, that sounds insignificant, but 1,500 people out of Bearsden’s population represents quite a significant community turnout.

We have been spurred on to continue this year to have more festivals in Bearsden. It was decided to split the festival into three and we have already had the first. When the baton came through

Bearsden, we had the Bearsden sport and Commonwealth food festival. I understand that everybody ate themselves to a standstill, despite the rain pouring down. Remember how the baton went all around Scotland in the sunshine? When it came to us, it poured all day.

East Dunbartonshire cycle festival in Bishopbriggs has been going for a number of years now. Two years ago, it became not only a festival of freewheeling cycling; we managed to add in fair trade as well, so it is now a fair trade cycle festival. Please look and learn—we can promote lots of things at the same time.

I will finish with the Kirkintilloch canal festival, which is to be held on Sunday 24 August. I invite everyone to join the 25,000 people who come through Kirkintilloch in one day. Kirkintilloch—a small town in the centre of Scotland—attracts 25,000 people. It is a fantastic day and so far—for the past few years—it has been sunny every Sunday.

Festivals are fun, educational and neighbourly, but they also boost the local economy—with 1,500 people through Bearsden Cross in one afternoon and 25,000 people through Kirkintilloch in one day.

As a librarian I have to mention quickly the festivals of reading that we have across Scotland. There is book week Scotland in November and the summer reading challenge for young people in our public libraries, which is sponsored by Tesco Bank.

I turn to my two favourites, one of which everyone will expect me to mention. First, for Westerton garden suburb's centenary last year we had a whole year of festivals in my small village. Secondly, Skye's tattie bogle festival in Minginish is different, quirky and great. Please go—they have a Facebook page—and look at all those scarecrows.

Festivals are for us to enjoy and to join in. I thank the many people who act and perform in them, but most especially I thank those who help us to produce them.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** Thank you. I have a little bit of time in hand if any members wish to take interventions.

16:08

**Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab):** I welcome the opportunity to talk about Scotland's festivals, especially the smaller, community-based events that take place all over the country and get very little recognition for what they do for us.

I particularly thank all the parents, aunties, uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers who take toddlers and young people to various clubs up and

down the country, and who sit in the evenings and stitch all sorts of garments for them at their own personal expense and make them proud that they can achieve something in the community. These events, which enrich us on a daily basis, take place all over the country throughout the year.

I have seen it time and again that when these small groups apply for funding in councils and various other places they are written off because they are too small and are not important enough. Believe me, those events are where it all starts. They are where people find their niche. They then want to continue to do these things all their life and support other activities throughout the country. Sometimes we underestimate their value. I particularly want to thank all those people who make such a huge effort on a weekly basis to support their young people to engage in community events and festivals up and down Scotland.

Over the past year I have been involved in many events where the community gets together and celebrates all that Glasgow has to offer. The quality of the gigs encourages visitors to keep coming all year round, every year. That is important. It is not just about small events in communities; we also want to share our festivals with other people.

On the face of it, getting people to come to Glasgow in January to listen to traditional music sounds like a big ask, but Celtic Connections continues to go from strength to strength. That is a huge achievement.

A festival that is close to my heart is the Glasgow mela, which has been happening since the early 1990s. Glasgow Life plays a key role in the organisation of the mela every year. The mela celebrates Glasgow and Scotland's diverse communities and multicultural society, and it has become so popular that there is a waiting list for people who want to participate, who come from all over the UK—despite the fact that it gets rained off every second year.

The mela could not have become so successful without the tremendous support of Glasgow City Council over the past 20 or so years, which I witnessed when I was a councillor in Glasgow. It is also supported by many other organisations, which is wonderful, because I like to see such things eventually become self-sufficient. It started as an ethnic minority mela, but it is now Glasgow mela and it attracts a rich and diverse group of participants. It is a fantastic event.

People sometimes wonder whether all that activity happens because we are part of the UK or because of local spirit. I know that the minority community has copied many events from down south and adapted them to Scottish design and

culture. That shows the spirit among Scottish communities; we might import things from other parts of the world but we tend to adapt them to our culture. That is wonderful, because it shows how we celebrate diversity, taking up what other communities do and creating a brand new cultural activity.

The Indian Bollywood industry frequently comes to Scotland to make films, as do the Lollywood film companies, from Lahore in Pakistan. When the film makers come, they tap into the talents of the local community, which can offer something different from what is available in their home towns. We can offer something unique, even though it might be similar to the traditions elsewhere. The expertise and skill of our young people is amazing, and what they can offer is fantastic. Perhaps that is why people from many countries come to make films in Glasgow and in Scotland's countryside.

Festivals are important, because they add so much richness to people's lives. I ask the cabinet secretary to make a commitment to the people of Scotland that the Government will not cut funding for such activities but strive to find resources to support them. That would be fantastic. I do not expect the cabinet secretary to give me figures just now—I would not dare put her on the spot. I simply echo the wishes of all the people who put on festivals on a shoestring. They really need support from councils and the Government, so I am sure that support would be very welcome.

I have had the privilege of travelling around the world and I assure members that no one can match our festivals in Scotland. We should be proud of that. That is why I always thank all those relatives who do so much to develop children's skills.

16:15

**Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP):**

This is an interesting debate and we all have our own perspectives. As I reflected on my own experience of the Edinburgh festival, particularly the fringe, I thought that what excites me about it is that it is live performance. Members will know that I have a particular interest in music. I was up the road in the Canongate church only last week for a live performance of Bach's "Mass in B minor", which is a magnificent work that I had never heard live before. It was a stunningly professional performance and a moving experience. At some point last week, I was in St Giles cathedral, where the resident organist, Peter Backhouse, played a wonderful instrument with a wide variety of sounds. I remember that, at the end, he got Louis Vierne's "Carillon de Westminster" going, and there was a growling from that instrument that can only be experienced by being there. It is a physical

experience and it is an absolutely fabulous live experience.

I also went with my wife to see "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying", which is a wonderful parody for how one might succeed in politics without really trying, and it was a fabulous performance by students from the University of Dundee. It brought back memories for my wife, but we do not discuss from how long ago. Also, if members have not heard our own Fred MacAulay discussing current political life, I did so last night and he is on good form. I recommend it.

Nanette Milne talked about the Aberdeen international youth festival. It is a fabulous activity, parts of which get down to my part of the world in north Angus and the Mearns. It gets to Stonehaven, Montrose, Brechin and Laurencekirk. That is hugely important because it means that those youngsters come to different environments and often small venues with enthusiastic audiences who get to hear something that they would otherwise never get to hear.

At Stonehaven town hall recently, we had a typical concert with the Madison boy choir from Wisconsin, the Blackburn with Darwen Music Service Big Band from Lancashire, and some traditional Scots musicians that have been previously discussed. After the concert, when I looked at some of the material that had been produced by some of those organisations, the faces were different from those we saw last year. I was reminded that these groups develop from year to year and we are still handing down the traditions and skills from one year group to the next. They are learning their craft from those who are at the front and from the performers who are around them at time.

**Nanette Milne:** I agree that the peripheral AIYF is appreciated—I mentioned Aberdeenshire and clearly it also goes into Angus. Sadly, the festival gets no financial support from Aberdeenshire Council or Angus Council. As the MSP for that area, could the member use his good offices to put a bit of pressure on Angus Council to support the festival that it benefits from?

**Nigel Don:** Can I say that I will try.

I will discuss local festivals, if I may, because north Angus and the Mearns are absolutely full of them. Forfar, my biggest town, has the Forfarfest in May and the Forfar harvest fest in September. Brechin's music festival is a long weekend at the end of August. The Montrose music festival happened earlier in the summer and, uniquely in my part of the world, they set up bang in the middle of town outside the townhouse and people can probably hear the music from miles away. These festivals bring all sorts together and they have all sorts of small performances, mostly in

pubs and church halls because those are the kinds of venue that we have, and they all work because everybody mucks in and makes it happen.

The same applies to the Stonehaven folk festival, which happened a couple of weeks ago. I have a happy memory of sitting on the harbour wall listening to Iain McFadden playing his pipes on one side and traditional musicians over the other side; I could hear them both mingling across the water. Stonehaven also has the world paper-and-comb championships in St Bridget's hall. It is a serious event, folks, and highly recommended.

More poignant this year is the Mearns connection festival, which happens at the Grassic Gibbon centre near Arbutnott. Of course, Lewis Grassic Gibbon is famous for "Sunset Song", a story set during the first world war that depicts the Mearns, in which he lived and wrote. There is an extraordinary poignancy about that this year.

We also have a new festival—Scotland's tea festival in Laurencekirk, which I am sure will come as news to members. It begins very soon—22 August—and celebrates the local man, James Taylor, who apparently more or less invented the Ceylon tea industry in the 1880s after disease had wiped out the coffee crop. Not only did we invent most of the things in the world, but it appears that we even invented Ceylon tea.

Members have mentioned non-musical events, so I would like to mention the Johnshaven fish festival, which is an annual event down at the harbour in Johnshaven, with stalls, music and a wonderful raft race.

All those festivals have to be organised. As other members have done, I thank and congratulate those who organise them because, without the organisers, the festivals simply would not happen.

I will take the rare opportunity to quote the cabinet secretary, as others have done. In her Talbot Rice lecture, she said:

"Our size is only limited by our imagination, our reach as extensive as our desire and capacity to explore."

That struck me as an extraordinarily accurate way to describe artistic endeavour that applies not just in our nation but to anybody, anywhere. Our capacity is largely limited by what we think we can do, although it is of course also limited by our opportunities and, in particular, the educational opportunities that we have when we are young. Although the Scottish Government has made a huge commitment to music through Sistema Scotland, we need to work hard to ensure that instrumental tuition in our schools is developed. I know that that is not within the cabinet secretary's remit, but it is enormously important that our

youngsters have an opportunity to do those musical things. I leave that with the cabinet secretary and the Parliament as a thought for the future.

16:22

**Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab):** As others have said, the major festivals, such as those that are taking place in Edinburgh, are world famous and attract visitors from across the globe, contributing many millions to the national economy. However, like others, I point out that it is not just on the international stage where festivals make a valuable contribution, and I want to highlight the contribution that regional festivals make to their local communities. Unsurprisingly, I will do that with reference to my constituency, as Dumfries and Galloway boasts a wide range of popular festivals throughout the year, many of which have been in existence for quite a bit longer than the Edinburgh festival. It will not be an exhaustive list, so I apologise to any festivals that I have omitted—this is a sample.

The first festival of the year is only three years old but it has been remarkably successful in that short period. The Big Burns festival, a contemporary festival that includes events such as a burlesque Burns supper, takes place over the weekend nearest Burns night. Last year, it attracted 14,000 visitors, 15 per cent of whom came from outwith Dumfries and Galloway. As a consequence, plans are under way to extend the festival over nine days next year. The festival also involves a large outdoor arts celebration, which is quite unusual at that time of year, so we always have our fingers crossed that the weather will not be too bad.

Wildlife tourism is valuable to the region and is encouraged by the Wild Spring festival in April and May. This year, it involved around 100 wildlife events, featuring several iconic species that are native to Dumfries and Galloway such as red squirrels, barnacle geese, otters and red kites. The Spring Fling is a visual arts and crafts festival that takes place in May and, in the same month, the Dumfries and Galloway arts festival is a celebration of the performing arts in venues large and small across the region.

People interested in recreational tourism are attracted by a number of walking festivals, including those in lower Annandale, Moffat, Langholm, and upper Nithsdale. The region also hosts a number of music festivals. Famously, there is the Wickerman in Galloway, but there is also the Eden festival at Raehills in Annandale in June and, just last weekend, we had Youth Beatz, a free music festival for young people in the region that is presented by Dumfries and Galloway Council and Youth Work Nithsdale. There are jazz

festivals in Kirkcudbright in June and in Lockerbie in September, the latter of which was spectacularly headlined by Ruby Turner last year, and I am looking forward to finding out who is coming this year. Moffat incorporates a traditional music festival into its programme for the annual gala and the little village of Moniaive, which has a population of only 487, hosts not one but two annual music festivals—a folk festival in May and the Michaelmas Bluegrass Festival in September.

I think that I am the only representative of the debatable lands who is taking part in the debate, so I must mention the galas, common ridings and ridings of the marches that are celebrations of the culture and history of the south of Scotland. Virtually every village has its own gala, and the larger communities of Lockerbie, Dumfries, Annan, Langholm and Sanquhar have common ridings or ridings of the marches followed by galas and parades, which regularly attract between 100 and 200 horses and riders. All of them are beautifully turned out, but even more attention is probably paid to the appearance of the horses than is paid to that of the riders. It can take many hours to get a horse ready for a riding of the marches.

Most of the galas date from the early 20th century—Langholm's is older; it started in 1759—but their origins go back centuries to the border reivers of the 13th and 14th centuries. In those times, the marches were ridden to check that no neighbouring clan from either side of the border had made off with the town's sheep or cattle, or purloined some of its territory.

Some argue that the origins of the common ridings date back even further than that and lie in the Celtic summer festivals that Liz Smith mentioned, which involved horse racing and horse trading. Langholm common riding attracts former residents, who return year after year to stand in Kirk Wynd to witness the horses—this year, I think that there were 174 of them—gallop past at full pelt; I am surprised that no health and safety person has found out about that. They also witness the crying of the fair three times, which involves a man standing on the back of a horse shouting while surrounded by the entire population of the town and the surrounding area. On one occasion, the horse—it was a new horse—took some exception to the proceedings and it looked as if the man would be put off, but he managed to cry the fair before the horse bolted. In most places, people would have been frightened but, as it was Langholm, people just stood back, let the horse bolt through and came back together again.

Annan combines its gala and riding of the marches with a pipe band competition, which culminates in a performance by the massed pipe bands in the town's high street. I would defy anyone who listens to the performance of

“Highland Cathedral” by the massed pipe bands in Annan High Street not to feel the hairs on the back of their neck stand up.

Moffat, with its history as a market town in the wool trade, prefers to celebrate the sheep rather than the horse. The shepherd and his lass are installed the evening before the gala, when the shepherd's ball takes place. Moffat also holds an annual sheep race, which will take place this Sunday. That is quite an event, too.

There are festivals to suit all ages and interests, but one aspect that they all have in common, as others have mentioned, is that they would not happen were it not for the volunteers—it is often the same people who volunteer year after year—who put in a huge amount of time and effort. One of the local councillors tells me that, in Langholm, the planning for next year's common riding started the day after this year's common riding.

Those regional and local events do not generate the income to allow people to be employed to apply for grants, to fill in the necessary notifications or to engage participants and performers. It is ordinary volunteers who have to do all that work, which can be pretty onerous. As I said, the work of organising the next year's event often starts as soon as that year's event has taken place.

The festivals do more than provide activity, enjoyment and celebration, and they do more than attract visitors and contribute to the local economy. They promote a sense of community identity and contribute to the wellbeing and cohesion of the community. In fact, I think that the work that is done for the festivals helps communities to survive some of the bad times that can come along. We have seen that in Dumfries and Galloway. Today's debate is a good opportunity to pay tribute to and thank all those people who work so hard to make such events happen. I thank everyone in Dumfriesshire who contributes to our wonderful array of festivals.

16:28

**Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** I have thoroughly enjoyed the debate. I think that all the speeches have been fantastic in letting us know what happens not just in my area but throughout Scotland. The debate is very timely, coming as it does after the success of the Commonwealth games, during the Edinburgh festival and before the MTV awards in my city of Glasgow. The way in which it has been conducted has meant that it has served as a great showcase for the whole world of exactly what Scotland has to offer.

My goodness—when we listen to what everyone has said, we see that we have a fantastic country. When I saw the Commonwealth games being

broadcast around the world on the television, I had a lump in my throat. I was proud to see everything that went on not just in Glasgow but beyond.

I am in the fortunate position of representing Glasgow city centre—Glasgow Kelvin. A number of festivals—there are probably too many to mention and I will not mention them all—take place in my constituency. Members have mentioned Celtic Connections, which features some of the best Scottish and international talent. We have Aye Write!—Glasgow's book festival—which celebrates writing, books and reading and features the best of Scottish writers and international authors. We have Glasgay, which is a wonderful, colourful and inclusive festival. We have the comedy festival, the jazz festival and many more, which all—believe it or not—take place in Glasgow Kelvin. Like others, I apologise if I have left out any festivals.

I will concentrate on a couple of festivals that are close to my heart and which I attend all the time, although I also try to attend events in the many other festivals that take place in my constituency. During the west end festival in Kelvingrove, 400 events take place over 80 venues. The parade in Byres Road is fantastic—it was spectacular this year. It attracts thousands of visitors and involves local community groups. This year, the restored Kelvingrove bandstand opened. It lay derelict for many years, but it has been brought back to life. It is much loved and was much used during the festival and the Commonwealth games. I thank everyone, including voluntary groups, who was involved in restoring the bandstand.

The west end festival is run on a pretty tight budget—members have spoken about budgets. I thank the many people who put their heart and soul into it so that we can enjoy it year after year. It will have its 20th birthday next year. I do not like to be a wee bit cheeky, but I am looking at the cab sec; I am not saying that we should get money from the Government, but I am sure that Michael Dale and others would be pleased to speak to the cab sec about some way to get a wee bit more funding for the festival.

Hanzala Malik mentioned the mela, which is another fantastic event. It is held in Kelvingrove park during the merchant city festival and it celebrates all the diverse cultures not only in Glasgow but throughout Scotland. It is fantastic that the mela mixes the traditional with the modern, so all age groups go along and thoroughly enjoy it. Hanzala was right that, unfortunately, it rained pretty badly this year, but we still went and thoroughly enjoyed the mela.

When I intervened on Rhoda Grant, I mentioned the merchant city festival, which is a fantastic success. It takes place in my constituency—not far

from where I live—so I know from my doorstep exactly what goes on. The festival is a success every year, but it proved an even bigger success this year. As the cab sec said, Glasgow was buzzing—it certainly was, and no more so than in the merchant city. We had food zones with fantastic food from around the world, we had stages with live groups, we had acrobats and we had a marvellous maze for young kids—perhaps I am a young kid at heart, because I thought that it was really good. The sunshine was wonderful, as were the people—not just the Glaswegians but the people from throughout the country and the world who came along in their droves to enjoy the festival. It will go from strength to strength next year.

There is merit in Patricia Ferguson's idea of a festival of sport, particularly for younger people. That would fall within Shona Robison's sport portfolio rather than the cab sec's. We talk about the legacy of the Commonwealth games, and perhaps that suggestion would be a good way of exploring exactly what legacy has been left and continuing the success of the games. I would be happy to be involved in that.

In opening, I said that we in Scotland have something to celebrate, which we certainly do. The debate has been great and I have loved it. I would love to take a couple of months off to travel round the country from the Shetlands to Dumfries, given what Elaine said. Fantastic work goes on across Scotland. The debate shows that, although even we do not know all that goes on in our country, plenty of people throughout the world know, and more will know this year because of the promotion that Scotland has had.

This is a great place to live and a great place to be. I look forward to more success for not just local festivals but those with an international flavour.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I remind members to use full names if possible rather than nicknames, or the official report may find it difficult to report proceedings.

16:35

**Cameron Buchanan (Lothian) (Con):** The danger when speaking at the fag end of a debate is not to avoid duplication. We have had an informative discussion today and heard a great deal of praise for all Scotland's festivals, including festival 2014 and culture 2014. We are all agreed on the success of this year's festivals thus far, and it is fantastic to hear such unanimous praise for the deserving performers, organisers, back-up teams and volunteers.

I add my voice to the chorus of praise from members of all parties for the plethora of festivals

that are being held, including the 20th Commonwealth games, festival 2014 and culture 2014, and many others. With more than 1,000 performers across 100 venues in Glasgow, including so many activities that were free of charge, festival 2014 delivered for Scotland and displayed our prowess to the world. Furthermore, more than 1,000 events over the course of culture 2014 spanned words, movement, song, dance, music, theatre, designs, films, ideas and art. Every cultural craving was catered for.

We must of course pay tribute to the people and organisations whose commitment has enabled such a spectacular show to be put on. I echo the sentiments of fellow members in that regard. The tributes paid by my fellow members have rightly highlighted the fantastic impact of those additions to our country's cultural prestige.

It is thanks to the people of the Glasgow 2014 organising committee, Glasgow Life, Creative Scotland and many community and cultural organisations that Scotland's international reputation for cultural prestige has been so entertainingly demonstrated. As my learned friend said, there have been 3,000 festivals, which have highlighted the wealth of cultural talent in Scotland and our ability to put on cultural celebrations that people around the world will remember.

I take this opportunity to draw members' attention once more to the biggest and most repeated demonstration of Scotland's creative talent and our rich cultural heritage: the Edinburgh international festival and festival fringe—the largest arts festival in the world. As an Edinburgh local and an MSP for Lothian, I take pride in all aspects of the Edinburgh festival. I pay tribute to its organisers and its performers, and to its lasting impact on the city.

The success of the festival is not attributed to a particular team of organisers or to a particular selection of performances. Rather, its success and worldwide fame is due to the ability of Scotland's people repeatedly to put on a show that allows our best talent to flourish as well as attracting the world's best performers to our nation's capital. The list of people who have come to the festival and the fringe who were not famous at the time but have now become worldwide names is too long to mention.

As we heard from Sarah Boyack, the Edinburgh festival was founded in 1947 in a post-war effort to encourage participation in the arts, and it has been attracting performers and audiences from around the world in ever-greater numbers ever since. It brings up a lot of impresarios and other people who want to see who the coming attractions are and what is happening.

The same can be said of the Edinburgh festival fringe, which has grown from a gatecrash by eight theatre companies. Two of those companies have an unbroken record of attendance, and I challenge my learned friend to tell me which ones they are.

Indeed, the 2013 festival saw 45,464 performances of 2,871 shows, and I am pleased to see that this year is also a sell-out. That spectacular growth and repeated success demonstrates the innate cultural progress of the people of Scotland, which I am sure we are all proud of and wish to celebrate whole-heartedly today.

The fact that such festivals go on all over Scotland indicates the strength of our arts, performance and music. It is important that we acknowledge the breadth and spectacular variety of the performances on offer every August. From drama, musicals and opera to dance, comedy and a cappella singing, the international festival and fringe truly offer something for everyone, even if the comedy does not always succeed.

When one considers that there are now—as we have heard—10 other major festivals in the annual festivities, including the Edinburgh international book festival, the science festival, the jazz and blues festival and the international military tattoo, one sees that the scale of Edinburgh's achievement is truly amazing and deserves the greatest admiration. It is only in Edinburgh, in August, that I can attend a book talk in the morning, enjoy whichever style of comedy suits my taste in the afternoon, watch the military tattoo at night and hear the taxi drivers groaning about the crowds as I come home.

The tattoo has grown since 1949 to attract 220,000 visitors each year and an annual television audience of more than 100 million. It is further testament to Scotland's ability to put on a world-beating international show.

We have celebrated Scotland's recent cultural festivities and festival 2014 and culture 2014, as well as touching on our country's spectacular heritage as demonstrated by the Edinburgh festival. However, I redraw members' attention to the number of festivals that highlight not only the strength but the breadth of Scotland's cultural tradition: T in the Park, fringe by the sea, Lennoxlove book festival, Wigtown book festival, Dundee women's festival, Aberdeen jazz festival, Fife comedy festival, tradfest, Penfest and Coloursfest—any fest you like. We all know the origin of the word fest, or festival, so I will not go into that.

The Commonwealth games, festival 2014 and culture 2014 delivered on the world stage. Our fine festival heritage makes it clear that we can do that again and again. As well as applauding the

fantastic work of the Glasgow 2014 organising committee, Glasgow Life, Creative Scotland and the many community and cultural organisations that continue to enrich our culture, I highlight one of the key aspects of the festivals that we celebrate today: they are truly international. International participation among performers and audiences has risen higher and higher in our festivals to foster international understanding and strengthen our well-earned reputation as one of the best countries in the world for all the arts—visual and musical—to flourish in.

I hope that Scotland continues to add to its fantastic repertoire of festivals, shows and every sort of cultural event imaginable, because we have shown that we can deliver and the world is impressed. Furthermore, I hope that the debate and the attention that the festival celebrations will bring deliver some of the recognition that Scotland's festival organisers and performers deserve for their invaluable contribution to Scotland, the arts and international collaboration.

I have no hesitation in supporting the motion and the amendment.

16:42

**Patricia Ferguson:** This has been an interesting debate and it has been worth our while to hear colleagues talk about what interests them and what is happening in their local areas.

I add my thanks to all the staff of Glasgow Life and Glasgow City Council who worked so hard to make festival 2014 such a success. I also thank all the volunteers who participated in the games opening and closing ceremonies. At one point, I calculated that some of the dancers performed constantly for two hours in very bright sunshine, wearing what looked to me like very heavy costumes and brandishing chairs for some of the event. Our thanks go to them, too.

My one regret about 2014 is that the calendar has been so cluttered—not to mention the fact that we have another interesting event coming up in only a few weeks—which has made it difficult to get to as many things as I would have liked to attend. However, I suppose that it is not a bad thing to have an embarrassment of riches.

Liz Smith brought a welcome historical perspective to our festival offering. I am glad that she made the connection with the built heritage, because I agree that culture and our built heritage help us to have a sense of ourselves and a sense of the place that we inhabit. That must be a good thing, and must be what we come back to and root ourselves in time after time.

I agree with Clare Adamson that this year has been exciting, but I think that Scotland is exciting

every year. I am sure that she would agree with me.

One of the events that I was not able to get to was the performance of the choir at lunch time today. I very much regret that. However, I happened to have the door of my office open and, although I was on the other side of the building, I heard every note. It sounded stunning, but that just made me regret all the more the fact that I was not there to hear it.

Nigel Don hit on something important when he talked about the experience of live performance. There is something remarkable about sharing a live performance; I think it is something that we all enjoy whether or not we are consciously enjoying it. Perhaps sharing it is just one of the things that adds to the experience. I am not sure, but I think that it is an important aspect.

My colleague, Sarah Boyack, was absolutely right to remind of us of the international outlook of the Edinburgh international festival. That may sound a bit like an oxymoron, but I think that members know what I mean. It is that outlook that makes the Edinburgh festivals so exciting.

Demands for additional venues and on the budgets of the City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Government are made, of course. In a sense, that is no bad thing because it means that the people who are involved are constantly striving to do better and to do more.

A parliamentary debate about a tourism levy is an interesting idea. There are arguments on both sides of that dilemma, but the time has come for us to give the idea a proper hearing.

It must be a challenge for Edinburgh to support all that is happening and, at the same time, to have that ambition—that we all share—to see the festivals develop and become bigger and even better still. That is an important aspect of the “Thundering Hooves” review that will happen shortly.

I was very struck by what Colin Keir said about free advertising for the city of Edinburgh; he was absolutely right. He reminded me of something that struck me last night when I was watching the BBC news coverage of Mark Carney's conversations from yesterday. The national news piece, which was filmed on Calton hill, showed the most stunning views of Edinburgh. To be honest, I am quite sure that most people were not listening to what was being said about Mark Carney; rather, they were enjoying the Edinburgh view because it is probably one that most visitors to the city do not see.

Colin Keir was also right to talk about the important contributions that have been made by Faith Liddell, Kath Mainland and Jonathan Mills.



To that list I add Councillor Steve Cardownie and Councillor Lesley Hinds who, as a former chair of the Edinburgh festivals, had a keen appreciation of, and interest in, the festivals.

I was sorry to hear about this year's experience with RockNess in Rhoda Grant's constituency. Perhaps we need to look at more constructive collaboration. I am very conscious that I attended a wonderful event in Wigtown—it was years ago—for which Glasgow City Council had loaned some of its Glasgow boys paintings. There was a hugely successful summer of exhibitions, talks and conversations about that. Perhaps we need to work more closely together across our country to make such events happen in a way that benefits all.

Rob Gibson rightly mentioned last night's Commonwealth games celebration in Parliament. It was a joy to hear part of Jim Sutherland's excellent piece, as was having it contrasted with the New Zealand group, Haka, performing some of its traditional music. It also reminded us that we have a shared interest in music and dance, too, that brings us together and helps us to understand our place.

I was very pleased that Nanette Milne mentioned the Aberdeen international youth music festival. I congratulate her on taking the opportunity to lobby Nigel Don for funding from the two local authorities in his area. I am sure that that is a constructive partnership that can be developed.

In reflecting on Stewart Stevenson's concern about the demise of the mouth harp, I wonder whether that might have something to do with our new concern about our teeth. As a very inexperienced player many years ago when I was a child, I found that playing the mouth harp interfered with good dental work. That might be part of the problem; I do not know.

Hanzala Malik was right to draw our attention to the Glasgow mela. It is a stunning event—it is the most enjoyable, diverse, bright and colourful event that a person can attend. Edinburgh and other places in Scotland also host melas. If anyone has not been to a mela, they should go because it is an experience to enjoy and savour.

I mentioned that Nigel Don had hit on something when he talked about how special live performance is when shared with others. I also reflected on his comments about the paper and comb festival, which led me to wonder whether he and Stewart Stevenson might want to join together to form a two-person combo playing the mouth harp and the paper and comb. I am not suggesting that I would necessarily buy a ticket to watch them, but it might be something that they would like to do.

The idea of holding a tea festival in Laurencekirk is intriguing. As Nigel Don said, that not only shows the ingenuity of Scots, but demonstrates that we do not need a lot of encouragement to find something to celebrate and to enjoy with others.

I hope that members will forgive me for recounting a personal anecdote. Elaine Murray's explanation of the burlesque Burns supper in Dumfries reminded me that, a number of years ago, I was asked by a wonderful man with a particular sense of humour, who came from Glasgow—he is now deceased—but lived in Dumfries for many years, whether I would organise a Labour Party Burns supper in that area. I did so, and it was a huge success. However, Elaine Murray's comments caused me to reflect on what Iain Jordan's comments about a burlesque Burns supper might have been. I am sure that they would have been unparliamentary in language and probably unprintable.

Sandra White was right to reflect on the west end festival's approaching its 20th anniversary. Why not lobby the Government for some money for that event? I say that with a slight vested interest, as it touches on my constituency.

The debate has been interesting and shows that there is a real commitment to art and culture across the chamber and in Scotland. It also reminds us of the endeavour that our festivals help us to celebrate. I look forward to hearing more about "Thundering Hooves" part 2 and to considering what the Government and the Parliament can do to help and support those festivals.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Fiona Hyslop to wind up the debate. I apologise for the fact that we have eaten into your time slightly, cabinet secretary. I can give you until 5 o'clock.

16:51

**Fiona Hyslop:** Sandra White was right when she said that the debate has been a showcase of Scotland. We are a nation that is rich in festivals, and it is clear that there is a shared appreciation of and passion for all our festivals whether they are big or small, international or local and community focused.

I was particularly interested in the fact that there were 25,000 people in Kirkintilloch on one day for the canal festival, which was mentioned by Fiona McLeod. Rhoda Grant reflected on how disproportionate the impact of festivals is in smaller areas. There is a consensus around the importance of festivals—the enjoyment that they bring and the impact that they have on tourism and local economies. As Elaine Murray said, we should reiterate our appreciation for all the hard work that local communities put into the smaller,

regional festivals to ensure that they are a success.

Nigel Don referred to James Taylor and the tea festival in Laurencekirk. I reassure him that the tea festival is already international. Only last week, the Sri Lankan high commissioner was the first to tell me about the tea festival that is taking place in Laurencekirk.

I am delighted that we have also had the opportunity to celebrate the great success of festival 2014 and its on-going partner, culture 2014. It is important that we recognise that it has been the most ambitious national cultural celebration ever to have taken place in Scotland.

Patricia Ferguson referred to a number of our festivals, including the book festival. Yesterday, I was pleased to be with the Irish culture minister at the book festival, where we introduced a discussion on the exchange between Neil Gunn and Maurice Walsh. Patricia Ferguson also mentioned the Imagine festival, which we should perhaps celebrate more. At the recent culture summit, the Maltese delegation said that she is taking the idea of the Imagine festival to Malta. She also made the suggestion that Glasgow host a festival of sport. I will make sure that my colleague Shona Robison hears about that.

It is important to recognise the embracing nature of festivals, which have often involved sports and culture. Liz Smith took us back to the origins of many festivals, some of which focused on nature and some of which focused on religion. Festivals can also recognise the importance of food and drink, as Stewart Stevenson highlighted. My suggestion for the west end festival is that, given that next year is the year of Scotland's food and drink, that might be an appropriate focus in its search for additional funding.

Sarah Boyack took a realistic and pragmatic approach to the issue of capacity. The second "Thundering Hooves" report will be important in ensuring that we are not complacent and that Edinburgh takes a competitive look at where it is. Liam McArthur recognised that some capacity issues might be related to transport, while Sarah Boyack talked about the need for investment in venues, which is an important point for all cities to understand. That is why the references by Colin Keir and Nanette Milne to the role of local authorities were significant. I try to support investment in culture wherever I can, including investment in venues in our cities, but that investment relies on local authorities also seeing festivals as powerhouses of their local economies. We have to work together to secure that support.

Willie Coffey reminded us of the joy of festivals and the sheer joy of enjoyment. That is an important point. He also pointed out that the

Darvel music festival is only 14 years old. Many of our festivals are new and are developing. As Rhoda Grant alluded to, there is a tension around the idea of whether it is possible to nationally programme festivals.

Stewart Stevenson talked about challenges, and perhaps we need a bit of the helpful anarchy that comes from the fact that festivals can come and go at different times. We look forward to RockNess returning, but that is a decision for the private promoters.

On Saturday night, in my hometown of Linlithgow, I was at the party in the palace, which featured Hue and Cry and Deacon Blue. Although, in this crowded year, people might say that too much is on, that was a new celebration that took place. We should think about the growth in the range of festivals, and about the fact that some are extremely new.

We should also reflect on the fact that festivals should share their experience. For example, the taste of the tattoo events have been taken to Stirling, Glasgow and Dundee, and Festivals Edinburgh has advised the Scottish history festival, the Edinburgh international fashion festival and the Aberdeen festivals collective, sharing its knowledge and understanding.

I recognise the important work of EventScotland and its partners for the year of homecoming. It has invested more than £3 million in more than 1,000 events in Scotland.

On what we get from our festivals, we must remember that they are also an expression of who we are. One of the performers at Glasgow Green during festival 2014, a Malawian rapper called Tay Grin, commented that Scots really know how to embrace their culture and support one another. For me, that is one of the key messages to come from the Commonwealth games. In terms of the legacy and how we build on the success of that incredible programme, it is vital that we continue to embrace and celebrate our culture in all its forms.

I heard what Rob Gibson said about Struileag and "The Children of the Smoke". We need to take some of the great performances that have been experienced and think about how we can share them more widely.

I want to end not on the majesty of the tattoo, the glamour of the international festival or the spectacle of culture 2014 but on some of the local festivals. There are two in my area that I want to mention in particular.

The Bathgate music festival has been running for only seven years. However, this year, it featured LaFontaines, who went down a storm at T in the Park last month and performed at Scotland week in New York earlier this year. There

is also the Linlithgow folk festival in September, which has been running for 16 years. It has a small but highly talented and enthusiastic group of volunteers. As with many of the festivals that we have heard of, the contributors and the volunteers who take the tickets and steward the events must be celebrated.

As we once again find ourselves looking at the world stage, it is worth reflecting on the deeper meaning of festivals. As we find ourselves facing images of turmoil from around the world, we recall that the Edinburgh international festival was established in the wake of the second world war as a platform for the flowering of the human spirit, with the aim of bringing together the countries of the world through culture. In a powerful speech, Clare Adamson talked about the Durban choir. I am sure that we all heard how excellent the singers were, even if we were not in the room. She talked about the importance of the power of culture to connect cultures and peoples, to foster understanding and, yes, to be a bridge to peace in a way that other interventions perhaps cannot be.

We have had a fantastic celebration of the Commonwealth games. I am glad that culture has been able to play such an important role in that—it will build partnerships that will take us forward.

We must remember that all our festivals and the stages that they provide—be they the wooden floor of a school hall, a vast amphitheatre or, as Patricia Ferguson mentioned, strange venues such as the dissection room of the veterinary college, which is now Summerhall—are important in letting our nation's voices, hopes and aspirations be heard by ourselves and by the rest of the world. We are a creative nation, contributing to the world, and are recognised for our global impact. Culture and our festivals are a huge part of that.

I believe in a Scotland that embraces its culture and heritage but which also generates a dynamic momentum and has a cutting edge that allows us to share our innovations with the world. Our festivals provide such a platform.

I will end with what I think was the best point of the debate. Fiona McLeod reminded us that festivals let us indulge our passions and stretch our horizons.

I thank all the members who have spoken, and ask them to agree to the motion in my name.

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** There are two questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S4M-10784.1, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, which seeks to amend motion S4M-10784, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on Scotland's festivals, festival 2014 and culture 2014, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-10784, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on Scotland's festivals, festival 2014 and culture 2014, as amended, be agreed to.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

That the Parliament recognises that Scotland's culture is in vigorous health and that this is reflected in the continued success of Scotland's festivals, including the Edinburgh festivals, which are internationally renowned for their excitement, vision and artistic ambition; congratulates all of those involved in the successful Festival 2014 and the ongoing Culture 2014 on enabling people across Scotland to share in the cultural celebration of the Commonwealth Games; celebrates the vibrancy and diversity of Scotland's music festivals; acknowledges the importance of all of Scotland's festivals, both large and small, across all the country, and notes the enjoyment that they bring and their impact on tourism and local economies; is especially appreciative of the hard work that communities contribute to ensure that smaller regional festivals are a success; congratulates EventScotland on the contribution that it made to Scotland's thriving festivals scene; considers that the initiative of Festivals Edinburgh in commissioning a further edition of the report, *Thundering Hooves*, will be an important and helpful contribution to the continuing development of the Edinburgh festivals; congratulates Sir Jonathan Mills on his major contribution to the Edinburgh International Festival and to the cultural life of Scotland as he prepares to hand over to Fergus Linehan, and wishes both men well for the future.

*Meeting closed at 17:01.*



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