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Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 29 May 2014

Session 4

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Thursday 29 May 2014

CONTENTS

	Col.
GENERAL QUESTION TIME	31577
Help to Buy (Scotland) Scheme	31577
Marine Protected Areas (Designation)	31578
Working Group on Supporter Involvement in Football Clubs (Membership)	31579
Accident and Emergency Treatment Target (Royal Alexandra Hospital).....	31580
Projected Population Decline (Argyll and Bute)	31581
Management Information and Dental Accounting System (Duplicate Registrations)	31582
Police Scotland (Meetings)	31583
Porterfield Prison (Replacement)	31584
FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME	31586
Engagements.....	31586
Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)	31590
Cabinet (Meetings)	31593
Royal Mail (Universal Service Obligation)	31594
"The Land of Scotland and the Common Good"	31595
Business Rates Incentivisation Scheme	31597
LOCAL TELEVISION	31599
<i>Motion debated—[Joan McAlpine].</i>	
Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP)	31599
Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP)	31602
Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)	31603
Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)	31605
Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con).....	31606
Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP).....	31608
The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf).....	31609
SCOTTISH CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION PROGRAMME	31613
<i>Statement—[Paul Wheelhouse].</i>	
The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse).....	31613
IMMIGRATION POLICY (HIGHER EDUCATION)	31626
<i>Motion moved—[Humza Yousaf].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Neil Bibby].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Liz Smith].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Liam McArthur].</i>	
The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf).....	31626
Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab)	31631
Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	31636
Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD).....	31638
Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)	31642
Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)	31644
George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)	31647
Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)	31649
Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP)	31651
Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab)	31654
Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP).....	31656
Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP)	31658
Liam McArthur	31661
Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con).....	31664
Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab).....	31666
Humza Yousaf	31669
DECISION TIME	31673
CORRECTION	31681

Scottish Parliament

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

General Question Time

Help to Buy (Scotland) Scheme

1. Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how the help to buy (Scotland) scheme is progressing. (S4O-03286)

The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess): Since it launched in September last year, help to buy (Scotland) has helped more than 1,200 households into home ownership. With over 160 house builders participating, the scheme is supporting Scotland's housing industry and is contributing to sustainable economic growth.

The Deputy First Minister announced a further £40 million of funding for help to buy (Scotland) on 16 May, taking total Government support for the scheme to £275 million over three years. The additional funding will allow more people in Scotland to buy a new home.

Gavin Brown: The scheme is funded via the financial transactions moneys. Are there currently any unallocated financial transactions moneys for this financial year?

Margaret Burgess: The scheme is indeed funded through financial transactions money. I will get the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth to respond to Mr Brown regarding the allocated funding for this year. I assure him that the Scottish Government is absolutely committed to the help to buy (Scotland) scheme and to helping people on to the housing ladder. We will continue that commitment to the scheme.

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): For buyers to get on the property ladder, there must be enough housing stock. The housing statistics that were published by the Scottish Government this week show that the number of houses built has gone down again and is at its lowest level since 1947. What is the Scottish Government doing to ensure that there are enough houses for our growing population?

Margaret Burgess: The Scottish Government has a commitment to build 30,000 affordable homes during this session. I remind the member that, since 2007, when this Government came into power, there have been more houses built across the whole sector and more houses built in the

social sector in particular. Per head of population, there are still more houses being built in the private sector.

Scotland is pushing above its weight compared with the rest of the United Kingdom when it comes to house building. We will continue to do so. We are considering other innovative ways to build houses for the people of Scotland. We have certainly outperformed any other Administration in the Scottish Parliament.

Marine Protected Areas (Designation)

2. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to include the six black guillemot sites, three sand eel sites and the Firth of Forth banks complex as part of the proposed marine protected areas to be designated in 2014. (S4O-03287)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): Marine Scotland is reviewing the 14,703 consultation responses, almost all of which, I am pleased to say, were supportive of the work that we and our project partners have been undertaking to develop the network of marine protected areas, including the 10 sites that were mentioned by the member.

We will be considering further scientific advice from Scottish Natural Heritage and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. Once that has been considered, we will set out our next steps for designating a network of MPAs within the next few months.

Colin Beattie: Does the cabinet secretary agree with me that understanding how best to protect Scotland's seabirds and to address their decline is of vital importance as we seek to develop Scotland's offshore renewable resource while respecting our natural environment?

Richard Lochhead: I agree with that. Offshore renewables already take account of potential impacts on seabirds. The new plans and designations that are currently being considered will ensure further protection for Scotland's rich seabird heritage.

There are already designations in place for marine waters. They were designated back in 2009, and they cover 31 seabird breeding colonies. Marine protected areas are also being considered for the black guillemot and other species that support seabirds.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): Regarding Colin Beattie's specific question on designating black guillemot and sand eel MPAs, could the cabinet secretary reassure us that he is taking into consideration the possibility of not just

protecting but enhancing the features in those MPAs?

Richard Lochhead: I am aware that a big campaign is under way to persuade the Government to designate sites that cover the breeding and feeding areas of important seabird colonies as part of our MPA network. That is why we are considering whether the MPA network should take into account the black guillemot and species that support seabirds, including sand eels—four sand eel sites are being considered—which are an important food source for seabirds. We are actively considering those designations.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): What further action is being considered to turn around the worrying trend of the dwindling number of sand eels, which are a very important source of food for seabirds?

Richard Lochhead: As I just indicated, as part of our current consideration of the MPA network, we will consider four sites where sand eels are present. Sand eels are, of course, an important food source for seabirds.

The situation is quite complex, because climate change and other factors influence our sand eel populations, but we are actively considering how sand eel sites can be included in the MPA network.

Working Group on Supporter Involvement in Football Clubs (Membership)

3. Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government who sits on the working group on supporter involvement in football clubs. (S4O-03288)

The Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners' Rights (Shona Robison): The recently established working group on supporter involvement in football clubs, which is chaired by Stephen Morrow, who is a senior lecturer at the University of Stirling, includes representatives of the Scottish Football Association, the Scottish Professional Football League, Supporters Direct Scotland and sportscotland. The group is scheduled to meet for the first time on Friday 30 May. As part of its early considerations, it will be able to review its membership to ensure that it has appropriate representation from clubs, supporters and the football authorities.

Alison Johnstone: Does the minister agree that one possible solution in moving Scottish football towards fan ownership would be for the sport's governing bodies to require clubs to give fans the first right to buy when clubs come up for sale and that, if clubs are unwilling to do that, the Parliament could consider introducing legislation on the issue?

Shona Robison: I acknowledge Alison Johnstone's long-standing interest in supporter involvement in football clubs, on which I am sure that we will continue to have discussions.

As I have indicated previously, including during last month's debate on the issue, the governance and ownership of football clubs is a complex subject, which we require to consider carefully. That is why the working group was established, and I am confident that, by working closely with those involved on all sides of the debate, it will identify a range of possible options for change. As I said, the group will meet for the first time tomorrow. It will consider all aspects of the issue and will look to make recommendations to me by the end of this year. At that point, we will be able to take forward its recommendations through Parliament.

Accident and Emergency Treatment Target (Royal Alexandra Hospital)

4. Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when the four-hour target for accident and emergency treatment will be met at the Royal Alexandra hospital in Paisley. (S4O-03289)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): The Scottish Government is working closely with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to ensure that the four-hour target for accident and emergency treatment is met across all its sites, including the Royal Alexandra hospital.

It is clear that we have some way to go to achieve the sustainable improvement that is required in the board area and at the Royal Alexandra hospital, although performance at the RAH is improving—it is often above 90 per cent and can even meet and exceed the 95 per cent target. However, we appreciate that more work has to be done to continue improvements towards meeting the 95 per cent target on a sustainable and on-going basis.

Hugh Henry: I am disappointed that the cabinet secretary will not give an indication of when his target will be met.

According to Audit Scotland, in November and December of last year, the RAH was one of only two hospitals that failed to provide accident and emergency treatment to 90 per cent of patients in four hours. The cabinet secretary intervened to protect mental health services in his own area. Will he now take a personal interest and intervene to ensure that the target is met for patients in Renfrewshire?

Alex Neil: The Royal Alexandra hospital achieved a level of 92 per cent in March, which is the latest official figure that is available. No patients had to wait more than 12 hours and there

was a 57 per cent reduction in the number of patients who had to wait for more than eight hours. That represents a substantial improvement on the performance when Mr Henry was a minister, when the overall level in Scotland was 86 per cent. The then health secretary, Andy Kerr, described that as a very, very good performance.

At a recent meeting with the chair and the chief executive of Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board, I discussed with them the detailed plans to ensure across the board's area that the board—like every other board in Scotland—achieves the 95 per cent target by September and moves on to the 98 per cent sustainable standard.

Projected Population Decline (Argyll and Bute)

5. Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to reverse the projected population decline in Argyll and Bute. (S4O-03290)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): The Scottish Government continues to support healthy population growth through working closely with a range of organisations, including Argyll and Bute Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, to promote sustainable economic growth in Argyll and Bute. That helps to ensure strong and thriving communities across the area that will retain and attract people. Population growth is a key driver of sustainable economic growth, as our Government economic strategy makes clear.

Jamie McGrigor: Does the cabinet secretary share my concern that recently published National Records of Scotland projections suggest that Argyll and Bute's population will fall by 13.5 per cent by 2037, which is the second-largest projected decline in all Scotland, and that the working-age population is predicted to fall by almost 22 per cent? Does he agree that attracting new jobs and investment to boost economic growth in Argyll and Bute is vital to reversing the decline? That means that the Scottish Government must redouble efforts to improve the area's infrastructure by improving roads such as the A83 and ensuring that proper broadband is available to all areas, including small rural communities.

John Swinney: I have a lot of sympathy with the points that Mr McGrigor raises. I made it clear in my first answer that improving economic opportunities is critical to boosting the population. In a range of areas in the Highlands and Islands, the roll-out of digital connectivity—that is an on-going priority for the Government—has boosted business prospects significantly, as have other measures that we have taken, such as the small

business bonus scheme, which is used extensively across Argyll and Bute.

The Government is focused on ensuring that the infrastructure in rural Scotland—whether it is transport infrastructure or broadband connectivity—is appropriate to attract businesses and to support and encourage population growth. Later this year, I will participate in a population summit with Argyll and Bute Council, which I look forward to contributing to.

Management Information and Dental Accounting System (Duplicate Registrations)

6. Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action has been taken to resolve issues causing duplicate registrations in the management information and dental accounting system so that overpayments do not occur in the future. (S4O-03291)

The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson): MIDAS payments for dentists are a matter for the practitioner services division, which I confirm has put in place a number of measures to resolve issues that cause duplicate registrations, so that overpayments do not occur in the future.

Hanzala Malik: The Scottish Government's figures estimate that, since 2006, £3.4 million has been overpaid to national health service dentists. That has happened mainly because of a series of flaws in MIDAS, which dentists are forced to use, and is not the dentists' fault. Does the minister agree that the priority should be sorting out the problem rather than punishing dentists for an error that was generated by a faulty computer system? What action will he take to ensure that the system is fixed, so that dentists do not suffer in the future?

Michael Matheson: It is important to understand that information that is held on MIDAS is based on information that dentists supply. Errors have occurred as a result of the information that dentists supplied and which was included on the system. To reduce the number of errors in the future, the community health index number is now attached to records, which reduces the risk of duplicate registrations on the system.

I am sure that the member recognises that it is important to retain the more than £3 million that has been overpaid to dentists in the dental budget, so that the money can be invested in dentistry. That money is being used to improve Scotland's oral health record, as we have done for a number of years.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): I call Dr Simpson—make it brief.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): The problem is that one dentist does not know that another dentist has made a duplicate

registration of a patient, so the error is not the dentists' fault. The information technology problem existed for four years, but the system is requiring dentists to repay the sums within six weeks. That is really not good when someone is running a business. I suggest that the Government should get the problem sorted properly and not punish dentists.

Michael Matheson: I am sure that the member will recognise that it is important that overpayments to dentists are recovered. There is a legal responsibility to recover that money.

Dr Simpson: The period is six weeks.

Michael Matheson: No. The period of time can be longer, as required. A process is in place to allow that to happen. The practitioner services division will allow that to happen where that is appropriate.

I am sure that the member will welcome the fact that all that money has been reinvested in NHS dental care provision in Scotland. That is a positive step to ensure that we continue to improve oral healthcare in Scotland.

Police Scotland (Meetings)

7. Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie)

(SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met Police Scotland and what was discussed. (S4O-03292)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): I last met representatives of Police Scotland at the public launch of the national code of ethics for policing in Scotland, which was held yesterday at the Scottish Police College. I was delighted to support that important development, which sees Police Scotland's values of integrity, fairness and respect firmly placed at the heart of our nation's policing.

Gil Paterson: As the cabinet secretary is aware, a young woman from my constituency—Regane MacColl—died in February after taking an illegal substance in a nightclub. Will the cabinet secretary outline the measures that Police Scotland and the Scottish Government can take to ensure that that tragic incident is not repeated?

Kenny MacAskill: I think that the sympathy of everybody in the chamber goes to the family of young Regane MacColl. It is a tragedy for anyone so young to lose their life, especially in that manner.

Taking any drug carries risks, as it is impossible to know its content and its effect on a person's health, whether or not it is sold as legal. I urge the public to heed warnings about the dangers of taking drugs.

We have made significant investment in our substance misuse education programme to ensure that credible, accurate and timely information is available to help people to make informed choices about their health. We are anxious to change the term, "legal highs"; in fact, those are psychoactive substances that can kill, as we have seen.

In its first debate on the issue, the Parliament backed plans by the Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs to work with our partners in Scotland and the United Kingdom Government to combat the supply and misuse of such new drugs. There is an ambitious programme for substance misuse education, and our know the score drugs campaign continues to offer reliable and non-judgmental advice on drugs and their risks.

Porterfield Prison (Replacement)

8. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): To ask the Scottish Executive when a new prison will be built in the Highlands to replace Porterfield prison in Inverness. (S4O-03293)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): Discussions between Highland Council and the Scottish Prison Service on an appropriate location for HMP Highland are under way. Until those discussions are satisfactorily concluded, a date and location for the construction of the prison cannot be confirmed. However, as noted in the Scottish Government's "Infrastructure Investment Plan 2011", it remains SPS's ambition to deliver HMP Highland as a replacement for HMP Inverness during 2019.

Mary Scanlon: In 2003, the SNP's deputy justice minister criticised the Labour Minister for Justice of burying her head in the sand and not addressing the consistent overcrowding in Inverness prison. In 2009—

The Presiding Officer: Can we get a question, Ms Scanlon?

Mary Scanlon: In 2009, we were promised a jail with a price tag of £40 million. When will it be built? How many prisoners will it hold?

Kenny MacAskill: The number of prisoners that it will hold will be a matter for the Scottish Prison Service. I can confirm that it is budgeted for 2019, and the Scottish Prison Service is working actively with Highland Council to ensure that an appropriate site can be discovered. It will certainly not cost in the region of the near £1 billion that the taxpayer is paying for Addiewell prison. Its construction costs are budgeted to be approximately £60 million, which follows the £80 million construction costs for HMP Grampian. The Scottish taxpayers will not have the huge expense that they have to pay for the burden of the private finance initiative/public-private partnership prisons.

Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that an integrated justice centre on one site that encompasses all the elements of the justice system would be a good idea in planning a new prison for the Highlands?

Kenny MacAskill: We strongly support measures that enable justice organisations to work together and ensure modern and efficient facilities. The member has made a good point, and I have no doubt that it will be borne in mind by not only the Scottish Prison Service but the Scottish Court Service, which would ultimately have to engage and deal with matters.

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-02132)

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

Johann Lamont: Excellent. We are always delighted when the First Minister keeps his eye on the ball.

The Scottish Government has missed its 18-week waiting time target from referral to treatment. Month after month, it still fails to hit its target of treating accident and emergency patients within four hours, even after diluting the target. Bedblocking—which means people left languishing in beds because the care system has nowhere for them to go—has gone up 300 per cent.

The national health service is going backwards on the First Minister's watch. Can he remind us why he still has confidence in his health secretary, Alex Neil?

The First Minister: Johann Lamont started off by saying that she is delighted. Somehow, the words "delighted" and "Johann Lamont" do not square at First Minister's questions.

All of us should agree that the NHS is facing a substantial challenge. It is treating many more patients. I think that all of us agree that the people who work in the NHS are doing a tremendous job for Scotland.

We always want to do better, and a lot of the statistics need to be improved. That is what we intend to ensure happens. However, we should remember two things. First, the satisfaction levels with the NHS in Scotland among the patients—the people who experience treatment in the NHS—are extremely high. Secondly, if we compare the statistics that were released this week with what was happening when Johann Lamont was a minister, we can see substantial improvement. Because she mentioned accident and emergency services in particular, I remind the Labour benches that Andy Kerr, who was then the Minister for Health and Community Care, was delighted with a performance of 87 per cent in the health service. The figure that Johann Lamont is complaining about now is 93 per cent. Yes, there is substantial room for improvement, but it is passing strange that the Labour Party was delighted with 87 per

cent when it was in office but condemns 93 per cent when the Scottish National Party is in office.

Johann Lamont: I promise the First Minister that I will be delighted when he stops displaying such disgraceful complacency about what is happening in the NHS. It is patients and others who are expressing concerns, not simply politicians. It would appear that, although the First Minister says that he is reflecting on the statistics, he does not believe them, because they show that the NHS on his watch is failing. Will he listen, then, to the professionals?

Dr Clifford Mann, the president of the College of Emergency Medicine, said:

"The college has been warning for some time now about extreme pressure in the unscheduled healthcare system. These are most evident in the A&E departments and create sometimes overwhelming challenges".

The British Medical Association Scotland said:

"Whilst the government is painting a picture of a well-staffed NHS, the reality is that doctors are working under extreme pressure and workforce shortages and high vacancy rates are significant contributing factors to this."

Last week, we found that only 67 people in this chamber had confidence in the First Minister's health secretary. Is it not the case that they might be the only 67 people in this country who trust him on health?

The First Minister: I regard with great interest the comments of health professionals, wherever they come from. However, when we are looking at emergency medicine, surely the key comments that we should consider are those of Dr Jason Long, who is chair of the College of Emergency Medicine in Scotland. On 28 May this year—so this is a very current quote—he said that the college:

"continues to support the Scottish Government's investment in and commitment to the specialty of Emergency Medicine and the work of Emergency Departments in Scotland."

There is a substantial body of opinion that indicates that. Dr Martin McKechnie, the vice-chair of the Scottish board of the College of Emergency Medicine said:

"We have had a lot of support and investment in the last 18 months from the Government and we are beginning, I hope, to feel and to see the effects of some of these changes."

Those are medical professionals, at the front end of accident and emergency, who are commenting on the emergency care plan that the health secretary implemented. That plan has brought about an improvement in the most recent accident and emergency statistics, so that 93.3 per cent of people are being treated within four hours.

Johann Lamont said that I am complacent about these things. In the first part of my answer, I said that we are looking to improve the statistics. That is our aim and intention for the health service. I dealt with that issue in some measure. It is fair to compare the 93.3 per cent figure for March 2014 with the position in April 2006, when performance of 87.5 per cent was hailed by the then health secretary, Andy Kerr, as showing

"that the vast majority of A & E departments are meeting the four hour target ... Investment and reform in the NHS is paying off".

If we are looking for complacency, I suggest that the Government of which Johann Lamont was a member was complacent in 2006, whereas the health secretary in this Government is putting in the investment to improve things in 2014.

Johann Lamont: Maybe I should remind the First Minister that it took an elderly man, waiting on a trolley, to have his photograph on the front page of the *Daily Record* to get the emergency care plan put in place.

Again, we have evidence that the First Minister will quote people who agree with him but does not listen to people who tell him that there are real problems. The First Minister can trade statistics and alibis and talk about the past, but he does not seem to realise that this is about real people.

I shall, in confidence, supply the First Minister with the details of a patient whose partner wrote to us and wants her experience to be known—she wishes to remain anonymous, so let us call her Mary. She went to her general practitioner with a lump on her breast. Her GP referred her as a priority to the Royal Alexandra hospital for cancer screening. No appointment came. In pain, and with the lump growing, she went to the accident and emergency unit, only to be told that she could not be treated, because she was on a pathway—or rather, waiting for an appointment. She did not get an appointment within the Government's target time. The lump grew, and after weeks of worrying she was forced to pay for private healthcare.

That is the distressing reality of what missing targets means for patients. Can the First Minister tell Mary, and all the real people who make up the statistics that he is trying to play down, why they should have confidence in his NHS?

The First Minister: Any case that is referred to me or to the health secretary will be treated seriously.

No one has ever claimed that every patient receives ideal treatment from our national health service, or indeed any national health service. However, our national health service in Scotland is something of which we can still be really proud.

If we want to look at patient experience, we should also consider the balance of the patient opinion website, where patient after patient reflects on the excellent treatment that they have received from our national health service. The site is an important innovation, in my estimation, because it is in the nature of human affairs that it is often instances in which people have failed or the health service has failed to deliver excellent treatment that come to public attention. Therefore, it is important that the patient opinion website gives the balance of opinion of the many hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens who, year on year, receive excellent treatment from our national health service.

Johann Lamont complains when I reflect that the statistics that we see now, although they are not ideal and in some cases have yet to meet the targets to which we aspire, are, in every single case, superior to the statistics when the Labour Party left office in 2007. In its 2007 manifesto, the Labour Party said:

"Health care across Scotland has never been better ... Waiting times are the lowest ever despite a big increase in operations."

Well, we have had more big increases in operations and attendance since then, and waiting times are better than they were when the Labour Party left office. In political terms, the central question that the Labour Party has to answer is why, when it was patting itself on the back when it was in office, it is attacking the Scottish National Party now, when every part of the health service is performing to higher standards.

Johann Lamont: Like the First Minister, we recognise the good things that are happening in the NHS and we celebrate them—of course we do. However, the problem with the First Minister is that he wants to ignore the problems that are emerging, rather than tackle them. We want to make progress. We want to get better. On his watch, we are going backwards.

The First Minister said that he is not complacent, but he ignores his own statistics and failed targets. He ignores the first-hand views of the experts and professionals. Most damningly, he ignores the lived reality of patients in Scotland. The First Minister is in denial about the pressures on the NHS on his watch, and about the failures in patient care. The fact is that he is more at home in the imagined world after a yes vote than in the real world of life under the SNP Government.

For those who are waiting in accident and emergency, for those who are waiting for treatment, for those who are waiting in pain, will the First Minister admit that he is failing to manage our NHS, and will he get on with the day job that patients across Scotland so desperately need him to do?

The First Minister: As I have pointed out, I could go on to talk about in-patient waits, out-patient waits and referral to treatment waits, as well as accident and emergency. On every single one of those measures, on this Government's watch, treatment in the national health service has improved. Johann Lamont says that things are getting worse, but every one of those statistics is much better than it was when the Labour Party was in office and Johann Lamont was a Government minister.

Let me tell members what has happened to the national health service on this watch. Despite the Westminster cutbacks, national health service staff have increased under the SNP. Staffing is up by 6.7 per cent. We have protected in real terms the front-line NHS budget, which is something that the Labour Party pledged to do in Scotland and has not done in Wales. On patient satisfaction, real people in the national health service say that 87 per cent of patients are satisfied with their local health service. That figure is up 7 per cent on the SNP's watch. We have cleaner hospitals. Clostridium difficile in patients aged over 65 has reduced by 83.8 per cent. I remember when Jackie Baillie said that we were going to be the health infection centre of the world, and then discovered that she was talking about what had happened under the Labour Government.

We abolished prescription charges in the national health service from April 2011, which showed that we aspire to the original foundation principle that the health service should be available to all, regardless of their income. All those things have happened under the SNP. Our national health service, a public service, is protected by the SNP while being neglected by Labour in Wales and every single one of those statistics is better than when Johann Lamont was in office.

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-02126)

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

Ruth Davidson: Yesterday morning, John Swinney was asked 11 times what the set-up costs of an independent Scotland would be, and he was unable to answer. Within three hours, the First Minister conjured up a figure of £250 million to £300 million. Will the First Minister today break down that figure for us by department, so that we can see exactly how that number was reached?

The First Minister: The £200 million figure that I quoted came from Professor Dunleavy of the London School of Economics. He came into the

press conference yesterday because he was cited during the weekend, by Ruth Davidson's colleagues in the United Kingdom Government, as the expert who could estimate the set-up costs that we would be likely to face when we establish the departments of an independent Scotland. The figure of £2.7 billion was cited by the UK Government.

Unfortunately Professor Dunleavy found out that his name was being taken in vain, and he embarked on a series of comments, describing the £2.7 billion figure as "bizarrely inaccurate", and accusing the Treasury of "badly misrepresenting" LSE research. He tweeted:

"Appears to take minimum Whitehall reorganization cost of £15m and multiply by 180 agencies to get £2.7bn. Overstates maybe 12 times?"

He said that the Treasury figures were "bizarrely inaccurate" and then estimated the set-up cost to be £200 million.

All I would say to Ruth Davidson, apart from mentioning the basic un wisdom of introducing Professor Dunleavy into this question time, is that if the chosen expert of the UK Government comes up with an estimate and I describe it as reasonable, is that not a way forward, as opposed to misrepresenting his work, overstating by 12 times and attempting to traduce the reputation of the London School of Economics?

Ruth Davidson: The First Minister wants to talk about Professor Dunleavy, so let us talk about Professor Dunleavy. He wrote a blog yesterday, which I have here. He said that the *Financial Times* asked him about set-up costs and that he gave, in his own words, a "guesstimate", which, again, in his own words,

"only covered Whitehall reorganizations, not whole scale new policy systems."

I think that the First Minister would be on much stronger territory challenging the Treasury's figures if he could come up with his own. We have 100 days to go and the SNP's case seems seriously to be resting on a "guesstimate" by a professor responding to a press inquiry. [Interruption.]

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Order. Let us hear Ms Davidson.

Ruth Davidson: I find it worrying that the First Minister has no intention of telling the people of Scotland how his paperclip economics add up. The fact is that he should have the numbers, because two years ago the finance secretary said that he would set out detailed set-up costs. [Interruption.]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Ruth Davidson: Let me quote paragraph 49 of his memo, which states:

"Work is currently underway in finance and the Office of the Chief Economic Adviser to build a comprehensive overview of the institutions, costs and staff numbers which I will draw together and provide an update to cabinet on in June."

That was June 2012. Taxpayer-funded civil servants were working on giving the Government the costs more than two years ago. The Cabinet has the numbers. The First Minister has the numbers. Why will he not let Scotland see the numbers?

The First Minister: The paper I have here is the "Scotland analysis", apparently the most comprehensive piece of work that the United Kingdom Treasury has ever produced. Professor Dunleavy, who Danny Alexander yesterday tried to write out of history, appears on page 38, which says:

"The Institute for Government (IfG) and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) estimate the average cost for a new policy department ... to be approximately £15 million. ... If this cost were incurred for all 180 organisations, the total cost would be £2.7 billion."

It was the UK Government that introduced Professor Dunleavy, who I must say is an estimable person—I have never met him, but he sounds like the sort of person I want to meet. It was Professor Dunleavy who said that the UK was guilty of gross exaggeration and was multiplying his work by a factor of 12, and who then produced the estimate of £200 million as being closer to the mark.

Danny Alexander, when faced with a torrent of questioning as to why the UK Government was relying on a professor who was saying that it was badly misrepresenting his work, said "No no, we're not talking about Professor Dunleavy; it was actually Professor Young that we were relying on." However, then Professor Young told the *Financial Times* that the £1.5 billion estimate was not his but was extrapolated from another range of estimates. Looking at his paper, I see that Professor Young said:

"The UK position is to make pessimistic predictions, warnings, and the occasional threat."

Professor Young is somebody I want to meet as well.

When the two professors relied upon by the United Kingdom Treasury to produce the ammunition to destroy the case for Scottish independence end up backing the case in the estimates that they produce, it is time for Ruth Davidson to revise her questioning strategy. [Interruption.]

The Presiding Officer: Order. I call Mr Rennie to ask question 3.

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-02125)

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

Willie Rennie: We were told that the white paper was the most comprehensive and detailed blueprint of its kind ever published, but it does not even include the costs of getting started. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order. Let us hear Mr Rennie, please.

Members: Yes, go on.

The Presiding Officer: Come on, behave. *[Laughter.]*

Willie Rennie: The Scottish Government's transition costs document, which Ruth Davidson rightly referred to but on which the First Minister refused to answer, was written two years ago. Will the First Minister tell us where it is?

The First Minister: The depth of examination in the questioning and the combination of better together leave a whole range of opportunities for answer. Yes, the documents that we published yesterday have comprehensive information and make a range of forecasts and estimates, but the difference between the document that Willie Rennie's lot published yesterday and the document published by the Scottish Government is that his lot's document has been destroyed by the very experts who were cited to support it.

The other difference is that the Scottish Government looks forward to developing the Scottish economy and Scottish society. We do not claim the Westminster bonus of the United Kingdom Government, which nobody in Scotland believes they will ever see from the United Kingdom Treasury. What we say is that, working together, we can achieve higher employment, higher productivity and a better balance of working population, and that by matching and marrying the resources and talents of our people, we can build a more prosperous and just society. If Willie Rennie thinks that the miserable, destroyed document that Danny Alexander presented yesterday is going to match up to a positive vision of the future, he is going to get the same disappointment in September that he experienced last week.

Willie Rennie: The answer to "Where is it?" was very long but did not answer the question. That is important for the First Minister, because if people vote for independence in September then find out that the First Minister was wrong on the costs,

there is no way back. The First Minister scoffs, but he needs to answer the question. If there is work, why will he not show it? If there is not, why has it not been done? We know that he is an expert on everyone else's figures, and he now has the chance to put them right. It is simple: he can publish the document that was produced two years ago and which sets out the costs for the transition to an independent Scotland. Will he agree to do that today?

The First Minister: If Willie Rennie cares to examine the document that was published yesterday, he will see not just projections for 2016-17 and the two years following that, but a 15-year projection for growth and achievement in the Scottish economy. Specifically, the document looks forward to a 0.3 per cent increase in productivity, a better balance in the working-age population and increasing employment in Scotland—by 3.5 per cent. It also sets out the mechanisms and measures by which we can achieve that, using the powers and tools of independence.

If we manage that together as a society, we will have an extra £5 billion of additional tax revenue—£1,000 a head for every man, woman and child in Scotland, or £2,000 per family—not given to us on a plate but that lets us work together as a society so that we can create a better, more prosperous and fairer future for the people of Scotland.

Royal Mail (Universal Service Obligation)

4. Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to reports that the Royal Mail has called into question its ability to fulfil the universal service obligation and what the impact could be on rural communities. (S4F-02128)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Postal services are a lifeline for many of Scotland's communities, particularly in our nation's more remote rural areas. Those communities depend on the delivery service guaranteed by the Royal Mail's universal service obligation. That is why it is so deeply concerning to see that the Royal Mail has concerns about its ability to fulfil the universal service obligation.

We can reflect on two things. First, it is disgraceful that this public asset was sold at a knock-down price. Secondly, having the regulation of mail in the hands of a Scottish Parliament will provide us with the opportunity to ensure that the universal postal service is there in the best interests of communities across the country.

Dave Thompson: Prior to the cut-price sell off, we were given specific assurances that the

universal service obligation would be maintained. As recently as last month, Vince Cable said:

“The sale of shares in Royal Mail has delivered on our commitment to protect the universal postal service and safeguard vital services for the taxpayer.”

My local MP, Danny Alexander, also once said—

The Presiding Officer: Can we get a question, Mr Thompson?

Dave Thompson: Yes, Presiding Officer. Danny Alexander said:

“We must continue to be vigilant, and safeguard the Universal Service Obligation at all costs.”

Does the First Minister believe that those Lib Dem MPs are to be trusted?

The First Minister: The question of trust between Danny Alexander and Vince Cable is very pertinent to the events of the past 24 hours. No doubt there will be speculation on who commissioned the poll in Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey and whether Vince Cable knew about that. The only thing that is certain is that we know what the results of that poll were.

I believe that that undermining or questioning of the universal service obligation—let us call it a questioning, because Royal Mail executives have spoken about a questioning of and a concern about the universal service obligation—brings very quickly into the front line of public discussion something that those of us who opposed the Royal Mail’s privatisation were deeply concerned about. We will be looking for more assurances that the universal service obligation guarantee still stands. Whether we get those assurances from Danny Alexander or Vince Cable, I suspect that we should get them quickly or we might not get them at all.

“The Land of Scotland and the Common Good”

5. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):

To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government’s response is to the recommendations in the land reform review group’s final report, “The Land of Scotland and the Common Good”. (S4F-02133)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): It is very important that the Scottish Government, the Parliament and all stakeholders have time to consider what is a very substantial report. We have already announced that we agree on the importance of knowing who owns Scotland and, last weekend, we announced the timetable for completing the land register.

As Claire Baker will be aware, the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee is

taking evidence from the review group and stakeholders this week and next. Thereafter, the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Paul Wheelhouse, will provide further detail on how we intend to take forward Scotland’s land reform agenda at the community land Scotland conference in Skye on 7 June.

Claire Baker: Will the First Minister support the report’s direction of travel and rise to its challenges? The vast majority of those challenges can be met in this Parliament. Is he prepared to make quick progress where possible?

The minister’s U-turn on Sunday on the timescale for the completion of land registration was welcome. Does the First Minister recognise that one of the review group’s key calls is for greater transparency over ownership? Will the Government introduce the regulations that would ensure that the land register contains details of beneficial ownership and discloses the true owner of a foreign company?

The First Minister: The land register is very important. Therefore, I am glad that the timetable for completing it is, I think, welcomed by Claire Baker. She asks whether we are supporting the report’s “direction of travel”. The answer is yes. That is not the case for every specific proposal. As she knows, for example, we do not agree with the de-rating of agricultural land being questioned, because we have already investigated that issue. Therefore, supporting the direction of travel is a good way to put it. I look forward to this Parliament’s examination of the issue.

I was disappointed that Claire Baker—or perhaps it was her press officer—rather misrepresented what the report says when she suggested that there had not been substantial action from the Scottish National Party since we came to power in 2007. The report says:

“since 2003, there has been no land reform programme.”

However, there has been a re-establishment of the community land fund, which was effectively abolished by the Labour Party. Supporting such a fund is quite important if we want communities to buy land. I am sure that Claire Baker will today—*[Interruption.]*

Claire Baker says that that is nonsense. I am afraid that it is not nonsense. If she looks into the detail, she will see that there was no fund to enable communities to buy land until it was re-established by this Government. Therefore, I am sure that she will be the first to welcome today’s announcement that the Scottish Government’s land fund—re-established by the Scottish National Party—is supporting the community ownership of the Carloway estate on Lewis with a grant of more than £200,000. That will enable the purchase of 11,000 acres of land, including the site of the

renowned Callanish standing stones, that will come into community ownership. That is another important stepping stone towards our target of 1 million acres under community ownership by 2020.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Like others, I welcome the agreement of a target date for completion of the register. I wonder whether the Government regrets voting against my amendments to the Land Registration etc (Scotland) Bill, which would have done just that. However, why can the Government accept that recommendation on timetabling but reject out of hand and so quickly the key recommendations on tax without leaving any time for scrutiny of the report?

The First Minister: We are considering the various aspects of the report. For example, I mentioned the rating of agricultural land. The Government had already investigated and reported on that in the past year or so, which is why we pointed that out in our reaction to the report. However, we are extremely interested in the report's direction of travel, which is why I set out the parliamentary and ministerial timetable for responding to its substantive suggestions.

I welcome Patrick Harvie's acknowledgement of the importance of the land register. I am sure that, like me, he is enthused by the reinvigorated land purchase fund for communities, which is taking us on the way to the enormous but achievable target of 1 million acres being in community ownership by 2020.

Business Rates Incentivisation Scheme

6. Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): To ask the First Minister when the business rates incentivisation scheme will become operational. (S4F-02138)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): As Gavin Brown knows, it was introduced on 1 April 2012. In general terms, the Scottish Government offers the most competitive business rates package in the United Kingdom and, as he also knows, supports 90,000 businesses through the small business bonus scheme.

Gavin Brown: It became operational in 2012, apparently. That is an interesting definition of operational. In year 1, the targets were changed mid-year and nobody was paid. In year 2, no targets were set at all. We are now in year 3 and no targets have been set for this year. Can the First Minister name a single council that has been incentivised by the scheme?

The First Minister: As I am sure Gavin Brown would want to acknowledge—[*Interruption.*]*—*well, okay, I am not sure that he wants to acknowledge it, but he will hear it anyway—Convention of Scottish Local Authorities leaders decided in May

2013 that they did not want to consider reviewing the 2012-13 BRIS targets until the final non-domestic rates audited figures for 2012-13 became available in February this year.

The COSLA leadership reconsidered its position at the 25 April 2014 meeting. A significant event had not occurred and, as a result, it was unable to agree the revised 2012-13 targets. I understand that that was by a majority of 17 to 15.

Mr Swinney will meet COSLA in friendship and co-operation and will try to agree a way forward. The scheme was introduced to incentivise local authorities and, therefore, we wish to see agreement on how the incentive is dispersed.

I say in all honesty to Gavin Brown that he might like to look into the detail. Because he is such a careful scrutineer of public money, he will want an incentive scheme to be paid out for business innovation and not just because there has been a lack of successful appeals against the rating system. Whatever else the Tory party is known for and whatever else he does or does not do, Gavin Brown looks at the detail and the facts. Therefore, I am sure that he will back Mr Swinney's efforts to take the scheme forward properly.

Local Television

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-08987, in the name of Joan McAlpine, on fairness for local television in Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak button now, or as soon as possible.

Before I call Joan McAlpine, I further invite members who are leaving the chamber and people who are leaving the gallery to do so quickly and quietly.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes the establishment of new local television services for Scotland; recognises the role that they can play in delivering public service broadcasting commitments such as news and current affairs; understands that Glasgow and Edinburgh have won local licences and that Ayr, in the South Scotland region, is on the shortlist for the next round of licences as well as Dundee, Inverness, Falkirk and Aberdeen; considers that local television's public service content justifies a prominent position in electronic programming guides of Freeview and other digital providers to maximise discoverability by viewers; notes with concern that Digital UK, the body responsible for allocating channel slots on these electronic programming guides, proposes to locate new local television channels at position 26 in Scotland compared with position 8 in other parts of the UK, and notes calls for all stakeholders and those with a regulatory responsibility for broadcasting, including Ofcom, which has a Scotland office, to work together to ensure that local television in Scotland is not disadvantaged.

12:34

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): As the debate is about media matters, I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests. I write a column for the *Daily Record* newspaper, which is owned by the Trinity Mirror Group.

I am delighted to be leading the debate, and I thank members from across Parliament who have signed the motion. I also thank the Carnegie UK Trust for its briefing for the debate, and STV for working closely with me to make the debate possible. I welcome visitors from STV and the University of the West of Scotland to the gallery.

We in Parliament are all familiar with the challenges for local news in the age of the internet. In the past seven years across the United Kingdom, 242 local newspapers have closed completely, and £400 million of advertising revenue has disappeared. However, the public value local news. As the Carnegie Trust briefing points out, local news is

"a hub of citizen engagement",

is "essential" to local democracy, and it

"connects people to place and each other."

That is reflected in the fact that 73 per cent of us believe that our local media are the best media for making us feel part of a community.

For that reason, we should welcome the arrival of the new local television channels. There was, of course, initial disquiet when the first licences in Scotland went to Glasgow and Edinburgh. South Scotland, which I represent, is poorly served by television at the moment, so I commented previously on the logic of that decision. The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, raised concerns about it at the time. However, having said that, I warmly welcome the launch of STV Glasgow next week and STV Edinburgh later this year. The regulator, the Office of Communications, will soon invite applications for local TV stations in Aberdeen, Dundee, Inverness and Ayr, and is considering advertising a licence for Falkirk, so we could have Kelpie TV as well.

STV Glasgow will begin broadcasting on 2 June—next Monday—at half past 6 in the evening. I was fortunate to visit STV's new studio on the Clyde a couple of weeks ago, which has been built with a panoramic view of the river and takes in the Finnieston crane, the squinty bridge, the Armadillo and the SSE Hydro, all of which look spectacular. A magazine show will be broadcast against that panorama that will feature cooking with chefs from the city's restaurants. I particularly welcome the inclusion of "Tenement TV", which showcases local bands and bands that are visiting the city, because there has been no TV platform in Scotland for unsigned young bands for quite a while. That is an opportunity to develop talent; in that regard, it should also be noted that STV has created 26 new roles for the new TV channel.

Bobby Hain, who is the director of channels at STV, has reported that advance advertising sales for the new station have been buoyant, with city businesses being attracted by the opportunity to reach a concentrated audience of 2 million at rates that are lower than the national rates. That is all good, and we hope that it will be replicated when local TV licences are rolled out across Scotland.

The motion for debate today is about fairness for local television and is focused on the need to give it appropriate prominence on the electronic programme guide, which has an important influence on what we watch. In England, local TV appears on channel 8 of the Freeview electronic programme guide, but in Scotland it will be on channel 23, because BBC Alba occupies the channel 8 slot in Scotland. I want to make it very clear that BBC Alba has widespread support and that STV and I have no problem at all with its

occupying that slot. The unfairness here is that, according to the Communications Act 2003, the regulator, Ofcom, should oblige providers of electronic programme guides to give a degree of prominence to public service channels. There are lots of shopping, movie and entertainment channels that could be moved to accommodate local TV, but that has not happened in Scotland. For example, no one could argue that ITV 2 provides a public service, but it is on page 1 of the guide. We have to ask why.

The answer seems to be clear: Digital UK—the industry conglomerate that provides the Freeview electronic programme guide—has the power, but it acts in the interests of the industry's biggest players, including ITV and the BBC. Digital UK has a policy that is supposed to favour public service channels, including those that provide local TV, but in Scotland's case it has ignored its own guidelines. What is perhaps even more worrying is that the regulator, Ofcom, does not interpret the Communications Act 2003 as giving it the power to demand that public service channels get due prominence, and so refuses to intervene in the matter.

A solution recently emerged, because the proposal to move BBC 3 online provides an opportunity to promote local TV in Scotland. I recently wrote to Digital UK to ask it to support such a solution, but I was told that the BBC trust has still to make a decision on BBC 3's future, so Digital UK will not comment until then. Of course, the BBC is a major player in Digital UK, which controls the electronic programme guide, so I was very worried to read of hints that are coming out of the BBC that it would like to use the vacant slot for BBC 1 +1, which again would stymie local television in Scotland.

That has exposed a flaw in the legislation that covers the whole UK. If the communications legislation cannot enforce prominence for public service channels in Scotland, there is a danger that public service channels could also lose prominence elsewhere in the UK. The UK Government appears to recognise that and it has announced that it will seek to introduce new legislation to rectify the situation. However, there is no timeline for that legislation and even if it is introduced, it will come too late to benefit the services that are being launched this year in Scotland.

Of course, the outcome of the referendum could make the debate redundant by transferring regulatory powers over broadcasting from Westminster to this Parliament. However, I am keen to achieve consensus in the debate, so I will not take that point any further. Whatever our position on the constitution, I hope that we can all agree that it is in the interests of democracy for

local TV not to be disadvantaged. I therefore hope that we can work together across the chamber for the fairest possible outcome, and not just in the commercial interest of broadcasters but in the interests of building strong communities, enhancing civic engagement and strengthening local democracy.

12:41

Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): I apologise because I may have to leave before the end of the debate as I have friends from Northern Ireland to meet.

I am delighted to speak in the debate and I congratulate my colleague Joan McAlpine on securing it. Fairness and broadcasting go hand in hand, and that applies as much to our national public broadcaster as it does to local television. However, today the focus is on local television and, indeed, on the increasingly reputable STV and commercial and local television.

As a member for South Scotland and a resident of Ayr, I welcome the issuing of local TV licences for Glasgow and Edinburgh, and the fact that Ayr is on the shortlist for the next round of licence distribution. I am sure that Deputy Presiding Officer John Scott welcomes it, too.

I quoted in the chamber on 30 January 2013, on a related matter, the UK minister who was responsible for broadcasting at that time, Jeremy Hunt, who had said that he wanted people to be able to

"watch television that's truly relevant to them, about what's happening where they live and featuring the people they know."

That is fair. At that time—there is no reason to believe that anything has changed—Ofcom asserted that nine out of 10 adults consume local and national news, and that 75 per cent of them rate local news and weather as personal and important types of communication for them.

I welcome the increased role that Borders TV is playing in assisting meeting local needs and expectations. However, as regards an expansion into more local television to meet the clear and stated needs and expectations of which I spoke, the public service channels that are being used are not, in Scotland at least, the highest available logical channel numbers. It appears that the obligation to provide news and current affairs will be met with the relegation of Scotland's new local services to lower down the EPG listings—lower than shopping, music and movie channels.

That lack of prominence, which Joan McAlpine mentioned—that lack of primacy for local public service channels—must be addressed. We are, of course, excited about the launch of STV Glasgow

on 2 June, albeit that it will be on Freeview channel 23—not 26—which is not high in the EPG listings. That will be another significant milestone in achievement by STV, but it should not be accompanied by a charter for remote-control flickers. The quality of its output merits a logical channel number that is higher than the one that it has been allotted, and also therefore merits prominence that is consistent with customer demands. That will be no less important for Ayr in South Scotland than it is for Glasgow. Ofcom is denying the provisions in section 310 of the Communications Act 2003. In relation to those provisions, Ofcom's EPG code states on channel listings:

"Ofcom will have regard to the interests of citizens and the expectations of consumers".

Ofcom should manage those expectations appropriately.

Paragraph 2.47 of the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport's July 2011 document, "A new framework for local TV in the UK", says:

"The Government wants to achieve EPG prominence on Freeview through acquiring a sufficiently high channel number. The Government hopes that this will be channel 8 ... in England and Northern Ireland and another high number"—

I repeat: "another high number"—

"for services in Wales and Scotland"

The document goes on to say that

"This must ensure that EPG providers give the listing and ... promotion of the programmes on public service channels an appropriate degree of prominence."

I repeat that 23 is not a low number and I hope that all that is remembered when BBC Three is closed down in autumn 2015.

12:45

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): I, too, thank Joan McAlpine for securing this opportunity to discuss local television in Scotland, and I offer her Labour's support in trying to ensure that local television stations are not disadvantaged, but are given the platform and the profile that they need to succeed.

This is an exciting and a challenging time for broadcasting in Scotland. The creation of new local television channels, the first of which will begin broadcasting on Monday, offers all sorts of opportunities: opportunities for communities to express themselves, to share ideas and information, and to offer a new perspective.

I was sorry not to be able to join colleagues in Glasgow just over a week ago at the launch of the STV services for Glasgow and Edinburgh—although I was not so sorry when I heard what

happened to my East Renfrewshire colleague, Jim Murphy MP. For those who were not there, the event included a large and very heavy horse that was intended to look like the iconic statue of the Duke of Wellington outside Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art, complete with parking cone on head. The reason why I know that the horse was large and heavy was that it stood on Jim's foot and would not budge.

The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf): Hear, hear.

Ken Macintosh: I knew that that would be applauded by some members. I think it was applauded by members of the Labour Party, too. That is what you call voting with your feet.

Anyway—horsey tales aside—it is exciting that communities around Scotland will have a new source of local news and information. It could not come at a better time, with traditional print news media in a state of crisis and disarray. The Carnegie UK Trust has reminded us that 242 local newspapers have closed in seven years, and all but two of the UK's regional daily papers saw a year-on-year decrease in circulation in the past six months. As Joan McAlpine highlighted, almost £400 million in print advertising revenue is forecast to have been lost from the newspaper market by the end of this year.

That is accompanied by the fact that all of us—and the younger generation in particular—are now accessing our news and information more and more through different media. Whether the medium is digital TV, social media or other online sources, pictures and broadcast material have never been more important. I, for one, am very hopeful that Scotland's new local television services will provide a vital service that will broaden the range of voices that we can hear, preserve local democracy and strengthen our communities.

That is certainly not guaranteed—many of us will be familiar with the old Bruce Springsteen song "57 Channels (And Nothin' On)"—but it is an opportunity that many Scots will grasp. If they are to do so, one of the problems that they will undoubtedly have to overcome is that of where on the electronic programme guide viewers will be able to find their local station. As Joan McAlpine said, across most of the UK local TV stations will be found on channel 8. Here in Scotland and in Wales, too, they will be on channel 23. That is partly for good reason, because our Gaelic channel, BBC Alba, is on channel 8, and in Wales it is taken by S4C.

Much as I want a good slot for our new local television output, I certainly do not want to move BBC Alba. It is a very successful station that is not

just serving the needs of the Gaelic community and is essential to the revival of the language, but is providing a much appreciated service to the whole of Scotland. The most recent figures show that BBC Alba has an average weekly reach of 750,000.

However, make no mistake: the slot that a channel gets on the electronic programme guide matters. An Ofcom analysis concluded:

"The evidence strongly supports the view that EPG positioning is likely to have a significant impact on a channel's performance. Based on this evidence, we consider that if a major digital entertainment channel suffered a significant loss of EPG prominence, this would be associated with a 10-20% drop in audience share on the Freeview platform and a 20-40% fall in audience share on the Sky and Virgin Media platforms."

It is my understanding that Digital UK is willing to move Scotland's local TV stations higher up the guide when slots become available. In fact, in the interim period between when Joan McAlpine lodged the motion and the launch of the stations, Digital UK has moved our stations up from channel 26 to channel 23. I offer my support for that approach. I believe that we should give the new stations every chance of success; giving them a prominent position among our plethora of digital channels is one way of doing so. I again thank Joan McAlpine for securing the debate.

12:50

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I join others in congratulating Joan McAlpine on securing this important debate. I apologise for perhaps not hearing the whole debate, should I have to leave early for the Conveners Group meeting that starts shortly, although I will certainly look at it afterwards.

The Scottish Parliament information centre tells me that broadcast media—TV and radio—employ something like 3,500 people in Scotland, so it is a significant industry. More fundamentally, it is significant for the people who consume the industry's products. One of the little things that gives us an insight into what the public wants is the circulation of the *Press and Journal*, which is roughly equivalent to that of *The Herald* and *The Scotsman* put together. Why is that so? It is because the P and J is essentially a paper that is rooted in local news, as it has outposts across the north and north-east of Scotland, with journalists embedded in communities and reporting on what is going on. Every day the P and J has a page and a half of news from my constituency.

There is an appetite for local news, which the new stations absolutely play into. The time for local television has come, as the cost of entry has shrunk to an entirely different level from that which it was at years ago. We must not allow the

initiative to fail because of some essentially technical issues around the stations achieving the right prominence. If channel 7 is going to be available, it should—to be blunt—be allocated to those stations, because we have public service broadcasters in the east and in the west and will have later in other parts of Scotland. Ofcom should respond to its guidance and allocate the channel to those stations.

There has been a bit of a lack of imagination on the part of Ofcom in examining other ways of achieving such prominence for the channels. This week, for example, when I came back and switched my telly on in my wee house down here, a message said, "There are new channels available. You have to retune." I pressed the retune button, and three minutes later the TV had retuned. That is fascinating. However, I have examined the behaviour of Sony, Panasonic, Samsung, Humax and Pace boxes—just a sample, not a comprehensive survey—and they always wipe my favourites. The reality is that if we could get our favourites set up so that retuning did not interfere with them, it would be okay when such a message came up and we had put our local channels on the favourites. However, the reality is that every time we retune, it overwrites our choices. The software that does that in all those boxes is downloaded from the network, so Ofcom could set regulations for the software as well as for the data content of the EPG, and could require the providers of the software not to do that. It is, in any event, specific to the UK, so that would not be to touch on international matters.

With a bit of imagination, we could get things to a different place. Ofcom could even require that there be little icons on the screen, so instead of having a dozen stations on the first screen that we see there could be—let us use an arbitrary number—26 of them, so we could get the new stations on the screen. There has been a lack of imagination.

The world is changing and will continue to change. I have just realised that it is 20 years since I first published a website. There is a lot happening and there is a lot more to happen. Let us ensure that there is a fair wind for this excellent local news initiative—for which I am sure there will be great demand—and that our local stations are prominent, so that the public can easily access and enjoy them.

12:55

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Like others, I congratulate Joan McAlpine on securing the debate. I very much welcome the introduction of local TV, and I am delighted to see it come about. I have always been supportive of the benefits of local TV, and it is

right, in the spirit of consensus that Joan McAlpine referred to, that we commend the UK Government for pursuing the matter. In particular, I take this opportunity to congratulate Rob Woodward and his team at STV on the achievements that they have already had, and on having the vision to back the introduction of local television in Scotland, which I think is wonderful.

That said, I share Joan McAlpine's original disappointment that Edinburgh and Glasgow were the first recipients of local TV. I was a bit surprised when that announcement was made, for reasons that I will come to in a minute. I can understand it, however, given the populations of those two cities—my understanding is that there need to be around 100,000 people in the catchment area to make it work, at least at this point.

I look forward to the whole thing being rolled out further. I understand that Ayr is a possible option for the future. As a former Ayrshire man, I am keen to see that brought about—as I know that you are, Presiding Officer; you told me to say that, and I am happy to do so.

I go back to a rather more parochial note, and to the reason for my slight surprise at the announcement of Edinburgh and Glasgow as the first recipients of local TV. My enthusiasm for local TV is effectively reflected in the words of the Fiona Hyslop, the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, who said in August 2011:

"Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders are arguably the parts of Scotland most in need of local television."

I took part in a parliamentary debate on the issue around that time, if I remember rightly, and I absolutely agreed with that point.

The situation in the Borders and Dumfries and Galloway has improved somewhat of late, as we have effectively regained Borders Television, which had been removed from us. I acknowledge Chic Brodie's recognition of that fact. Local need is now much better satisfied than it was in 2011. Nonetheless, the cabinet secretary's statement that year was pertinent.

I bow to other members' technical knowledge of electronic programming guide positioning, which is infinitely superior to mine. I can understand the concerns about the issue, but I do not think that we should get too desperately hung up about local TV's position on the electronic programming guide. I have Sky television and I regularly tune into the BBC's 24-hour news channel, which is on channel 503. What draws me to it is the quality of the programming. Although I understand the desirability of having a position of prominence, I would argue that, to a certain extent, the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. If the quality of local television programming is good enough,

people will manage to press two numbers rather than one on the zapper, if that is what it takes to get to their programme. If the attraction of watching the programme is strong enough, because of its quality, that issue will be overcome.

That said, I recognise the strength of the arguments for EPG prominence. If a local channel can be moved higher up the list, it most certainly should be.

I am pleased to have taken part in the debate, and I again congratulate Joan McAlpine on securing it.

12:58

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): I, too, thank my colleague Joan McAlpine for securing the debate.

I welcome the new STV local channels that are being launched in Glasgow and Edinburgh over the summer in conjunction with Glasgow Caledonian University and Edinburgh Napier University. Edinburgh TV and Glasgow TV are the only new Scottish channels announced so far, but I understand that Ofcom will be advertising licences later this year for the Aberdeen, Ayr, Dundee, Falkirk and Inverness areas.

The channels are necessary because we see so little of Scotland and Scottish culture on the existing public sector broadcaster, the BBC. According to the BBC's own management review, BBC Scotland's local television original output for 2012-13 was 778 hours. That was at the same time that Scottish licence fee payers contributed £320 million to BBC coffers.

The new channels ETV and GTV will broadcast from 12 noon until midnight seven days a week. That means that each of them will broadcast a total of 4,368 hours a year, which is more than four times the total number of hours of local television that are broadcast by BBC Scotland.

It is even more remarkable that the stations will operate on a fully commercial business model, as they decided to reject the option of receiving funding from the BBC, which had hoped to purchase content from the Scottish channels and the UK-wide local TV network to the tune of £5 million per annum for three years.

STV Local has freed itself from having to provide the BBC with access to its content, which it hopes will be able to attract its own revenue. In order to attract that revenue, I understand that the new channels will provide a mix of local content and programming, which will include news, current affairs and live shows, as well as quality acquired and archived programming.

In developing the new channels, STV and its partners need to consider how they can address the totally inadequate level of broadcasting of programming on our arts, music, entertainment and comedy, on which BBC Scotland managed to broadcast only 36 hours of programming in the year to March 2013. There is hope that they might indeed do that, given that, at last year's Edinburgh Napier media Monday event, Bobby Hain, director of channels at STV, stated:

"Securing the local TV licence for Edinburgh means we will be bringing relevant and engaging content to the capital on a brand new platform. This is an exciting opportunity and one we are looking forward to delivering in partnership with Edinburgh Napier University."

We are not talking only about an opportunity to reflect our society on the wee screen, as the new channels will present opportunities to the students who attend the partner universities. Edinburgh Napier University students who study journalism will be given the opportunity to work and train in a live TV environment, while work experience will also be available to students who take other media courses. Edinburgh Napier has a track record of producing top journalism and media graduates, and I am sure that the students will prove invaluable to the community programming that is planned for ETV.

Despite the best efforts of STV and Edinburgh Napier, ETV and GTV will be successful only if they attract an audience and, as a result, advertising revenue. That is where the problem lies because, when the licence was awarded, Digital UK originally allocated the stations channel 45 on the Freeview platform. It has now reconsidered that decision and will move them to channel 23. Across the UK, the other local channels that produce programmes will broadcast on channel 8. Now that the BBC is taking BBC 3 off the air, surely the solution would be to move BBC Alba to channel 7, which would mean that ETV and GTV could be broadcast on channel 8 as well.

The alternative that is proposed for channel 7 is that it be used for BBC 1 +1, which by its very nature will be a repeat channel with no original content, and very little of its content will have emanated from Scotland. That is unacceptable and, if the proposal is allowed to go ahead unchanged, it will again highlight why broadcasting in Scotland should be regulated by the Scottish Parliament.

13:03

The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf): I join other members in congratulating Joan McAlpine on securing the debate and welcome the range of excellent speeches that have been made.

The subject of the debate is both important and timely. It is important because, between them, the two local television stations that will start broadcasting this year in Glasgow and Edinburgh will have a potential audience of some four fifths of Scotland's population, and it is timely because, as we have heard, STV Glasgow will start broadcasting in just a few days' time, on Monday 2 June. Like Ken Macintosh, I was not at the station's launch—in my case, because I had been, literally, sent to Coventry—but I have genuine sympathy for Jim Murphy. I applauded Ken Macintosh's mention of the horse standing on Jim Murphy's foot only because I have seen him play football and know that anything that slows him down is probably a good thing.

As a member of the Scottish Parliament for the Glasgow region—although the area that STV Glasgow will cover will extend beyond that region—I am particularly pleased that the new station is about to get under way.

After last week's terrible news of the fire that ravaged the Mackintosh building, which is part of Glasgow School of Art, I reflected on how something that is small and local can have repercussions that are local and simultaneously national and international. I am grateful to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service for its good work in tackling the blaze.

I am sure that the new STV Glasgow service will want to cover the journey to recovery of that Glasgow School of Art building. That is a good example of a story that can be given broadcast coverage in a lot more depth by a station such as STV Glasgow, which has an opportunity to bring a unique dimension to television broadcasting. I look forward to STV Glasgow beginning to broadcast next week and to STV Edinburgh following later in the year.

As we know and as many members have said, there is the possibility of further local television stations. The intention is to have television franchises in Aberdeen, Ayr, Dundee, Falkirk and Inverness later this year and a start date in 2015 or 2016 is implied.

The Scottish Government has a bit of regret that the model of an English-language television channel for Scotland with local opt-outs, as recommended by the Scottish Broadcasting Commission in 2008 and endorsed unanimously by the Parliament, has not been followed. Nevertheless, the increased coverage that local television under the current model will offer is to be welcomed.

I am certainly keen for the new stations to prosper. From what I have seen of STV's local coverage—from its STV Glasgow app, which is on my phone, through to its flagship political

programme, “Scotland Tonight”, which has regionalised news—I think that it has stolen the march on local programming and that its stations will be a huge success.

As Alex Fergusson said, the biggest key to achieving success will be the quality of the programmes, which I am confident about. As I mentioned, STV has a strong record as a broadcaster and understands localism in news. However, when the stations are in their early phases and people do not quite know the level of quality, prominence in the EPG will be immensely important.

Programming for STV Glasgow will include a headline two-hour show called “The Riverside Show” from 6.30 pm each weeknight. Joan McAlpine described well the panoramic background to that. Other programming will reflect Scotland’s diversity—the channel will show the popular series of some years back, “Take the High Road”, and, for different communities in Glasgow and across Scotland, it will screen in Polish a recent series from Poland called “Days of Honour”, which is set during the second world war.

I believe that STV Glasgow has the capacity to attract audiences, but realistically—and especially when it starts up—doing that can at least be eased by having a relatively high position on the electronic programme guide. As Ken Macintosh said, that would accord with the basic principles that Ofcom has set for the EPG, which include prominence for public service broadcasters.

We share the dissatisfaction of all members in the chamber with the present channel slot of 23, although we recognise that movement in the correct direction has occurred, as Ken Macintosh said. We urge Digital UK and the powers that be to move further in that direction and give the stations the prominence that they deserve. In a previous motion, Joan McAlpine mentioned the opportunity that may well arise from the BBC executive’s intention to move BBC 3 to a purely online basis, which will free the channel 7 slot. As far back as May 2012, the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs pressed the case for greater prominence for local television in Scotland with Digital UK, which allocates the EPG slots, and we will continue to make that case.

For the public, the case will be made above all by the programming that STV Glasgow and STV Edinburgh offer. It is a great model. Gordon MacDonald was right to emphasise that it will bring in universities and give students a break in broadcast media—I know many journalism students as friends, and they have struggled to get into that. Local television will give them that fantastic opportunity.

When all that is put together, I am in no doubt that the channels will fulfil the public service broadcasting mission to inform, educate and entertain. I look forward to experiencing that when STV Glasgow begins broadcasting on Monday. It might even have me on one of its shows—who knows?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sure that the minister’s comments will be noted. I thank all members for taking part in the debate.

13:10

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Good afternoon. The first item of business is a statement by Paul Wheelhouse on “Climate Ready Scotland: Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme”. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement and there should therefore be no interventions or interruptions. Minister, you have 10 minutes.

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse): Today, I lay before Parliament the Scottish Government’s final Scottish climate change adaptation programme. The programme is in accordance with section 53 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

There is no doubt in my mind that climate change poses one of the greatest threats to the world as we know it. The latest evidence from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change sends a stronger warning than ever that human activity is changing the global climate. On 31 March, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published the second volume of its fifth assessment report, “Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability”. The evidence supports urgent action to reduce emissions to avoid dangerous climate change and the necessity to adapt to those changes that we can no longer avoid.

Climate change is affecting every continent, contributing to heatwaves, drought and flooding across the globe. Heavy rains and floods are not only now common here but now commonplace in Africa, with devastating effects in countries such as Sudan and Somalia, while north-eastern Brazil has experienced its worst drought in the past 50 years and typhoon Haiyan, one of the strongest storms ever to make landfall, devastated parts of the central Philippines with tragic results. The impact is also being seen in our seas and on our coastlines, with the significant threat of coastal erosion from a global sea level rise of up to 82cm by the end of this century. That would displace millions and cause massive damage to important natural habitats as well as enormous economic damage.

Scotland will not be immune, and we are already seeing evidence of Scotland’s climate changing. Temperatures in Scotland between 2003 and 2007 were the highest since the record began in 1910. Average winter rainfall in the 1990s and 2000s was around 23 per cent higher than the 1961-1990 baseline, and there is a trend

of increasing rainfall intensity in parts of Scotland. As recently as this past winter, Scotland experienced the devastating effects that extreme weather can bring. A succession of major winter storms from mid-December to early January saw disruption across Scotland’s rail network and airports, several thousand homes without power and traffic accidents and fatalities. Dumfries and Galloway experienced severe flooding as the River Nith burst its banks and the River Girvan in Ayrshire was recorded as being at its highest level for 16 years. Some places in Scotland saw more than 600mm of rainfall over a five-week period and overall it was the wettest December and wettest month in the records dating back to 1910.

Although the aggregate impacts of climate change might be less severe in Scotland than in many other parts of the world, we will be faced with new challenges. Recent evidence from the Met Office shows that, when viewed over long-term averages, the United Kingdom is expected to see more milder, wetter winters and more hotter, drier summers in the future. However, the UK has seasonal weather that also varies hugely from year to year due to natural processes. We should also plan to be resilient to wet summers and to cold winters throughout this century.

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 is still the most ambitious piece of climate change legislation anywhere in the world and, although there are, no doubt, many challenges ahead, Scotland is making progress, with the biggest fall in emissions in western Europe. However, despite our commitment to reduce emissions, the inertia of the climate systems means that some degree of further climate change is inevitable over the coming decades. That is why the Scottish Government is fully committed not only to the greenhouse gas emissions targets that the 2009 act sets out but to ensuring that Scotland is well prepared and resilient to the impacts of climate change. In doing so, it has been important to consider the statutory requirements of the 2009 act when preparing the adaptation programme.

The programme must set out Scottish ministers’ objectives in relation to adaptation to climate change, proposals and policies for meeting those objectives and the period within which they will be introduced. The programme must also set out the arrangements for involving employers, trade unions and other stakeholders in meeting Scottish ministers’ objectives, and the mechanisms for ensuring public engagement in meeting them. The programme must also address the risks in the UK climate change risk assessment. Our programme delivers on all that.

On where we see our role in addressing climate change, Scotland does not lack ambition. As a nation, we can all take pride in that. The impacts

of climate change will affect Scotland as a whole and we all have a role to play in ensuring that Scotland is well prepared and resilient to change.

Wider engagement will be key to delivering our adaptation objectives. Adapting to the impacts of climate change will require a mixture of actions at local, national and international levels, and responsibility for adapting rests with organisations, businesses and communities across Scotland. It would be neither appropriate nor feasible for the Scottish Government to directly prepare every organisation for the impacts of climate change, but our adaptation programme provides a framework for everyone in Scotland to contribute to the delivery of the objectives within their own organisation, business or community.

Adaptation is about understanding and managing the risks and opportunities; about taking action through collective and mutual support, collaboration and partnership working; and about evaluation and review and being flexible in the face of uncertainty. Our programme does that by integrating adaptation within Scottish Government policies and strategies; by helping people to understand and plan for the risks and opportunities that are presented by the changing climate and encouraging and facilitating partnership working; and through regular monitoring and reporting.

Committee scrutiny and responses to the public consultation were invaluable in the development of the final programme, as they highlighted the strengths of the programme as well as areas where it could be developed further. Where appropriate, we have addressed those things in the programme, and where it has not been possible we will consider other areas in the longer term and for future programmes.

The Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee and consultation respondents sought clarification on timescales, funding and responsibilities. On timescales, the schedule of work to develop and implement each policy and proposal in the adaptation programme will start from the position that the policy or proposal presently occupies in relevant Government programmes. There are inevitable uncertainties about exact timescales across the broad range of policies and proposals in the programme, which is why it offers a broad definition of timescales. That is consistent with the approach that was taken in “Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027—the Second Report on Proposals and Policies”, which was published last year.

On funding, we are investing in and planning for the changing climate by firmly embedding climate change adaptation and related costs into the policies and proposals that are set out in the

programme. We are also providing support and core funding for adaptation through the development of a robust evidence base, including annual funding to the ClimateXChange adaptation research programme; programmes to develop adaptive capacity, including adaptation Scotland; and policy-specific action, including annual funding to the Scottish Flood Forum.

On responsibilities, although the Scottish Government as a whole is responsible for the policies and proposals in the programme, we will work collaboratively with a wide range of partners to deliver the programme of work that is set out. The fact that our adaptation programme contains many examples of adaptation actions in Scotland demonstrates that a wide range of organisations across Scotland are already taking responsibility for their share of action and working collaboratively to achieve results.

Our programme provides a framework for activity, but it is not a statement of everything that we are doing. The wide-ranging nature of the impacts, the complex interactions and the emerging evidence mean that our response must be adaptable. We should not be tied to a specific course of action. Work will continue outside the programme as new evidence emerges and our understanding of the effects of climate change and their impacts develops.

Of course, the programme is not an end in itself. Due to the inherent uncertainty in some aspects of climate change, adaptation policies need to be flexible and to be adjusted as and when new information becomes available. Our policies and proposals will evolve and develop during each programme, providing the flexibility that is needed to adjust to new understanding and information as it becomes available.

We will use the framework that is set out in the programme to continue to integrate adaptation within Scottish Government policies and strategies and encourage and facilitate partnership working. That on-going development of the Scottish Government's action will be reflected in regular reports on progress and in future adaptation programmes. Work is already under way with ClimateXChange and the adaptation sub-committee of the United Kingdom Committee on Climate Change to consider indicators against which progress can be assessed.

I believe that Scotland's first statutory climate change adaptation programme contains a comprehensive package of measures that make clear the Scottish Government's on-going commitment to ensuring that Scottish Government policy, as far as possible, helps Scotland to adapt to the effects of climate change, creates a more resilient country for us to live and work in and helps to protect Scotland's much-loved natural

environment. I thank all those who helped to shape the programme that we have laid before the Parliament today. I look forward to taking questions.

The Presiding Officer: The minister will now take questions on the issues raised in his statement. I intend to allow 20 minutes or so for questions, after which we need to move on to the next item of business.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank the minister for sight of his statement.

The Scottish Government is legally required to produce a climate adaption programme, the overarching aim of which is

“to increase the resilience of Scotland’s people, environment and economy to the impacts of a changing climate.”

I am disappointed in the process this afternoon, because it has been impossible to assess in any real sense the final programme, as we only received it 20 minutes before the statement was made. I hope that there will be further opportunity to scrutinise the document in the chamber.

I stress that we are very keen to continue to work in a cross-party manner on these important long-term issues. Thus, we have some brief initial questions. How does the minister envisage that the programme will help to achieve the future annual emissions targets, given that there have been some initial difficulties?

In his statement, the minister highlighted

“a broad definition of timescales.”

In view of some stakeholders’ criticisms of the programme being too short term, what plans does the minister have to extend the programme beyond the first five years, in line with the report on proposals and policies structure?

Monitoring is essential. The minister agreed with the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee that it is crucial to

“develop indicators that effectively measure progress towards the aims and objectives”.—[*Official Report, Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee*, 6 November 2013; c 2907.]

Can the minister give more details, beyond the organisations that are involved, of the plans for monitoring?

In his statement, the minister recognised the challenges that were faced last winter. Roughly 18 per cent of Scotland’s coastline is highly susceptible to erosion and the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee heard that careful targeting of areas is needed to make them more resilient. The minister confirmed that that was actively being considered by the Scottish Government. Has that been developed?

Lastly—

The Presiding Officer: You are way over time.

Claudia Beamish: Am I way over time?

The Presiding Officer: I have been extremely generous.

Claudia Beamish: Could I finish with one sentence?

The Presiding Officer: I will allow the minister to answer your questions.

Claudia Beamish: Right—thank you.

Paul Wheelhouse: Thank you, Presiding Officer. I will do my best.

I apologise to Claudia Beamish and other members if there were technical problems getting the document to them today. I will endeavour to answer the questions that Claudia Beamish raised.

How does the programme help to achieve emissions targets? The more that the public understands the importance of climate change and how it will affect our lives, communities, business and the wider society that we live in through the adaptation programme and the influence that it has on behaviours, the more we will potentially lock in positive behavioural change to help us to meet our emissions targets. I hope that the programme will help communities to understand why certain things have to happen from an adaptation point of view and a climate change mitigation point of view.

I hope that, as a result of our improved understanding of adaptation and why it is so important to society, the programme will set a more positive narrative than there has been in the past about why certain investments and land use changes have to occur to facilitate climate change mitigation.

There is a mixture of timescales set out in the programme, which reflects its organic nature. It will change over time. It refers to key Government documents that will themselves change over time, such as the planning policy and the land use strategy, which is shortly to be reviewed, as Claudia Beamish will know. Therefore, it would be a mistake for the programme to contain specific text from those documents or for the programme to be structured too rigidly. We have maintained a degree of flexibility so that the programme can evolve and reflect change as it happens.

Page 74 of the programme sets out some specific details on timelines for Scottish Water’s investment programme. Similarly, there are details on Historic Scotland’s action plan for 2012 to 2017. We have a deadline of the end of the year

for local strategies to be developed on flood risk management.

In other areas, we have been more flexible, because strategies will evolve and timelines are not yet certain. Of course, we do not know at this time exactly how climate change will unfold. A lot will depend on how much action the world takes to mitigate climate change, including what temperature rise scenario we will face as a society.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): What actions will the Scottish Government take to ensure that each Government department will put climate change and climate change adaptation high enough on their agenda to effectively mitigate the public sector's environmental footprints?

Paul Wheelhouse rose—

Jamie McGrigor: What can be done to incentivise peatland retention and restoration as a way of absorbing more CO₂?

The adaption programme suggests that parts of Scottish agriculture and forestry might experience positive change as a result of changes in our climate. Can the minister give details of what research is being done on that, so that some producers might be able to benefit?

Lastly, with regard to the farming for a better climate programme, how will the Government highlight the financial savings that are being achieved on the focus farms to all other farmers and crofters, in order to spread best practice?

Paul Wheelhouse: I should have known better than to stand up after Jamie McGrigor's first question. I will try to answer his questions as best I can but, again, I will pick up later on anything that I miss today.

On leadership, we have established the public sector climate leaders forum. At the forum's most recent meeting, which Claudia Beamish attended as an observer for the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, we discussed adaptation and the five key steps that the public sector can take to address it. I assure Jamie McGrigor that the question of how we adapt to climate change features in cross-Government and cross-departmental conversations; indeed, every Government department inputted extensively into the document on the basis of their portfolio interests to ensure that it reflected what could be undertaken and the risks and challenges that are faced in each area. For example, we need to understand the impact on critical transport infrastructure, the energy sector and other areas, and then get feed-in from the specialists. That has been a core part of producing the document that has been laid before the Parliament today, but I

assure Jamie McGrigor that we will continue that cross-portfolio engagement on adaptation.

On Mr McGrigor's final question, I know that the cabinet secretary was making an announcement today about further funding for the farming for a better climate programme. It is certainly very important. Just to give a flavour of it, I know that at least two of the monitoring farms reduced carbon dioxide emissions by between 10 and 11 per cent and that their underlying business gained commensurate financial benefits. That shows that the approach is not just good for the environment but very good for the farms as businesses.

Finally, I undertake to give Jamie McGrigor further feedback on his other questions.

The Presiding Officer: Eleven back benchers wish to ask the minister a question. I ask that the questions be short—that is, there should be only one question—and that the answers be equally brief.

Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): I note in the "Climate Ready Society" section of the document the need for effective public engagement if the adaptation programme is to meet its objectives. Will the minister expand on the triggers that will make action possible beyond Government to ensure that the crucial involvement of families, communities, public bodies, private business and local authorities is taken into account?

Paul Wheelhouse: Rob Gibson is right to raise that issue, which I alluded to in my opening remarks. Communities, businesses and individuals have an extremely important role to play in this matter. If we can, as I suggested in my response to Claudia Beamish, influence their behaviour with regard to adaptation, it will have a knock-on impact on our efforts to tackle climate change.

Public bodies and local authorities can also play a vital role in supporting communities and businesses in that respect, and the Scottish Government is helping to facilitate that in a number of ways, principally by providing leadership in the public sector climate leaders forum that I referred to in my response to Jamie McGrigor; by supporting the 2020 climate group, which provides strategic direction for action in the business sector; by providing advice and guidance through the adaptation Scotland programme, which works with public bodies, organisations and communities on how to take action; and by supporting ClimateXChange in its work with a range of stakeholders on specific research projects and pilots. We also want to provide financial support through measures such as the climate challenge fund to help communities at a local level.

Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab): How does the climate change adaptation programme relate to the low carbon Scotland behaviours framework, and how will that be monitored?

Paul Wheelhouse: Cara Hilton has made a good point. In outlining our action on climate mitigation, we have made strong use of the individual, social and material—or ISM—modelling tool, which helps Government to understand the implications of behavioural triggers for change with regard not only to mitigation but to adaptation. The approach can be equally applied to individual circumstances, the social context in which people live and work and material triggers such as regulatory powers that might trigger a change in behaviour. Understanding the behavioural aspects of climate policy helps to inform Government, other public sector agencies and, indeed, businesses about how best to influence that behaviour in a positive way. If the member does not already have information on ISM, I am happy to provide her with further detail on it.

Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP): Will the minister provide further information on support and funding for adaptation?

Paul Wheelhouse: With regard to the adaptation funding that we have already outlined, there has been a good degree of work on flood risk management. Indeed, as the member knows, we provide £42 million a year through the local government capital settlement for flood protection.

In addition, we must provide support to public bodies for implementing the climate change duties. We provide informational guidance on climate change adaptation duties and how to comply with them. Guidance for public sector, third sector and business sector partners is disseminated through Adaptation Scotland, to which we provide core funding. In responding to Jamie McGrigor, I referred to “Five steps to managing your climate risks”. I also mention the business climate risk management plan and support for communities through a new resource called “Are you ready?”, as well as direct engagement with communities.

We provide core funding for the development of a robust evidence base, with about £1 million annually to fund a ClimateXChange adaptation research programme. There are programmes to develop adaptive capacity, which includes funding of around £250,000 for Adaptation Scotland to help organisations and communities. There are policy-specific actions, including annual funding of £140,000 to the Scottish Flood Forum to help it to support communities that have been affected by or are at risk of flooding.

Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Can the minister reassure the Parliament that the

mechanisms are in place to ensure that the Scottish Government and partners are able to assess how to adapt and respond to the needs at hand and to new research as it arises, as argued by Scottish Environment LINK?

Paul Wheelhouse: Research is clearly very important. That is why we fund ClimateXChange to undertake the work that I outlined earlier. At the leadership forum that we held last year, we discussed with business, public sector and community stakeholders how to work together to show leadership on climate change.

The public sector climate leaders forum has just been re-established, and the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee has an observer role on it. That is a very important forum for identifying how we can work together and learn from one another. There are steps that have already been taken in the private sector that the public sector can learn from, and vice versa. We do not have to reinvent the wheel. There are lots of good behaviours already happening. Indeed, councils—not necessarily all of them under Scottish National Party control—are doing very good things. We should disseminate good practice and ensure that local authorities across the country are sharing their knowledge.

Research is important, whether it is informal or formal, and the sharing of information and best practice is crucial if we are to achieve quick results in both adapting and mitigating climate change.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I draw members’ attention to my entry in the register of members’ interests in relation to my membership of the Institute of Advanced Motorists.

On objective B3-12, on “Improving driver skills”, is the minister aware that driving 10mph slower delivers 10 per cent cash savings and 10 per cent emissions savings for only a 2 to 3 per cent average speed reduction on journeys? Will the minister commission work to identify how we might develop a response to that in a Scottish context?

Paul Wheelhouse: I know that Stewart Stevenson has a long-standing, close interest in the issue. Yes, reducing speed will have a benefit in reducing emissions through fuel-efficient driving. We are enabling people to become responsible drivers, reducing emissions, not just through speed control but through other measures such as gear selection to drive more efficiently.

We have funded the Energy Saving Trust to provide 2,000 FuelGood sessions this year. We are also continuing to examine demand to ensure that we can support as many drivers as possible.

On the specific issue about whether to commission work, I will have a discussion with

Keith Brown on the matter, as it cuts across his portfolio interests. I promise to raise the issue with Mr Brown to see whether there is any possibility of examining what the impact could be on our climate emission targets.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): Will the minister publish the number of houses that have benefited from energy efficiency and renewables installations year by year and by local authority, so that we can monitor that key ambition of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 in reducing emissions and eradicating fuel poverty? That would enable us to track progress and identify obstacles to progress.

Paul Wheelhouse: I recognise the importance of the issue that Sarah Boyack raises. I know that it is of close personal interest to her, and we have discussed it before. I am happy to have a discussion with colleagues about how we can produce that kind of information. Clearly, the issue is one of mitigation more than one of adaptation, although there is also an adaptation impact, so I see the relevance of it: we have more erratic weather and people will be exposed to poorer weather conditions, as we saw in 2010, when the weather unfortunately impacted on our achievement of targets.

I see the significance of the issue. I do not have an answer for the member today; I will need to discuss with my colleague Margaret Burgess what we might be able to do regarding the available data. However, I can tell the member that we are looking at publishing more information in line with the requests from parliamentary committees regarding how we are monitoring our progress against RPP2. I hope that that will help to inform that kind of understanding.

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): Extreme weather patterns that range from intense and sustained periods of wetness to lengthy very dry spells create difficulties for the agricultural sector in Scotland. What thought, if any, has been given to encouraging water storage projects on farmland to ensure that, when the heavens open, we bank the downfall for the far less rainy days to come, thereby protecting food production?

Paul Wheelhouse: That is the flip-side of an issue that we discuss on a regular basis—how we can use natural flood management to prevent flooding in communities. Opportunities exist to take such action. The areas for natural flood management that the recently published flood risk hazard maps identify could be used to store water for areas that will suffer erratic weather conditions, such as periodic drought. I would be happy to meet Mr Dey to find out what ideas he might have in that regard and whether there are any opportunities to consider such projects in Angus.

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): The minister mentioned the severe flooding around the River Nith in the south-west of my region back in January. I know that the farming community there has been badly affected. The minister will be aware of an application for funding support to construct flood defences, which is supported by Dumfries and Galloway Council. Can he provide an assurance that that request will be looked on favourably?

Paul Wheelhouse: We recognise that the situation that was faced in Dumfries and Galloway over the festive period was particularly stressful. I am sure that the announcement of additional funding for Dumfries and Galloway Council to address the damage that was done to flood defences in the area was welcomed by Jim Hume.

There is the longer-term issue of what we can do to help communities such as those in Dumfries and Galloway to adapt to climate change. That is why we are looking closely at options for further extending the flood warning systems in the area. In addition, we will look sympathetically at the bids that Dumfries and Galloway Council makes, but they must comply with the criteria that are set in partnership with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. Unfortunately, at the time of the recent process, Dumfries and Galloway Council's bid was not complete, so it could not be approved, but we will consider the needs of the community in Dumfries sympathetically.

Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): I would like to extend the previous question. One of the consequences of large amounts of water falling out of the sky is that, once they hit the ground, they come down pre-existing watercourses, which means that we know where the major floods will arise. Does the minister agree that one of the best steps that we could take would be to ensure that the capital is spent earlier rather than later? The risk is there, and the sooner we can mitigate it, the better. Therefore, large sums need to be—

The Presiding Officer: I think that we get the question.

Paul Wheelhouse: I recognise the point that is being made. In climate mitigation and climate adaptation, there is a very good argument to be made that early action helps to avoid higher costs in the longer term. That is why it is important that we maintain our commitment to providing £42 million a year through the local government capital settlement to support flood protection investment. I give Nigel Don an undertaking that that remains a high priority and that we will look to continue to make such strategic investment.

Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab): Following on from the point that Nigel Don made,

communities such as New Cumnock in Ayrshire know from bitter experience that investment in flood prevention and resilience is paramount. I understand that the nature of funding for flood defences is such that it is primarily dependent on local authorities and not central Government. We are aware—

The Presiding Officer: We need a question, Mr Pearson.

Graeme Pearson: We are aware that some local authorities have reported significant underfunding. What impact does the minister anticipate that that underfunding might have?

Paul Wheelhouse: I assure Mr Pearson that discussions are on-going with COSLA about how we can provide further funding to deal with flooding in the future.

I put on the record the fact that, in capital terms, we have provided the equivalent of about three times as much flood protection funding per property at risk as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has provided in England. We are putting in a high level of investment relative to the scale of risk that exists in Scotland, but I assure Mr Pearson that we are working closely with COSLA on how we can continue to allocate funding to deal with the issue in the future.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): Will a long-term approach to the management of surface water to ensure that sewer systems are resilient to climate change encourage the use of permeable landscaping and planning guidance, wherever appropriate, as well as the replacement of Victorian and other aged drainage and sewer systems that are no longer fit for purpose?

Paul Wheelhouse: The short answer is that we are sympathetic to that point. Mr Mackay will be happy to consider it. I understand the point that is being made. In some places, the concreting over of many gardens has contributed to the overloading of sewers. We will be happy to consider that issue for Alison Johnstone.

The Presiding Officer: I thank the minister and members for their co-operation; we have finished bang on time.

Immigration Policy (Higher Education)

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-10147, in the name of Humza Yousaf, on the impact of immigration policy on higher education in Scotland.

15:00

The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf): I am grateful for the opportunity to bring this important issue before Parliament. Higher education is one of Scotland's greatest and most valued assets. It has a key role in supporting and developing our country, our economy, our culture and our society. Many—if not most—of us have benefited from a great university education. I see on the Opposition front bench Neil Bibby and Kezia Dugdale and note that some of us, including me, have experience that is a little more recent than that of others, although I could not possibly comment on others around the chamber.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): That statement was a little ageist.

Humza Yousaf: There are mature students too, of course.

Many of us have enjoyed a great university experience. Last year, the British Council's report "A Strategic Analysis of the Scottish Higher Education Sector's Distinctive Assets" identified five key features of the Scottish higher education sector: a joined-up and collaborative sector; quality assurance and credit recognition procedures that are owned by all universities; graduate employability and employment; innovative structures; and research excellence. Today, we will discuss the negative impacts of the United Kingdom Government's immigration policies that we can already see on Scotland's higher education asset and we will discuss the opportunities that an independent Scotland would provide to address that threat to our institutions.

In November 2012, Professor Pete Downes, as convener of Universities Scotland, rightly praised the

"brilliant track record of excellence-driven growth in international recruitment"

of universities in Scotland and the UK. However, he warned:

"As I scan the policy horizon, it's hard to see a bigger risk, or a more poisonous gun pointed at our collective success."

That was his view of the rapid and negative changes to the UK's immigration system, which

make it increasingly difficult for international students to come to Scotland and the rest of the UK to study. Professor Downes was right then and, today, his concerns are still shared across the Scottish higher education sector and by the Scottish Government.

One month ago today, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning set out to the Education and Culture Committee what independence will mean for his portfolio and highlighted the real and urgent need to ensure that Scottish universities can continue to attract the brightest and best students and researchers. I am determined that we take a positive approach in establishing an immigration system that sustains and extends Scotland's "brilliant track record" and removes completely the threat of the "poisonous gun".

Scotland is a highly attractive destination for international students. Our higher education system is underpinned by world-class research, our tremendous breadth of learning, including internationalisation, and a focus on enhancing all aspects of graduate employability. Scottish education is known around the globe for its excellence—it has often been mentioned to me at the highest levels of Government in many of the countries that I have travelled to in my role. People know of our five world-class institutions that are in the top 200 in the world and, for our gross domestic product, Scotland's research is cited by other researchers around the world more than that of any other country.

The British Council highlighted last year that the overall learning satisfaction of international students in Scotland was better than that of those in the rest of the UK and in many of our European counterpart countries. I can tell members that we still have that. Just last week, the student academic experience survey of 15,000 students found that, of the four home nations, Scotland had the highest level of respondents who declared themselves to be fairly or very satisfied with the overall quality of their course—88 per cent. When we add to that Scotland's natural assets—its beauty, its friendly cities, its world-renowned festivals and its great infrastructure—it is clear that this country is a wonderful place in which to study and is a highly attractive destination for international students.

I am proud that Scotland has one of the highest proportions of international students in the world. In 2012-13, there were 28,305 international students at all levels in our universities, from more than 180 countries. However, beneath those figures, the negative impact of the UK Government's immigration policies is being seen and felt. The number of non-European Union enrolments—the figure takes into account the

numbers for all years of study—was 0.7 per cent lower than it was the previous year. However, that masks a worrying drop in new entrants from countries such as Pakistan and India, which are two countries that have traditionally sent high numbers of students to study in Scotland. Those students have enriched our lives here in Scotland over the decades.

In March 2011, the UK Government announced its intention to close the post-study work visa route in April 2012. In the two years since then, the number of new entrants to Scottish higher education institutions from India has decreased by 58 per cent, the number from Pakistan has decreased by 38 per cent and the number from Nigeria has fallen by 22 per cent.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Will the minister perhaps inform the chamber whether, since the changes to the visa rules were introduced, the number of students coming from non-EU countries to study at Scottish universities has gone up or down?

Humza Yousaf: As I said, the total enrolment has decreased by 0.7 per cent. The number of new entrants from India has decreased by 58 per cent, from Pakistan by 38 per cent and from Nigeria by 22 per cent.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): I can help the minister by telling him that the actual number of students from outside the EU has gone up every year since 2007-08. The figure went up by 11 per cent in the last year alone. Unfortunately, the number of international students from outside the EU going to college in Scotland has halved. Does he regret that colleges do not feature in today's debate?

Humza Yousaf: No—I will certainly speak about colleges as I continue my remarks. Colleges Scotland has provided a very good briefing on how colleges have also been impacted by the UK's policies. I saw its briefing before I came to the chamber and I will be happy to mention colleges as I go on.

Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Humza Yousaf: I will make some progress and will let my good friend in later on.

The figures demonstrate the real threat, but it is not just apparent in Scotland. The largest decrease in England was also in the number of first year entrants from India—the figure was down by 23 per cent in a single year.

Daniel Stevens, the National Union of Students' international officer, said:

"Many international students feel unwelcome in the UK as a result of the government's hostile and overzealous policies."

However, it is not just comparisons with other parts of the UK that concern us; we must also look at Scotland's position relative to our key competitors around the globe.

While the number of international students in Scottish higher education institutions has fallen between 2011-12 and 2012-13, the figures for our main competitors in the English-speaking university markets have increased, as there has been 0.4 per cent growth in Australia, 7 per cent growth in the United States and 11 per cent growth in Canada. According to Universities Scotland, the number of students from India going to Australia has increased by 70 per cent.

I strongly believe that the crucial difference between Scotland, with our falling numbers, and our competitors, with their strong growth, is the ability to set their own immigration policy that supports and enhances their higher education sector.

Hanzala Malik: I know that the minister went to India and Pakistan very recently. I understand that, on his return, the Scottish Government reduced its marketing budget for India and Pakistan by 50 per cent. Do you think that that has had an impact on the reduction in numbers?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Can members please remember to speak through the chair?

Humza Yousaf: I ask members to look at the progress that Scotland has made on international marketing. We are higher up the brand index than we have ever been before. Lonely Planet said in its 2014 guide that we were third behind Brazil and, I think, Antarctica. We are doing well. The fact that our budget has been reduced slightly is a direct effect of the cuts that we have received, but Scotland has still managed to do very well. However, it would be ridiculous to equate that with the overzealous and regressive immigration policies, which I know the member has concerns about, too.

The view from the sector is very much shared. Professor Anton Muscatelli wrote that

"the UK Government is trying its best to destroy a global brand ... There might not be quotas for overseas students in the UK, but the impact of the UK Government's anti-immigration rhetoric has had the same effect."

The Scottish Government shares that view. In the same article, the director of the migration observatory at the University of Oxford, Dr Scott Blinder, said:

"The Migration Observatory's public opinion research has shown that a large majority in Scotland would like

Holyrood rather than Westminster to make immigration policy for Scotland."

In April this year, Lord Krebs, the chair of the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee, said:

"The overwhelming evidence ... led us to conclude that changes to the immigration rules in this country have played a direct part in putting overseas students off from choosing the UK ... We are calling on the"

UK

"Government to overhaul its immigration policies—in particular it needs to do away with the new rules on working after study."

When I reflect on my student days, I think of the many friends from around the world that I still have to this day and who enriched my university experience. The "Richer for it" report, published by Universities Scotland in September, identifies a number of key qualitative benefits of the internationalisation of our higher education sector. However, perhaps even easier to quantify is the significant economic contribution that international students make. In 2012-13, Scottish higher education institutions received an overall income of £374 million from non-EU international students through their tuition fees, but those students also pay for accommodation and contribute to the Scottish economy in other ways, to the tune of around £441 million a year.

The longer-term impact of immigration policies on the economy is also important. Earlier this year, David Watt, the executive director of the Institute of Directors in Scotland said:

"We have an immigration policy that's largely led by the southeast of England and it's a significant problem for Scotland".

Further, over the weekend, even Theresa May, the Home Secretary, seemed to dismiss the arbitrary cap that the UK Government has placed on immigration, speaking about her desire to reduce immigration by "tens of thousands", not hundreds of thousands.

This Government rejects the negative rhetoric on immigration and welcomes the contribution that migrants make to our society, our economy and our culture. That is why, in "Scotland's Future", we set out our proposals for taking responsibility for our own immigration system, promising to introduce a controlled immigration system that meets our social, economic and cultural needs. An important part of that will be the reintroduction of the post-study work visa. That fresh talent visa was welcomed enthusiastically by us when it was introduced in 2004 by the previous Administration and was so popular that it was replicated by the rest of the UK. However, because of the crude cap that the present UK Government wished to impose, it removed the post-study work visa, in a

classic case of throwing the baby out with the bath water. International students in some of our universities tell me that they valued the post-study work visa.

Wherever I travel around the world, particularly in India and Pakistan, there is, if nothing else, a very negative perception that the UK is closing its borders. I am clear that the current UK approach on immigration is damaging Scotland's ability to compete in the international student market. Scotland is a welcoming place and is open for academic and research business. It is more than willing to enable those with talent to stay with us if they wish to build lives and careers here.

Student migration is positive for Scotland in economic, academic, social and cultural terms. With the levers that independence will afford us, we will be able to move away from the negative rhetoric of the UK Government and its restrictive immigration policies. We will also be in a stronger position to promote Scotland and her universities overseas, with a dedicated diplomatic and trade network.

We will ensure that the immigration policies that we introduce, including the post-study work visa, will allow Scotland to attract and retain world-class talent, contributing to our education system and the Scottish economy.

I move,

That the Parliament is proud that Scotland is an attractive destination for international students; recognises that a culturally diverse student and teaching body in Scottish higher education institutions enriches intellectual, social and cultural life; welcomes the valuable contribution that international students make to the Scottish economy; shares the serious concerns raised by university principals and vice-chancellors that current UK immigration policy is damaging to the higher education sector and to Scotland's international reputation; believes that Scotland must distance itself from the negative rhetoric of the UK Government and its restrictive immigration policies, and further believes that an immigration policy designed to meet Scotland's needs, including a post-study work visa scheme, is needed to meet Scotland's educational, social and economic ambitions.

15:13

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): The Labour Party always welcomes the chance to discuss how we can improve higher education in Scotland and we therefore welcome the debate this afternoon and the opportunity to examine the role that immigration plays in our higher education system.

On this side of the chamber, we recognise the important role that international students play, and we make clear our opposition to the coalition Government's approach to immigration, particularly with regard to higher education. We also stress our belief that the Scottish Government

could also be doing more to attract international students.

Much of the motion concerns the damaging effect of the Tory-led UK Government's immigration policies on universities. I do not disagree, but it would be extremely naive to think that only our universities are facing the challenge. I share the view of Mary Senior, of the University and College Union Scotland, who told the Education and Culture Committee:

"The UK Government's immigration policy is holding back not only universities in Scotland but universities right across the UK."—[*Official Report, Education and Culture Committee*, 25 March 2014; c 3857.]

The Labour Party acknowledges the huge contribution that immigrants have made to Scotland and the UK over many decades and the contribution that immigrants continue to make to our universities and colleges. I mention colleges deliberately, because the Scottish Government has again ignored further education in its motion.

The Colleges Scotland briefing for the debate highlights a significant drop in the number of foreign students at our colleges. Given that the Scottish Government has overseen a staggering cut of 140,000 in the number of students going to college in Scotland—from anywhere—that should not come as a surprise. The trend needs to be urgently addressed; the Scottish Government is responsible for that trend.

It is precisely because the Labour Party recognises the positive contribution that international students make to our education system and communities that First Minister Jack McConnell's Administration introduced the fresh talent initiative in 2004. Fresh talent was a bespoke programme, which was designed to address the biggest challenge that faced Scotland—a declining population. Central to the initiative was the plan to allow overseas graduates from Scottish universities who expressed an intention to live and work in Scotland to stay on for two years following the completion of their course, to seek employment.

It is important to recognise that the Scottish Executive was required to work to secure the powers to take such an approach in a devolved Parliament.

Humza Yousaf: Does the member agree that the current situation is unacceptable? A Scottish Administration can introduce a laudable initiative such as fresh talent only for the UK Government to withdraw it, against Scotland's interests. Does the member agree that it would be better to retain the power here, so that no other Parliament or Government could get rid of such policies?

Neil Bibby: It would surprise the minister a great deal if I agreed that we should become

independent and have our own immigration policy. I do not subscribe to that view.

The introduction of the fresh talent initiative shows that, despite what the Government says week in and week out, change is possible when there is the political will to achieve it. What is more, the fresh talent working in Scotland scheme, which was announced in February 2004, was operating by the following summer and covered students who graduated that year.

Labour members are proud that we took that approach in 2004. We are proud that we secured the agreements that were needed to make it happen as quickly as it did in 2005. In 2008, as the minister said, the scheme was taken over by a UK-wide scheme which looked to engage with immigrants in a positive way.

Our connection with the fresh talent initiative and commitment to encouraging international students to help Scotland to flourish is all the more reason to disagree with the changes that the coalition Government has made. However, our success in creating the fresh talent initiative shows that we can tackle the issue if we use the force of political will and creative policies.

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): I agree with the member on the importance of political will, but does he concede that an infinite amount of political will is of little assistance when there is no constitutional power to use it?

Neil Bibby: No, and I will give the reason for that—[*Interruption*—if members care to listen.

The First Minister was talking about the national health service in Wales today. Perhaps the Scottish Government should consider what lessons can be learned from Wales when it comes to attracting international students. In Wales, where Labour is in power, the proportion of international postgraduates is the largest in the UK, at 41 per cent—the proportion is 36 per cent in Scotland.

After the coalition Government ended the fresh talent initiative in 2010-11, many people expected to see a drop in overseas students coming to study here. However, the figures show that in the following year, 2011-12, the number of international students rose by 2 per cent, from 27,880 to 28,500. I accept that we need to look at the figures in detail, as the minister said, because the levels from different countries vary.

In doing so, we must acknowledge, as the Tory amendment does, that the student visa system has been open to abuse in some circumstances, so we need to look closely at temporary student visas for short courses to see whether they are being abused. Labour accepts that and I know that

it is in the Conservative amendment. I am sure that all parties would agree with that.

The SNP wants to use the debate to talk about the coalition Government's immigration policy as if it is a threat to the future of our higher education system. As proud as I am of Labour's delivery of the very system that has been rolled back, the numbers show that overseas students continue to come here to study. Indeed, the numbers continued to increase after the change to the system. So, although I disagree with the Con-Dem Government's policies, that is what the statistics show.

We fear that those policies could be damaging over time, but the reality is that independence is the biggest threat to higher education in Scotland. Just two weeks ago, I spoke in the debate on the life sciences and highlighted the benefits to Scotland of a single research system across the UK. The funding system gives a disproportionate level of research funding to our excellent universities. The facts speak for themselves. In 2012-13, Scottish higher education institutions secured £257 million of UK research council grants. That represents 13.1 per cent of the UK total, which is significantly more than our 8 per cent of UK gross domestic product and 8.4 per cent of the UK population. The reality is that the best way to keep being part of the UK research council funding is to keep being part of the UK.

It would also be remiss of me not to recognise the positive role that UK embassies have played in promoting our universities around the world. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office operates in more than 170 countries, which gives our universities a global presence and actively encourages people from all over the world to come to Scotland to study.

Humza Yousaf: While reflecting on the good work that is done by UK embassies, why does the member think that an independent Scotland's Scottish embassies, which would promote Scotland 365 days of the year, would be incapable of doing that job on a much better scale?

Neil Bibby: The UK embassies promote the UK and Scotland 365 days of the year. The fact is that they operate in 170 countries and I would welcome more details from the minister of how many embassies an independent Scotland would have. It is certainly not going to be the same number as the UK has at the moment.

We want to attract foreign students. We want to make it possible for people from overseas to come to Scotland to work, study and live. We want Scotland to be a welcoming and inclusive country, as I am sure everyone in the chamber does. That is why we believe that it is counterintuitive for the Scottish Government to want to discriminate

against English, Welsh and Northern Irish students if Scotland were to become independent. Not only is the white paper policy of charging students from the rest of the UK tuition fees while not charging other EU students illegal under EU law, the reality is that independence would mean that our higher education funding would be left with a massive black hole of at least £150 million as a result. Where will the money come from to fill that gap?

Our ambition is for an open, welcoming, and tolerant Scotland that does not discriminate on the ground of nationality. I note that the minister did not refer to that part of our amendment.

Dr Allan: I thank the member for giving way again. The member used the phrase “discriminate on the ground of nationality”. He will, of course, be aware that Belgium and Austria have made similar arguments to those that are being advanced by the Scottish Government on objective justification for discrimination when it comes to students from other parts of the EU, on the ground of not nationality but residency.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Neil Bibby, I can give you around another minute to come to a conclusion.

Neil Bibby: On the arguments around residency, I refer the minister to the recent Scottish Parliament information centre briefing on tuition fees in the rest of the UK and the Universities Scotland legal advice that the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning likes to quote that says that, if any objective justification could be successfully argued—and there are major doubts about that—the residency requirement would need to be applied to all students and not just those who are resident in other parts of the UK. Essentially, that means that what is said in the white paper is inaccurate.

If we are to achieve our ambitions for higher education, we must face up to the challenges that currently exist within the sector. We have the highest drop-out rate, the worst retention rate and damningly low levels of student support. Scottish students are being let down by the Scottish Government. Although we recognise that the issue of student visas needs to be addressed by the UK Government, I urge the Scottish Government to address the important issues for which it is responsible in higher and further education.

We want to have a system of higher and further education in Scotland that is outward looking and meets the needs of our students. We recognise the difficulties faced by our universities across the UK as a result of the coalition Government’s policy, but we also know that something can be done about it here and now. The stakes for higher education institutions, their staff and their students are high. We hope that the UK Government and

the Scottish Government will work together, as Labour did in government, to address the issues that our students face.

I move amendment S4M-10147.3, to leave out from second “that Scotland” to end and insert:

“in a modern, welcoming and inclusive Scotland where the diversity of its many cultures is celebrated; recognises the success of Labour’s Fresh Talent initiative, which encouraged foreign nationals to work, study and thereafter stay in Scotland; believes that independence would threaten higher education in Scotland through its impact on research council funding and the ability to promote Scotland’s universities on a global stage through the UK’s network of embassies and consulates, and also believes that there would be significant legal and financial consequences of the Scottish Government’s intention to discriminate against students from the rest of the UK in the event of independence.”

15:25

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am grateful to the minister for bringing this debate to Parliament. It is important to debate this topic, which is controversial. Just like with yesterday’s debate on childcare, it is important to debate this topic in the context of what is right—in this case for our higher education institutions—rather than just in the context of the referendum debate.

Notwithstanding the past and current ability of the sector to attract international students in what is an increasingly competitive international market, one cannot fail to listen to the warning from university principals and Universities Scotland—and indeed Universities UK—who have deep-seated concerns about some aspects of Westminster policy that they see as unnecessarily restrictive.

If the cabinet secretary was here, he would know, from two public debates that we have had on this issue in recent times—one was on the BBC and the other was at the University of Dundee, in the presence of Peter Downes—that I agree with some of the concerns, which I made plain to Theresa May and David Willetts on separate occasions back in 2012.

In particular, I think that our universities are absolutely right to be concerned about the lack of flexibility in the timescales for the award of visas and, just as important, the lack of transparency when it comes to visa refusals, most especially for PhD research staff contracts that run beyond 18 months. Indeed, those two issues have been central to the concerns of many of the universities in Scotland, given that they leave doubt in the minds of students and staff about post-study work arrangements and can hinder future planning and investment. I heard those concerns for myself probably most forcefully in the Aberdeen medical school, and they have also featured at meetings of

the cross-party group on colleges and universities in the Parliament.

There is a real issue, and I hope that it is not too late for the Home Secretary to pay attention to the extent of the concern, including that raised in six Westminster committees, that international students should not be included in the UK Government's net migration targets. It is simply not acceptable that restrictions mean that our post-study work arrangements, or what are called tier 1 arrangements, are not on the same competitive basis as countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. I personally believe that Universities Scotland makes a very strong case for extending the length of time that international graduates are given to get a job—not indefinitely, which would not be acceptable, but certainly by at least a year.

That said, it is important to set this whole debate in context and to dispel some of the myths that have crept into it. Those myths have come not just from political parties; there has been a lot of misunderstanding about the issues. Neil Bibby was quite right to say that this debate has its foundation in a debate about colleges. The UK coalition Government took action because the number of bogus students who were entering further and higher education created considerable difficulties. It was not just a case of bogus students; as we all know, there were some bogus colleges as well.

For me, immigration policy needs to be balanced. It needs to be wholly welcoming to those who can make a substantial economic, social and cultural contribution to their institutions, just as the minister has outlined, and to their wider community, but it should be punitive towards those who merely wish to take advantage of it for their own ends. There is no question but that that was the case four or five years ago.

If last week's European elections told us anything, they demonstrated how careful politicians have to be when it comes to handling the whole issue of immigration and the rhetoric that accompanies it.

Humza Yousaf: I welcome the member's comments thus far. The point that she makes is fundamental: we have to challenge the negative rhetoric that often comes with discussion of immigration, which is a very sensitive issue. We saw that in the European elections, which she talked about. Up here in Scotland, this Government has been unashamed in challenging that rhetoric and therefore we won the European elections, with the United Kingdom Independence Party in fourth place. Other parties pandered to that rhetoric and substantially got beaten in the European elections. Does the member not think

that it is time to challenge that rhetoric as opposed to conforming to it?

Liz Smith: I am sorry, but I do not accept that analysis.

Mary Scanlon: It is quite untrue.

Liz Smith: Indeed, it is untrue. Where I agree with the minister is that we have to be very sensitive about the issue of immigration and the rhetoric that goes with it.

I am pointing out that the reason why, in developing immigration policy, the Westminster Government has had to make significant cuts and changes is that there was an influx of bogus students between 2008 and 2009. That is the central issue here. That is why the policy was put in place by the UK Government. Such an influx is not acceptable to any of our institutions, nor, I believe, to any of our political parties. It is not good for our higher and further education institutions if those bogus students are able to take advantage of student visas, because that is a disadvantage to other students.

The fresh talent initiative was an important Scottish innovation that ought to be brought back. The doctorate extension scheme that has been introduced is a good thing. The graduate entrepreneur route into PhD thresholds ought to be brought back.

Let us be absolutely clear about this, though. The problems that we have must be set in context because, otherwise, we will end up in considerable difficulty. It is not helpful to say that everything about immigration policy and coalition Government politics is bad for our universities. That is completely untrue.

I move amendment S4M-10147.1, to leave out from "shares" to end and insert:

"sympathises with the concerns expressed by university principals and vice-chancellors regarding the lack of sufficient flexibility in the student visa system, but believes that UK immigration policy must be placed in context; recognises that, under the previous Labour administration, the student visa system was routinely abused and that measures had to be taken to address this; understands that a balance needs to be struck between welcoming international students and maintaining public confidence in the immigration system, and calls on the UK Government to continue to engage with Scottish universities so that their concerns are addressed as quickly as possible."

15:31

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I thank the minister for bringing the debate to Parliament. I start, as others have done, by acknowledging the impressive track record of our universities in attracting students from all over the world. In what is, by any measure, a highly competitive environment, that record of success is no

coincidence and reflects the high quality of the learning, research and overall student experience for which our universities are rightly renowned.

In return, as Universities Scotland reminds us in its briefing, those international students contribute an estimated £800 million in fees and wider expenditure in our economy. More than that, they provide a cultural and social infusion to our universities that undoubtedly broadens, deepens and enriches the learning experience for Scotland-domiciled students.

This issue matters, therefore, and it matters that we find ways that enable our universities to deliver greater success in future against the backdrop of increased competition from a host of other countries. On that, there will be unanimity throughout the chamber. I assure the minister that he will find no disagreement from me—just as he did not from Liz Smith, who made an excellent speech—that aspects of current UK immigration policy and the way in which the debate around immigration is framed at times are acting as an obstacle to achieving that objective.

My amendment quotes my colleague Vince Cable, the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, who has been particularly critical, as have I, about the inclusion of students in the net migration figures. Given the wider policy on net migration, that has the potential to send conflicting signals and inhibit the development of sensible policy on higher education.

However, we should also be clear—and here the minister and the education secretary need to take care that they are not part of the problem—that there is no cap on genuine students coming to Scotland or the rest of the UK from outwith the European Union: none at all. That is why, when Universities Scotland talks about the risks associated with the

“perception of UK government policy”,

that should give Mr Russell and Mr Yousaf pause for thought that, in their eagerness to demonise all things UK, they could be accused of contributing to those very same risks.

By way of example, Mr Russell's assertions at the Education and Culture Committee recently that international student numbers at Scottish universities have gone down since visa rules changed back in 2010 were wrong. The numbers have gone up, albeit not as much as one would have hoped, and with a worrying drop—as the minister rightly pointed out—from key countries such as Pakistan and India.

However, that is an illustration of the dangers of Mr Russell's approach, as well as further evidence of a somewhat cavalier attitude when it comes to knowing whether figures are going up or down.

Humza Yousaf: I regret what Liam McArthur has to say on the issues. When questioned on the matter in India, I put right some of those misconceptions. He can read about that in *The Times of India*.

Does the member agree not with us but with Professor Anton Muscatelli, who said that the UK Government is

“trying its best to destroy a global brand”.

There might not be quotas for overseas students, but the impact of the UK Government's anti-immigration rhetoric has had the same affect.

Liam McArthur: I have just set out the evidence to the contrary. To an extent, although I understand the concerns of Anton Muscatelli and others in the sector, we need to be careful with the language that we use. That said, I agree that changes to policy, presentation and perception are in the interests of higher education across the UK, including here in Scotland. That is also reflected in Liz Smith's amendment, not least in relation to the need for greater flexibility in the student visa system.

The Liberal Democrats helped to secure improvements just over a year ago that enabled an extension to post-study work, but we need to go further and recognise that countries such as Australia, the United States and Canada have upped their offer and increased their attractiveness to international students as a result.

I will continue to argue the case for change—change that enjoys cross-party support, as Universities Scotland acknowledges. As ever, where the consensus falls apart is over the nationalists' insistence that it is only by breaking up the UK that the situation can be improved. Not only is that untrue, it offers a potentially toxic remedy, as Neil Bibby's amendment rightly identifies. For example, leaving the UK would put at risk our ability to access critical research funding. Scottish universities punch well above their weight in UK research council allocations and funding from major UK charities and trusts.

Professor Paul Boyle of Research Councils UK has told this Parliament that there is “no international precedent” for this scale of research collaboration across borders.

Humza Yousaf: Will the member take an intervention?

Liam McArthur: Not at the moment.

While no one is questioning that Scottish universities attract a proportionately higher share of funding based on the excellence of their research, it is naive to pretend that those arrangements would simply continue unaffected were Scotland to leave the UK. I suspect that the

SNP knows that—why else would it feel the need to misrepresent the views of Professor Boyle in the way that it has?

Humza Yousaf: The member must give way on that point.

Liam McArthur: I will give way to the minister.

Humza Yousaf: Liam McArthur said that the SNP is misrepresenting Professor Boyle's views. What Professor Boyle said is clear. I do not know whether the member has had a chance to read what he said. He said:

"We strongly support Scotland retaining its position in a single research ecosystem ... We would like to see a single research system continue whether there is a yes vote for independence or not."—[*Official Report, Education and Culture Committee*, 25 March 2014; c 3891, 92]

How have we possibly misrepresented his views?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will give back that time to Liam McArthur.

Liam McArthur: Thank you very much, Presiding Officer. I am sure that Professor Boyle would say that, as would we all. However, I think that he went on to say that there is "no international precedent" for such collaboration across borders, so it is naive to assume that that would simply take place.

Restricting the access of our universities to the vast network of UK embassies, consulates and overseas trade support would also do nothing to enhance the ability of our HE sector to compete for students in this highly competitive environment.

As for nationalist claims that students from elsewhere in the UK would continue to be charged tuition fees for studying in Scotland, the European Commission has made it quite clear that such discrimination would be illegal under European Union law, saddling Scottish ministers with a bill of around £150 million. There is even evidence that the appeal of our universities to international students could be diminished by our not being part of the United Kingdom.

Last week, Roderick Campbell raised concerns that were highlighted in a recent survey of international students about independence, but Mr Russell chose to entirely ignore his question—presumably on the basis that such impertinence from Government party back benchers is not worthy of a response. Mr Campbell should have received the answer that the concerns that he raised are valid and underscore the importance of retaining what the authors of the survey called "brand UK".

Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Liam McArthur: I am afraid that I will not.

That, as I have accepted, is not an argument for the status quo. We need a change in the rhetoric and a more consistently positive and welcoming message. In that context, I agree with Universities Scotland that the Prime Minister's statements in India recently were helpful. More of that is needed.

On policy, while stability is desirable, again we need to see further movement. Students should be taken out of net migration figures and improvements to post-study work opportunities should be provided. The previous fresh talent initiative shows what can be done and we could do worse than look once again at that model.

I recognise the economic, social and cultural benefits that we gain from our universities' ability to attract large numbers of international students. Likewise, I understand and accept the sector's concerns about how their efforts to do more in that area are being constrained. I will continue to do what I can, on a cross-party basis, to help deliver the changes that we need to see. However, the SNP needs to accept that independence is not the answer to every question or the solution to every problem. In this case, the medicine that the SNP is prescribing is simply a poison pill.

I move amendment S4M-10147.2, to leave out from "shares" to end and insert:

"notes the comments of the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, who has made the case for international students studying in the UK; notes in particular his view that declining international student numbers being seen as a triumph for immigration control is 'absurd' and 'seriously distorting the debate on sensible university policy'; recognises that there is no cap on the number of overseas students able to study in the UK and that the UK Government has no intention of introducing one; welcomes the concessions secured by the Liberal Democrats to the UK Immigration Bill to ensure that the UK still attracts skilled and talented people who want to study or work hard and contribute to economic growth and wider society, and welcomes the positive statements that have been made by the UK Government about the value of international students."

15:39

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate, which is an opportunity to recognise the vital contribution that international students make to higher education, research excellence, the wider economy and the cultural diversity of Scotland. Scottish universities have an excellent track record of attracting international students and have a teaching and research offer that allows them to compete successfully in a fiercely competitive global recruitment environment.

Scotland derives huge social, economic and cultural benefit from the 28,500 international students who study in our 19 universities and higher education institutions. Universities Scotland

estimates the economic impact of international students in Scotland to be £337 million every year in fees and £441 million in off-campus expenditure.

As the MSP for Edinburgh Southern, I am incredibly privileged to represent not one but two of Edinburgh's world-class universities: the University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh Napier University, both of which have campuses in my constituency. More than 30 per cent of Edinburgh Napier University's student population is international and the University of Edinburgh has perhaps the largest total cohort of international students in Scotland. According to the University of Edinburgh's annual review of 2012-13, 12 per cent of its students are domiciled in the EU, excluding the UK, and 27 per cent are internationally domiciled, excluding the EU.

One of the strengths of the higher education sector in Scotland, which contributes to Scotland having some of the world's top-ranking universities, is its ability to attract and retain some of the finest academics and researchers from around the world.

Scotland performs very well in foreign direct investment, leading the way in the UK on projects and jobs created outside London. Our universities are among the key pull factors that contribute to Scotland's attractiveness to investors. Their key outputs of skills and research are cited by almost half of companies as a key reason for their investment in Scotland.

As the MSP for two universities, I will highlight the effect of UK immigration policy on higher education in Scotland. The university sector in Scotland speaks with one clear voice that the UK's regressive policy on student immigration and its obsession with lowering immigration from outside the EU presents a real and immediate threat to the entire higher education sector in Scotland. It is encouraging that, on that point, there appears to be consensus across the Parliament.

Universities Scotland makes the point forcefully:

"The UK's visa regime is now significantly more restrictive than that applied by a range of competitor nations who are vigorously seeking to attract talented learners from around the world. This places the UK, including Scotland, at a competitive disadvantage."

Key competitors, such as the United States, Canada and Australia, have continued to expand their international student numbers, as Liam McArthur acknowledged. Between 2011-12 and 2012-13, international student numbers in three other key English-speaking university markets increased, with 0.4 per cent growth in Australia, 7 per cent growth in the United States and 11 per cent growth in Canada.

The fact is that the number of first-year international students studying at Scottish universities has fallen significantly. According to the UK Higher Education Statistics Authority, applications from India fell by 58 per cent, those from Pakistan fell by 38 per cent and those from Nigeria fell by 22 per cent. That fall in admissions from some of the most important emerging economies in the world not only places a stranglehold on a valuable revenue stream for Scottish universities but threatens to damage Scotland's well-deserved and hard-earned international reputation.

It is ironic that a recent Universities UK survey of international student recruitment offices in higher education institutions throughout the UK found that only 30 per cent of Scottish institutions were meeting their own targets for international student recruitment. That demonstrates that the capacity exists within institutions to recruit higher numbers of international students but the current policy environment does not support that ambition.

The Scottish Government's white paper pledges to take a different approach to immigration from that of the Westminster Government. The Scottish Government quite rightly sees immigration as an aid to healthy population growth in Scotland.

Unlike those on the far right of politics, I do not believe that Scotland is full. Our immigration policy and our attitude towards international students should reflect our values as a welcoming and inclusive modern country.

Reflecting on the UK's policy of curbing the entry of international students, Professor Anton Muscatelli, the principal of the University of Glasgow, stated:

"It's a message that says 'don't come here, we're closed for business, closed for education' ... It's exactly the opposite message that a number of other countries are sending, including the US, Canada and Australia. I don't think we should be there as a country."

Given the positive benefits to Scotland's economy, culture and society from international students, the impact that our universities make across the world and Scotland's reputation as a country that welcomes with an open mind and open arms those from overseas, I cannot but agree wholeheartedly with Professor Muscatelli.

15:45

Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I thank the Scottish Government for bringing forward this debate on an issue that is rightly at the forefront of minds across the chamber.

I would also like to make the minister aware that, like my Labour colleagues, I have a degree, but I gained it as a mum who was working full time. I went to Napier College, which became a

university while I was there. I am very grateful for the opportunities that I got at the college, and I probably would not be here today if I had not got that chance in life and the chance to work really hard.

In that sense, it makes me even more disappointed that only higher education is mentioned in the motion. I think that that flags up a little bit of the SNP attitude toward Scotland's colleges that has delivered unprecedented cuts in college budgets and therefore to opportunities for progression for people like me, particularly those who are returning to the workforce, upskilling or from traditionally marginalised groups. As my colleague Neil Bibby has outlined, the current decisions made by Governments in both Holyrood and Westminster have resulted in drastically fewer foreign students attending our colleges, which has a numerical and financial impact on them that is much greater than that on our elite universities.

With the caveat that I think that we should be talking about much more than just higher education in the debate, I will speak to several interrelated points for the rest of my time.

The first point is that I share the Scottish Government's concerns about the impact of the current Conservative immigration policy. In particular, I am concerned about including students within the blanket immigration cap. That policy treats all legal immigration in the same way—as something bad for Britain that should be reduced—and that is wrong. I and the Labour Party strongly believe that it is deeply damaging to the UK's diversity and economy that the number of fee-paying overseas students has fallen at a time when the international market for universities in comparable countries is growing. That is why university students should be removed entirely from the net migration target.

Secondly, I want to emphasise that, as always, changing the constitution is not the way to solve those problems. In this area of trying to achieve social justice, erecting a border is not the place to start or end. The solution is to elect a Government for the whole UK that is committed to exempting university students from any net migration target and creating a managed system that is in Britain's interests. It just so happens that we have a political party that can do that in 2015. We do not need independence to implement positive policies that make allowances for Scotland's differences while allowing us to remain part of a strong partnership in research and teaching.

In the past, we have created schemes in which we have co-operated, rather than simply take pointed stances against the UK Government. Indeed, the Government's motion states that

“a post-study work visa scheme ... is needed to meet Scotland's educational, social and economic ambitions.”

I could not agree more that such a programme can work, but where I differ from the Government is that I know that such a system can work under devolution because we saw one implemented in Scotland in 2005—the fresh talent initiative—following the kind of co-operation between the UK and Scottish Governments that I have been talking about. The fresh talent scheme was continued until 2008, when it became such a success that it was rolled out across the entire UK. Sadly, however, it was withdrawn by the Conservatives in 2012.

When we have Governments that are willing to engage with each other and co-operate, we can ensure, as we emphasised in our devolution commission, that we properly account for distinct Scottish needs. We see in other countries, too, allowances being made for different areas within them—for example, there are such systems in Australia and Canada. In our devolution commission report, we identified that there are some barriers to setting up such schemes but that we ultimately believe that reasoned and agreed variations between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom are justifiable and workable. The fresh talent scheme has shown us that the way forward is through co-operation. It is up to the Scottish Government to show that it is willing to agree.

My third point is one that the SNP should reflect on, as it is crucial to its proposed immigration and higher education policy. All the discussion in the debate has focused on international migration, but the Scottish Government's proposals on the international and EU fee situation post-independence have been particularly doubted by many.

I find it shocking that a Government that paints itself as open, egalitarian and wishing to co-operate with the rest of the UK post-separation is happy to discriminate against those from one specific other state. Our nation's most respected academics, including the chair of European Union law at the University of Edinburgh, have lined up to criticise the white paper's failure

“to unpack the layered system of derogation and justification”.

The legal test is not simply an attempt to show objective justification as some SNP members would have us believe. Rather, the newly independent Government would have to show that its policy was not directly discriminatory. Direct discrimination simply cannot be justified by any objective justification; it is a much narrower set of derogations that are allowed.

The Scottish Government has not even attempted to engage in debate on what derogations it may seek following independence, and because the residence requirements that are outlined target only those from England, Wales and Northern Ireland, it seems that even the objective justifications that Mr Russell has outlined in the past rest on a shooegly peg. The European Court has only once accepted—in the case of Bressol and others—that a member state may limit access to university courses, and even then it was in specific circumstances that related to public health, and not on cost grounds. The idea that blanket treatment for residents of a single member state would be found proportionate is frankly a little far-fetched, and it is unfair for the Government not to face up to that major challenge before September.

15:51

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): I always welcome the opportunity to debate the Scottish Government's record on higher education and the valued contribution of international students. I say at this point that I do not have a degree, but I still value what higher education can give to our communities. In towns and cities throughout Scotland, international students are making a difference not just economically but also as part of our society.

I always get a difficult time in here because people say that I talk as if all roads lead to Paisley, but it is what I know and what I have experienced over the years. The University of the West of Scotland in Paisley does well when it comes to international students, and we have managed to retain quite a few of them over the years. Every single year, Renfrewshire Council sponsors a get-together and ceilidh in order to welcome them and encourage them to enjoy the town. Most of the time, those events are alcohol free. We could possibly all learn from that, given how much they enjoy the event as they get involved in Scotland's culture.

Those students come over here because of our establishments and the experience that they can get. One thing that was mentioned earlier is what they give to Scotland. Well, there is about £441 million of off-campus expenditure. In my constituency, the university makes a massive contribution to the town. A couple of years ago, the international students were outside the town. Now, they have a campus in the centre of the town and they can stay there as well. That has made a difference. It was designed in order to make sure that we could get people to stay within the town. When we are encouraging students to come here from abroad, it is important that we are welcoming so that they want to be part of the community.

I would like to comment on some of the things that have been said during the debate. The SNP was extremely supportive when the previous Scottish Executive put forward the fresh talent initiative, which it thought was the way forward. The initiative was then adopted by the Westminster Government; it was slightly adapted—some would say that it was watered down—but it was adopted. However, the problem is that it was taken away by another Westminster Government.

I said yesterday that we constantly hear the argument in Scotland that one more push for a Labour Administration will make everything different. Labour members accuse us of saying that independence will be the answer to everything. Well, I am accusing them of saying that another Labour Government will make everything better. That clearly does not happen: every single time Labour has had opportunities, it has ended up with the same Westminster compass going back and forward between the two big parties. Our idea and our belief is that we can try to make things different. We can take the great talent and abilities of the students who come here from all over the world and say that Scotland is open for business and that we want to be part of the global economic world.

When the Education and Culture Committee took evidence on this issue, most academics said that the academic world sees no boundaries. Academics work with each other all the time, which is very important for research. I was there when Professor Peter Boyle said:

"We strongly support Scotland retaining its position in a single research ecosystem ... We would like to see a single research system continue whether there is a yes vote for independence or not."—[*Official Report, Education and Culture Committee*, 25 March 2014; c 3981, 3892.]

That makes sense; that is being sensible. The excellence of our universities' research will not become non-excellent overnight—to use an almost Bill and Ted reference. We will still retain the same level of excellence. No one will stop coming to our academics' doors and asking them to be involved in research. That is obvious and simple.

I say this lightly, because I think that we can find a way to work together on this, but again we have just had more scare tactics and negativity. We are saying that independence will give us the opportunity to be part of the world, move things forward and take full control over this issue.

Liz Smith: Will the member give way?

George Adam: Yes, I will.

Liz Smith: I thank the member for taking an intervention. There are no scare tactics—*[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Liz Smith: I am asking how the funding of academic research under a subscription system in an independent Scotland would exceed that of the research funding that there is under the current system.

George Adam: Negotiations are negotiations, and things would be sorted out during the negotiation period. Negotiation was a quite important part of a position that I held in a former life, and I am pretty sure that things could be sorted out eventually.

Some members say that we are discriminating against UK students when we talk about objective justification, but that is complete nonsense. As certain members were told quite bluntly, the issue is about residency, not about discrimination.

Neil Bibby: Will the member take an intervention?

George Adam: This should be fun.

Neil Bibby: Will George Adam confirm that the SNP policy, if it is not about discriminating on the grounds of nationality, is about discriminating on the grounds of residency?

George Adam: An objective justification is exactly what the argument is. Mr Bibby makes a demolition of his own argument when he talks about these things.

We have to look at the situation and we have to look at a mature way of taking this forward. The only way that I see that we can do that is by Scotland having independence and full control. I do not believe that the non-stop Labour-Tory situation down south will do any better for us.

15:57

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): The topic of immigration preoccupied most of the UK during the European elections. With the wall to wall media coverage of the UK Independence Party, we in Scotland have been subjected to a tirade of one-subject campaigning. All that completely distorts the reality here.

Only since 2003 has the number of people coming to Scotland consistently exceeded the number of those leaving, and it will take us quite a while to make up the deficit. Natural population growth has not helped to make up for the loss of people to emigration.

Interestingly, England's position is diametrically opposed. Although we added an average of just 2,667 people a year during the past three decades, net migration into—mostly—England

was 2.92 million in just one decade between 2001 and 2011.

We need people, especially young people, to come here and make a positive contribution to our culture, our economy and our communities. Without immigration we are going to find it hard, if not impossible, to sustain a workforce large enough to help to pay the pensions of those retiring. Some of us here may be a bit closer to retiring than others.

However, Westminster seems utterly determined to restrict the number of people coming to the UK in any way that it can. The UK has dumped tier 1 post-study work visas and replaced them with graduate entrepreneur visas, which have been capped at 1,000 students and made it increasingly difficult for non-EU citizens to work here.

Many of those students take courses in modern business methods, including MBA degrees, but rather than offering them an easy opportunity to start their careers in Scotland we are sending them straight back into the arms of our competitors abroad. It is a crazy policy that is driven by a perceived problem that does not even apply in Scotland.

Of course, as we know, immigration policy is reserved. If the Home Office wants to festoon Scottish buses or visa offices with advertisements telling people to go home, there is absolutely nothing we can do about it. If any Westminster Government wants to take back or stop any policy it has implemented, it can do so at any time. That is the point of this whole debate: we can develop new and appropriately designed policies only with the leverage that comes with independence; without that independence, we cannot stop the Tory Westminster Government taking away the fresh talent initiative, capping student visas or anything else. This is yet another example—a big and crucial example—of how we are definitely not better together.

At an economic level, evidence in the Institute for Fiscal Studies report—it is in chapter 4—has established that a Scottish migration system could improve our fiscal balance by £1.6 billion a year. Just last month, the principal of the University of Glasgow—we have heard a lot about him today—criticised Westminster's approach to migration legislation, saying that the universities' links across the world were under threat. He pointed out that

"you begin to see how people have perceived what the UK has been doing in the immigration space so negatively",

and he suggested that it was like putting up a sign saying "Closed for business" or "Closed for education—don't come here".

Those are strong and powerful words from the principal of the University of Glasgow, an institution with a centuries-long tradition of providing education. We know that in Scotland we punch well above our weight with regard to equality and the ambition of our further and higher education institutions. As for research grants, I must point out that they are based on merit, not geography. Can we just get rid of that red herring here and now?

Scotland has been an educational leader since the early part of the 15th century, and it is home to some of the world's oldest and most prestigious universities as well as some of the finest specialist vocational and modern institutions. Highly educated working-age graduates who are likely to be keenly ambitious generate more taxes, and they will settle and have their children in this country and contribute greatly in many ways—not just financially—to it.

Each year, Scotland attracts more than 40,000 students from across the world. During their studies, they are net contributors to the economy—indeed, they contribute £779 million annually—but most are compelled to return home once they graduate because of a daft short-sighted policy that ensures that their brains do not get used. In an independent Scotland, we could create incentives to encourage these young people to establish themselves in Scotland. By having an international mix of identities, we would, as a nation, benefit not only economically but across the cultural and social spectrum.

Westminster is damaging our economy. Both Universities Scotland and the University and College Union Scotland have criticised its draconian approach to immigration and student visas. It makes no sense to train experienced, gifted graduates in Scotland only to force them to leave as soon as they have qualified.

I will finish on this point: the can't-do attitude of the better together parties in the chamber today epitomises the very reason why we need independence. We need to be able to maintain Scotland's can-do attitude.

16:03

Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP): Today's debate on the impact of immigration policy on higher education in Scotland is very timely. In recent years, the UK Government's approach to immigration policy has become illogical and damaging to different aspects of society, particularly our higher education sector. In a bid to appease the Tory rebels on their back benches and in the vain hope of scuttling the rise of UKIP in England, David Cameron and Theresa May have pursued a politically motivated

immigration policy instead of one that is functional and addresses the needs of the UK's constituent parts.

That policy has manifested itself in a desire to cut overall migrant numbers. Indeed, the ability to cut migrant numbers, regardless of the impact on business or education, is now the self-defined measure of success for the UK Government's immigration policy. The UK Government knows that it cannot cut numbers from the EU to meet those targets, so it is imposing increasingly strict immigration criteria on non-EU citizens who wish to come here, including many of the students who would like to study at Scotland's world-leading universities and colleges.

The decision to impose further restrictions on non-EU migrants as a perceived solution to EU migration epitomises the UK Government's increasingly nonsensical and dysfunctional approach to immigration policy. As a result, the number of students coming from India to Scotland has fallen by 58 per cent, while the number of students moving from India to Australia has increased by 70 per cent. Other English-speaking countries such as the United States and Canada have also enjoyed healthy increases in international student numbers. Scotland is now lagging behind, with non-EU student numbers decreasing.

The impact of the UK Government's policies has not gone unnoticed. Indeed, those policies have been doggedly pursued in spite of the criticism of industry specialists. In 2013, the High Court ruled that UK visa rules were "unjustified" and "disproportionate", infringing on the rights of both British citizens and those wishing to come here.

In recent evidence to the European and External Relations Committee, Professor Wright of the University of Strathclyde called the current UK Government policies on international students "a disaster", which made us "less competitive".

The principal of the University of Glasgow, Professor Anton Muscatelli, is of a similar view, stating that UK Government immigration rules are damaging to the higher education sector in Scotland and that they create an international perception that students are not welcome here.

The UK Government bluntly reinforced that point with its high-profile "Go home" poster campaign, which was subsequently withdrawn after the Advertising Standards Authority ruled that the campaign was predicated on misleading and inaccurate statistics.

Professor Muscatelli continued by saying that the message that we are "closed for education" is

"exactly the opposite message that a number of other countries are sending, including the US, Canada and Australia. I don't think we should be there as a country."

Ultimately, however, Scotland has no say over the matter.

Scotland attracts 40,000 students from 180 countries every year—students who contribute more than £779 million to the economy annually. The benefits of international students are not simply quantifiable in monetary terms. Foreign students develop an international outlook among our own home-grown students, and they enrich the learning experience for everyone in the education sector.

NUS Scotland's evidence to the Education and Culture Committee succinctly stated the case by saying:

"immigration, including that for the purposes of study, provides huge benefits to Scotland and the UK, and should be wholly encouraged."

It is difficult to understand why we should allow the benefits of migration to be threatened by the politically motivated immigration policy being imposed by Westminster. Scotland can, should and must choose a different path, and a yes vote in September will ensure that we have a sensible, measured and proportionate immigration policy, as outlined in the Scottish Government's white paper on independence.

Studies undertaken by the migration observatory at the University of Oxford found that a majority of people would prefer immigration decisions to be taken by Holyrood, rather than at Westminster. The study also found that there was public sympathy for the Scottish Government's position of encouraging international students to study here.

One measure that we could immediately reintroduce with independence is the post-study work visa. The UK Government made a short-sighted decision in withdrawing the scheme, which allowed many highly skilled and educated migrants to remain in Scotland. It makes little sense to train graduates only then to tell them to leave the country. I am delighted that there seems to be universal agreement in the Parliament that we should introduce a post-study visa. The problem with the Opposition's argument is that what the UK Government giveth the UK Government then taketh away. Although there is universal agreement here, we can do nothing while the powers rest with Westminster.

The reintroduction of the post-study work visa will help to attract international students to our universities and colleges and to deliver the economic prosperity that could be achieved with independence. Independence will also give us the full range of powers to incentivise innovation and to encourage research investment in our universities. It will allow our higher education sector to compete effectively for the best

international students and to create a country that is welcoming and open to international researchers.

It is clear that there is little hope of reform while Scotland is part of the UK. Our colleges and universities can only watch powerlessly as events in the south of England negatively impact upon the future prospects of the education sector in Scotland. Scotland would be better served by an immigration policy that was tailored to suit Scotland's specific circumstances, rather than following the one-size-fits-all approach taken by Westminster. Scotland's needs are different from those of the south of England, and independence will allow us to create an immigration system that is fair and proportionate, and which works in conjunction with the higher education system, rather than against it.

It is important for international students to know that Scotland is open for business, that they are a welcome addition to our society and that the negative and damaging voice of Westminster does not reflect the views that are commonly held here in Scotland.

16:09

Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): It is an honour to speak about the impact of immigration policy on higher education in Scotland. Historically, Scotland is known for producing skilful and original individuals. Furthermore, Scotland is rightfully proud of its excellent education system, and our universities are among the best in the world.

Over the past decade, Scottish universities have experienced an increase in the number of Scottish, European Union and international students. Current figures indicate that Scotland has a higher share of students from countries outside the UK attending a form of higher education than the UK as a whole has. That speaks volumes for our education system, and it gives me an opportunity to thank all the teachers, lecturers and professors in Scotland for their dedication and the hard work that they do for our students and students from overseas.

However, the basic fact is that undergraduate degrees take a year longer in Scotland than they do in England and Wales, and no one can tell me that having to pay an additional year's worth of fees and living costs to study in Scotland has no influence on the decision that students make about whether to study here.

Another point to bear in mind is the fact that the excellent international reputation of the British higher education system as a whole benefits us. A survey that was carried out by Chinese students among 200 overseas students at four Scottish universities found that 46 per cent of the non-EU

nationals who were surveyed said that they would be less likely to choose a university in an independent Scotland because they wanted to get a British degree. That surprised me. More than a third of them feared that a Scottish degree would not be considered to be as valuable as a British degree. I suppose that that needs to be put to the test; nevertheless, there is a perception that a British degree would be more valuable.

Many students automatically begin their search for a course by contacting the British Council or a British embassy. They look through all the courses that are provided by British universities and apply for one that meets their needs. At present, Scottish higher education institutions can identify themselves as being part of that British system, but if Scotland leaves the UK, it will no longer have the benefit of the extensive network of embassies and British Council offices in 170 countries around the world.

Dr Allan: Although the member makes many very good points, I struggle to understand some of his most recent arguments. If it is the case that only a British degree holds attractions—

Neil Bibby: That is not what Mr Malik said.

Dr Allan: If it is the case that it is primarily a British degree that holds attractions, why are Canadian universities having so little difficulty in attracting students from India and other countries? Is Mr Malik making the case that Canada should not have taken the decisions that it took about self-determination?

Hanzala Malik: The minister will appreciate that Canada had an option to separate and it did not.

There is absolutely no doubt that having such a large number of outlets gives us an advantage.

I agree with what Humza Yousaf said about the difficulties with immigration issues, but the Scottish Government cut the marketing budget for India and Pakistan, which did not help because, at the end of the day, it is all about marketing. We cannot pretend that marketing does not have an effect: it does, and it would be unfair and unjust to suggest that it does not.

We would like the Scottish Government to do its duty by paying Scottish colleges and universities more money so that our own students can find places. Humza Yousaf and I have constituents who have received letters from colleges to say that they are 600th in the queue for a place. I wonder how old they will be when they eventually get a place. The Government says that there is free education, but I do not believe that it is free education if people cannot get into a college.

The same applies to universities. There are students who have all the entry qualifications but who have been denied a place because the

Scottish Government will not pay the fee for them—another promise made but not kept by the Scottish Government.

We need to look at ourselves and see whether we are being honest with ourselves and not disingenuous with students. I am sure that many students who did not get places this year will think twice about independence, because they know that the Government has not delivered on its promise of free education.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): Please draw to a close.

Hanzala Malik: I am keen for the Scottish Government to deliver on the promises that it has made rather than look around for people to blame and people to use as a political tool to sell the idea of independence, because what is said just is not true.

16:15

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I will remind the Parliament of how successful, unique and important Scotland's education system is to the collective intellectual and international knowledge economy.

In October last year, the British Council published a detailed and comprehensive assessment of Scotland's higher education system and its distinctive and defining strengths, which was authored by Neil Kemp and William Lawton. The report found that the overall learning satisfaction of international students in Scotland is unmatched worldwide, which reflects the Scottish ethos of higher education as a public good. The Scottish system is world class and is rated highly not only against the rest of the UK but against international comparators.

The report picked out defining characteristics that are unique to Scotland, such as the

"primacy of the learner and a stress on life-long learning; an integrated and inclusive sector that is internationally active; a no-fees policy for"

Scottish and EU

"undergraduates; high employability rates for graduates; strong links with business and industry; an innovative system of research pooling and research investment; high levels of research impact including"

many

"spinoff companies; success in winning research income"

and the

"strong recruitment of international students".

When the report was published, Lloyd Anderson of the British Council Scotland said:

"This report tells a remarkable story of a national academic system that is world class and highly innovative,

a story of which Scotland should be very proud. The nation's assets include a higher than expected number of world-class universities, as rated by both academic indicators and the students themselves, and a uniquely joined-up, collaborative and inclusive sector."

Professor Nigel Seaton, who is vice-convenor of Universities Scotland's international committee and principal and vice-chancellor of the University of Abertay Dundee, said:

"This report confirms the distinctive strengths that put Scottish higher education on the world stage, especially its emphasis on our integrated approach to lifelong learning as supported by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework."

Section 3.11 of the report, which is about non-EU international students, highlights some of Scotland's successes, particularly enrolments from the US and Canada. It says that another success has been an increase in enrolments from China and India, although the Indian rate has fallen recently and

"Recent indications are that Indian enrolments have been adversely hit by changes to UK immigration policies."

On 22 June 2005, the fresh talent initiative was launched. A year earlier, Jack McConnell had said:

"I laid down a challenge to Scotland—the challenge of growth. I set out the economic and social case for increasing Scotland's population through promoting ourselves within the UK's policy of managed migration.

This policy statement describes how Scotland's devolved government will begin to reverse the population decline that threatens our future prosperity, through a modern scheme of managed migration."

Earlier today, Jamie McGrigor asked a question in the chamber about the demographic challenges in Argyll and Bute and a decrease in population there. Those problems are well known and well understood in Scotland, and if ever there was an argument for why we need constitutional change, it is that very one. We had a policy that represented the needs of Scotland. We negotiated it, it was delivered, and it worked for Scotland. Nothing in our challenges has changed; what has changed is that, on the whim of a Westminster Government with political pressures that are not relevant in Scotland, the fresh talent initiative was taken away and cancelled.

There has been quite a bit of discussion about objective justification in the white paper, but very little discussion about why that objective justification is there. We must remind ourselves that it is there because of the obscenity of charging students south of the border up to £9,000 a year for their education. We do not agree with that approach in Scotland and we do not want to have to introduce it. We have been forced into things because of the poor decisions on charging for education elsewhere in the UK.

Kezia Dugdale: Will the member give way?

Clare Adamson: No, thank you.

The future is not about the status quo versus what is in the white paper, because the likely outcome of the political changes that we are seeing as a result of last week's election is that the relationship with the EU will be renegotiated and voted on. We have no clearer idea about how the rest of the UK and its relationship with the EU will go forward. I am therefore less worried about the matter than the Opposition members seem to be.

I have many quotes on the issue from submissions and evidence, including from Colleges Scotland, and I am very sorry that I will not be able to quote them all. However, Professor Wright from the department of economics at the University of Strathclyde said:

"Our competitors for foreign students are English-speaking countries, of which there are not that many—say, five or six. The issue is critical for Scotland, because the higher education sector here is huge, compared with the sector in England and many other countries. It is a very important part of the economy."—[*Official Report, European and External Relations Committee*, 15 May 2014; c 2037.]

He went on to say that he is losing students to Canada because they cannot work in the visa system that the UK Government has set.

16:22

Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP):

Like countless others, I bought a Sunday paper last Sunday. It contained an interesting insert from a group called Better Together, which contained the following comment:

"With more universities in the world's top 200 per head of population than any other country on the planet Scotland's universities are thriving as part of the UK."

I can at least agree that Scotland's universities are thriving, and it is, of course, absolutely true that they are a vital part of Scotland's economy. Indeed, even the Scottish Affairs Select Committee acknowledged that the excellence of Scotland's higher education institutes meant that they attracted a disproportionate share of UK research funding. As others have said, they attract just under 30,000 international students, not including from the EU, and 12 per cent of all students are from overseas, not including the EU.

Scotland has five of the top 200 universities in the world, including the University of St Andrews, of course, in which 2,625 students—or 33 per cent of the total—are from overseas. Those universities are global institutions. However, as Alastair Sim of Universities Scotland has said, the UK offer to overseas students is not as attractive when it is compared with the offer from competitors in Canada, the USA and Australia. The absence of post-study work visas, the inability to be

accompanied by family members and other issues play their part in a student's consideration of the options. We know of the increasing difficulties of students from India and Pakistan in getting visas at all, cap or no cap. Our loss is Australia's gain, of course. Easier requirements to meet in Australia have caused a dramatic increase in the numbers of students from India and Pakistan, albeit that they started from a low base.

The question is: will independence help? Jack McConnell's comment that

"We need to grow the population to grow the labour force to grow the economy"

was not made specifically in connection with independence, but the reality is that the UK's current immigration policy impedes entry into Scotland. Even that august unionist body, the Scottish Affairs Select Committee, grudgingly acknowledged that independence

"may provide scope for marginal changes, which might be beneficial to the recruitment of foreign students".

Stewart Maxwell has already referred to the fact that it was absolutely clear from Professor Robert Wright's evidence at the Parliament's European and External Relations Committee that the current UK system "is a disaster". He said:

"With the removal of the fresh talent initiative, foreign students have to leave six months after they graduate and have to be monitored on a monthly basis. That is making us less competitive, because our chief competitors do not do that."

He also said:

"I do not understand why, from a rational economics point of view, the UK has the system that it has, and why Scotland is forced to follow it."—[*Official Report, European and External Relations Committee*, 15 May 2014; c 2037-38.]

I agree. Above all else, it looks like a political, rather than an economic, decision. The UK Government could change its policy, but, given the results of last Thursday's vote, that perhaps looks less likely. However, even without independence, Professor Wright believes that the Canadian experience, particularly the Canadian-Quebec accord, suggests that responsibility for immigration could be devolved. If our political opponents really believe in the best of both worlds, perhaps they should consider that.

Chinese students are the most mobile on the planet. They account for 16 per cent of all international students and number more than 500,000 in total. They are substantial consumers of higher education. Professor Downes told the Parliament's Education and Culture Committee that China

"is not a country that is subject to intensive scrutiny by the immigration people at Westminster."—[*Official Report, Education and Culture Committee*, 25 March 2014; c 3858.]

Liam McArthur referred to the *ChinaGirlsAbroad* survey, and I agree with others that its conclusions are disappointing. However, at the end of the day, I think that some of those concerns might be misplaced. I will quote some of the opinions that are contained in the report. One student says:

"After independence, the spending on education might be reduced".

Another student says:

"Wouldn't have opportunities to explore the rest part of UK."

Another student says:

"UK is a comparatively developed and well organized country (in education), but if Scotland became independent, it would face many issues, such as currency, diplomacy, and defence, etc."

In those comments, we can perhaps hear echoes of George Osborne.

The conclusion of the report contains perhaps the most telling comment of all. It says:

"In a sense, the views of the students expressed here and the divisions between them over the future status of Scotland, parallel the arguments in Scottish society as a whole."

I could not agree more. However, I think that the truth of the matter is that a world-class institution will remain a world-class institution, wherever in the world it is located. What is absolutely true is that we have to ensure that, as a society, we are open and welcoming to students. It is noteworthy that the NUS survey found that 50 per cent of international students feel unwelcome in the UK, and that nearly 20 per cent would not recommend the UK to a friend or relative as a place to study. Those are the issues that we need to tackle.

I accept that universities exist in a competitive market. Under any constitutional arrangement, universities will need to market themselves, and I am convinced that Scotland's universities are up to that challenge.

In the time remaining, I would like to say a few words in general about migration. Population growth in Scotland and the rest of the UK has been anything but equal, historically. As Tom Devine has noted, between 1841 and 1911, 600,000 Scots moved south, without a similar move in the opposite direction. Today, of course, there is a move from south to north, as well as substantial migration from Scotland to the south, such that roughly 700,000 Scotland-born folk live elsewhere in the UK. When we talk about increasing the working population, we should consider that it is just possible that some of those people might want to return to a Scotland that is at least intent on creating the conditions for a thriving, growing economy and which is keen to

attract students and skilled workers from across the world.

It is perhaps telling that the people who are talking about border controls are Theresa May and other right-wing Conservatives, such as the absent Alex Johnstone. Whatever else it might be, their message is not one of hope and aspiration.

16:28

Liam McArthur: This has been an intriguing debate. There has been a large amount of consensus and—perhaps inevitably, in the run-up to September—the now all-too-customary areas of difference.

There is unanimity across the chamber about the contribution that international students make to our universities, economically, culturally and socially. That was reflected in everyone's speeches. George Adam gave a perfect illustration of that when he spoke about the impact of international students in his Paisley constituency, and Jim Eadie, who also pointed to the impact of the two universities in his constituency, was right to remind us of the contribution that universities make in terms of attracting inward investment.

A point that was perhaps not made as strongly as it should have been in this context is the contribution that international students make to the soft power that Scotland and the UK exert through graduates from our universities.

Members were unanimous, too, in acknowledging and, I think, accepting the concerns that people in our university sector have expressed very forcefully.

Liz Smith was right to set out some of the background to the changes in the visa regime. That was helpful, and I think that Neil Bibby accepted what she said, but an acknowledgement of the issues was notably absent from most of the speeches of members of the Government party. It was helpful to hear about the context, in relation to not just why we are here but the issues that we need to resolve in determining how we get to where we need to be and ensure that our universities are competitive.

I think that members throughout the Parliament accepted that change is needed in not just the policy but the rhetoric around immigration. Perhaps it was predictable, ahead of September, that the consensus broke down on how we resolve the issue. I simply do not accept that independence is a panacea that can be rolled out when we are confronted by any problem, which will somehow and miraculously change everything that we want to change while leaving untouched all the aspects that we want to retain.

I am thankful that the debate on immigration is—or has been—different in Scotland from how it has been in other parts of the country. I listened with interest to what Roderick Campbell said about migration within the UK, and I make the point that there is migration within Scotland that has nothing to do with immigration policy but reflects the trouble that all Governments have in retaining population in more remote areas. Jamie McGrigor raised the issue in a parliamentary question earlier today, as Clare Adamson said.

We should not delude ourselves into assuming that the debate on immigration in Scotland would remain the same if the Scottish ministers became responsible for immigration policy. The minister talked about support in the polls, but social attitudes surveys and recent polling suggest that public views on immigration north and south of the border vary very little. *The Herald* revealed only last week that seven out of 10 Scots back stricter immigration controls. That cannot simply be glossed over in an attempt to argue that we are, by instinct, entirely different from people who live elsewhere in these islands. That is not an argument for pandering to anti-immigration attitudes—quite the reverse—but it should be an argument for urging caution in the assumptions that we are being asked to make by the SNP.

The tone of the debate around immigration needs to improve. In light of what happened last week, not just here but across the continent, it is all the more important that politicians north and south of the border convey the message that we are open, tolerant and welcoming.

Policy, too, needs to reflect our aspirations. I underscore my view that, although there is no cap on international students, the figures should be set apart from the overall net migration figure. We need to increase opportunities for the best and brightest international students to stay on after completing their studies. Improvements have been made, but there is a strong case for going further, not least to reflect the competition that our universities face from counterparts in the US, Canada and Australia, in particular, which members mentioned.

The argument that breaking up the UK is the best way of making our universities more attractive to international students simply does not bear scrutiny. As Neil Bibby said, and as leading academics have made clear, there is a threat to the research funding that our universities currently attract. Last week, 14 professors, from all five of Scotland's medical schools, expressed "grave concerns" about Scotland's research community being

"denied its present ability to win proportionately more grant funding than the country contributes to a common research pool."

The academics went on to say:

"We regard creation of a post-independence common research area as an undertaking fraught with difficulty and one that is unlikely to come to fruition."

Dr Allan: The member knows what I am going to say. He will be aware that 102 academics wrote to the press shortly after that to say that they think that independence holds out the best prospects for research funding in Scotland.

Liam McArthur: We can say, "Your academics say this and our academics say that", but we cannot ignore the fact that the creation of a common research area would be subject to negotiation, as George Adam readily acknowledged. Simply to assert that the current position will remain the case going forward is not at all convincing. It is difficult to see how the situation would increase the attractiveness of our universities to international students.

Clare Adamson: Will the member give way?

Liam McArthur: I am afraid that I am in my final minute; I am sorry.

Reduced access to the UK network of embassies, consuls and inward investment support also seems to work against the objectives that we are all seeking to make our universities more competitive internationally. I do not doubt that a scaled-back Scottish diplomatic operation would target key markets, but it would inevitably be more stretched and create increased numbers of blind spots. Meanwhile, the claims that the nationalists could go on charging fees to students from the rest of the UK in the event of a yes vote are believed by no one but themselves. Academic experts and the Commission have explained how that would be discriminatory and illegal under EU law.

In the event that the education secretary is wrong, Scottish ministers will need to find an extra £150 million or more to cover the costs of lost fee income. Added to that, as Roderick Campbell has said, a survey of international students at four Scottish universities revealed recently that nearly half of non-EU students said that they would be less likely to come here if Scotland was an independent country. As one student put it, the UK is a powerful brand.

Our international students enrich our universities while making a significant contribution to our economy. Universities Scotland is right to seek our support in ensuring that this vital sector remains competitive and attractive, and once we are beyond September, I hope that we will be able to use that consensus to secure that objective.

16:35

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I acknowledge the content of the speeches from Liam McArthur and Liz Smith; I also acknowledge their tone, which was very fitting in such a debate. They were not the only ones, but it is important that this debate has been conducted in such a manner.

I also acknowledge the agreement that we have seen from across the chamber. We might have our differences in the lead-up to 18 September, but we all agree on the contribution to Scotland of EU and international students. My daughter went to Leiden for a year as part of the Erasmus scheme to study for her degree, and I know how much she benefited from that and from meeting other students.

Like my colleague Liz Smith, I welcome the chance to debate immigration policy today. Although I completely understand why Universities Scotland and individual principals such as Anton Muscatelli, who has had many mentions today, have raised concerns about the UK Government's immigration policy, as the Conservative amendment makes clear, and as Liz Smith did very well to set out, it is vital to place the debate in context.

Specifically, the previous student visa system had to be looked at. I can do no better than to quote the chair of the Public Accounts Committee, the former Labour minister Margaret Hodge, who concluded that the 2009 changes were

"poorly planned and ill-thought out"

and that they were implemented

"before proper controls were in place".

The result was that an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 additional migrants came to the UK to work rather than to study. A "Newsnight" investigation, as well as that of "Panorama" of course, was able to obtain two bogus visa documents for £350.

Since being elected, the UK coalition Government has sought to address the situation. The measures that it has taken are too numerous to mention, so I will mention just two or three. All institutions that want to sponsor students now have to be classed as "highly trusted" and be accredited by statutory education inspection bodies, and rightly so. We owe it to the students who come here. There has been a shift away from paper visa applications, which were being abused, towards online, print-and-send application forms. Credibility interviews have been established that also assess those who apply to study in the UK.

I appreciate that there were no bogus colleges in Scotland, but they undoubtedly existed elsewhere in these islands. Given the huge problems with the old system, the changes were

necessary. No one could argue that they were not, and I thank Neil Bibby for acknowledging that in his opening remarks.

The vice-chancellor of the University of East Anglia said that the UK Government

"listened to our concerns about pathway courses into universities and the need for the language requirement to be set at a realistic level that will not deter good students".

Accordingly, for an immigration system to function properly, it must welcome those who are willing to contribute to society while acting against those who seek to exploit the system.

As Liam McArthur said, a recent poll identified that seven out of 10 Scots believe that stricter controls on immigration are necessary. Whatever we think about such opinions, we cannot simply wish them away.

Leaving aside all the uncertainties that surround the SNP's own immigration proposals, the facts state that since the UK Government came to power, the number of first-year enrolments from non-EU countries to Scottish universities has increased year on year, as Kezia Dugdale said. We all thoroughly welcome the contribution of the students who have come here to study.

Although there has been a drop in the number of Indian students coming to Scotland, the numbers from China, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Thailand and many other countries continue to rise year on year. If we want to talk about India, let us do so in context.

Like others, I believe that international students make a huge contribution to Scottish life, educationally, economically and of course culturally. I sympathise with and acknowledge the concerns voiced by Universities Scotland and Professor Pete Downes, who recently appeared before the Education and Culture Committee. As I have said, we want to welcome students, but we do not want people coming in with bogus visas, which is detrimental to those who want to come here to contribute to Scottish life. We want to discourage those who exploit and abuse the system. The UK Government had to tackle the student visa system, which was coming in for abuse, and those measures must be set in context.

The discrimination—and it is discrimination—against English students that would happen if we went forward to an independent Scotland is unacceptable. In the context of any attempt to maintain good relations with our nearest neighbours, that has to be the worst possible policy. Clare Adamson stands on the moral high ground and talks about how she opposes £9,000 tuition fees, but she is very happy to take the £9,000 tuition fees from those who are coming from England. If she is opposed to £9,000 tuition fees,

why is she so happy to charge English students that amount if an independent Scotland were to come?

16:42

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): I will be the third person to welcome the tone of the debate. If only the media had taken the same approach, we might have had a different election result last week. Liz Smith was the first to introduce the European election results; Liam McArthur mentioned them in his closing speech, too. We should all unite against UKIP and we should stand up and take it on. The solutions that UKIP puts forward do not stack up when we look at the challenges that the UK faces. I believe UKIP to be a regressive, reactionary and racist force in UK politics. I take some comfort from the fact that the UKIP vote was just 7.7 per cent in Edinburgh, but it was as high as 13.6 per cent in other parts of the country. We have a duty to unite and defeat those arguments and that party with the power of our arguments and the will of our work.

I was pleased that Humza Yousaf mentioned the role of the National Union of Students and the approach that it takes to welcoming international students to our shores. It does not just welcome them; it gives them an active role in the democratic systems that we have in place for student participation in so many of our universities. The NUS leads much of the work around promoting a positive place for international students on our campuses. However, the minister did say that he would come back to the issue of colleges and I do not feel that he did that, so perhaps he will return to it in his closing speech.

The minister was also very gracious to mention the fresh talent initiative. I pay tribute to Jack McConnell's leadership on that initiative. Jack McConnell's most successful policy is often viewed as the smoking ban but, when we look behind the scenes, we could argue that the fresh talent initiative was one of the most innovative and progressive things that he did in the sense that it was a long-term policy that displayed a great deal of foresight about the population challenges that we face as a country and addressed them head on, much against the will of quite a right-wing press. We should unite in recognising that.

At the heart of Jack McConnell's fresh talent initiative was the fundamental acceptance and belief that we could have UK-wide border controls with the flexibility within that system to reflect local and national circumstances. Fresh talent was combined with the wider programme of promoting Scotland overseas. The slogan was

"Now is the time, Scotland is the place".

Behind that bold slogan, though, was a serious policy and a mechanism to deliver it.

Although we have heard much about the fresh talent initiative, we have not heard much about the relocation advisory service, which underpinned much of the fresh talent work. The service was introduced in 2004, at the same time as the fresh talent initiative, and was funded by the Scottish Government as part of the initiative. The Scottish Government continued to fund the service when fresh talent was absorbed into the UK Labour Government's plans around tier 1 post-study visa schemes. The Scottish Government continued to support the service because it offered a one-stop-shop information advisory service for people looking to study, live and work in Scotland.

The relocation advisory service also worked with employers to provide advice and assistance when companies were looking to recruit staff from overseas. People could do that using the website www.scotlandistheplace.com. That website is no longer operational. In 2012, the Scottish Government restructured, and the relocation advisory service was subsumed into TalentScotland, a Scottish Enterprise initiative. On the TalentScotland website there is nothing like the same degree of work, information and services that the relocation advisory service offered. It is important that we recognise that.

There was also the one Scotland, many cultures campaign, which ran from 2002 to 2008-09. Earlier today, I asked SPICe to tell me whether there were any equivalent schemes now. It told me that there is no current anti-racism media campaign in Scotland but that marketing activity on equality issues is planned for later this year.

It is important to recognise those two factors because, as much as I agree with a lot of what Humza Yousaf has said today, if he is going to apportion blame, he has to look at his own record on the issue. The one Scotland, many cultures campaign and the relocation advisory service have disappeared. He would be in a stronger position today if he had maintained those services.

We have heard a lot about statistics today. I heard Stewart Maxwell say that the number of non-EU students studying in Scotland was decreasing. I am afraid that that is incorrect. I have the tables from the Higher Education Statistics Agency here, which show that the number of non-EU students studying in Scotland has increased every year from 2008 to the present day. In fact, in the past year it has increased by 11 per cent, which is double the UK-wide figure of 5 per cent. Stewart Maxwell is shaking his head—I would be happy to provide the HESA tables to him after the debate.

We agree with the minister that the current Tory-Lib Dem Government immigration policy poses a significant threat to our universities. The weight of concern from the universities sector is considerable. The minister will have more success in uniting the chamber if he does not overegg it, but I am afraid that his use of statistics today suggests that he might be doing that.

Although I have proved to the minister that the number of international students in higher education is increasing, the number in colleges is decreasing. In fact, it is half what it was when the minister's party came into power in 2007. In 2008-09, Motherwell College had a progressive approach to attracting international students. It had one dedicated member of staff in China, specifically to attract Chinese students to study at the college. We are calling on the Government today to consider more of that type of work.

There are other issues behind the statistics, because we do not know the full impact of what they tell us. We do not know what percentage of international students remain in Scotland after they complete their studies or how many want to stay and draw on policies such as the post-study work visa programme. We do not know how many people want to stay long term and become resident in Scotland. We would be in a much better place if we had that information today.

We have talked a lot about countries from which the number of students coming to Scotland has fallen. India has been mentioned several times, and Jim Eadie mentioned the impact that that drop in numbers is having on the University of Edinburgh. I asked SPICe about that particular trend today and was told that a contributing factor to a reduction in the number of Indian students coming to study in Scotland is a massive and rapid expansion in the Indian higher education sector. Fewer Indian students are coming to Scotland because the university sector is growing there and Indian students are choosing to stay and study in India. I am not going to suggest that that is the whole reason for the reduction in numbers, but it is worth putting the situation into context.

I add that the number of students coming from China is going up, while the number coming from the USA and Canada is staying broadly the same.

My colleague Neil Bibby was absolutely right to introduce the rest-of-the-UK fees issue into the debate. I encourage all SNP members to look at the SPICe briefing, which shows that the white paper proposal is not legal. It is very clear that that is the case, and I refer them to the fourth point in that briefing, which says quite clearly—

Jim Eadie: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in her last minute.

Kezia Dugdale: I am sorry to hear that; I would have very much welcomed the opportunity to hear from Jim Eadie on that point. However, I encourage him to look at the SPICe briefing.

Neil Bibby was also correct to raise research council grants. I point Christina McKelvie to some of the facts. She suggested that grants were allocated on merit, not geography. UK research councils fund UK institutions. If we are not part of the United Kingdom, we will not have access to those funds—it really is that simple.

We cannot accept the SNP's position because it implies that only independence would deliver a more progressive immigration policy. That is demonstrably not the case, as Jack McConnell proved. We cannot support the Tory or the Lib Dem amendments because we cannot endorse the UK Government's immigration policy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We will find that out at decision time.

16:51

Humza Yousaf: I share the sentiments that have been expressed by members across the chamber. There have been disagreements, but the tone of the debate has been fairly good. We all agree that we value the contribution of international students and that they enrich our experience not just economically, as important as that is, but holistically through their culture, socially and in many other ways.

I will try to address as many of members' remarks as I can in my closing speech. Before coming here, I read Colleges Scotland's briefing, which of course mentions the UK Government's policies. In particular, it wants to discuss attaining the "highly trusted" status; at the moment, it can apply for that only in the 12-month transitional period. Discussions on that with the Scottish Government are on-going and I am happy to update any member, particularly Kezia Dugdale, who asked a question on that very issue.

I enjoyed Mr Malik's speech, but he said that there are waiting lists. There are no waiting lists at all for colleges. In fact, he attended a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Mike Russell, and his officials. *[Humza Yousaf has corrected this contribution. See end of report.]* At that meeting, he was asked to provide evidence on the existence of waiting lists. To this day, he has not provided any written evidence.

Hanzala Malik: I make it absolutely clear that I have not been asked to produce any evidence. However, now that I have been asked, I am happy to provide it. I want the minister to guarantee that

he will make places available to those students who are waiting, once he has the evidence.

Humza Yousaf: As I said, there are no waiting lists. I am happy for Mr Malik to provide that evidence, which was asked for before, but the fact that people can apply to up to 10 colleges does not mean that they are on the waiting list for all those 10 colleges.

Liz Smith's speech was very good; it was interesting and measured. However, her speech did not quite match the tone of her amendment. Most of her speech was about the numbers of bogus students and context setting. However, her colleague Mary Scanlon made the important point that there were no bogus colleges here in Scotland, so why are we affected by the Conservatives' decisions to remove the post-study work visa?

Liz Smith: The context of the immigration policy for the whole of the UK, Scotland included, is that there was a threat of bogus visas. That is not acceptable, because it damages the colleges and the universities.

Humza Yousaf: I accept the point that bogus colleges are unacceptable and that they damage our education sector. However, Mary Scanlon's point was that we did not have that problem in Scotland. The UK Government's approach is very much a case of using a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

Liz Smith mentioned that she had written to David Willetts and Theresa May, but even by her own admission, those calls fell on deaf ears. I appreciate her efforts, but if the UK Government will not listen to members of its own party, what chance do we have? Why not take that power in our own hands?

The problem with the entire debate—particularly with reference to the post-study work visa, but immigration in general—was highlighted and articulated well by Stewart Maxwell. The current UK Government and, I suggest, successive UK Governments have measured success in the immigration system in arbitrary caps—tens of thousands, not hundreds of thousands—but that is not the measure of whether an immigration system is good or not good, effective or not effective. The measure must be whether it contributes to our goal of sustainable economic development.

All members agreed that we should reintroduce the post-study work visa. The SNP's point is that the Parliament should be given the power to do exactly what all of us wish to do.

I will touch on some of the points that Opposition members made. Neil Bibby said that we have the lowest levels of support for students. That is simply incorrect. I ask him to look at what

NUS Scotland said when it described our package of support as

“the best support package in the whole of the UK” in 2012.

Neil Bibby also attacked us for not widening access when 18-year-olds from the most disadvantaged areas are 40 per cent more likely to access university under the SNP than they previously were. He talks about access, but the fact that he was one of those who did not vote for the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013, which mandated statutory widening of access, really shows some audacity.

Neil Bibby, Liam McArthur and other Opposition members mentioned research pools. Liam McArthur said that there was no international precedent for a research collaboration. Let me tell him that, on 8 November 2013, three days before the UK Government's paper on research was published, two UK research councils signed an agreement with the Swiss National Science Foundation. Paragraph 7 of that agreement says:

“the parties agree to reciprocally open their national research project funding schemes to collaborative proposals involving researchers from the other country.”

Liam McArthur: I rather suspect that the example that the minister cites involves collaborative research funding in which the bodies get back what they put into the pool. Professor Boyle told the committee that there was no precedent for international collaborative cross-border research on the scale that would need to exist for us to retain the benefits that we get from the UK research councils.

Humza Yousaf: We are not asking for any more money. The Scottish Government has made it clear that we will pay our way and, if Liam McArthur does not believe the Scottish Government, he should believe Professor Tim O'Shea, principal of the University of Edinburgh:

“there is no reason why any form of constitutional change should preclude participation in higher order research councils.”

The quality of our research will determine whether it is funded, as I am sure it will be.

The need to charge students from the rest of the UK comes from the UK Government's terrible decision to charge up to £27,000 for education. It is unbelievable that we should take lecture after lecture on that from the Labour front bench. That party promised in 1997 not to introduce tuition fees then did and, in 2001, promised not to introduce top-up fees and then did. It also promised never to reintroduce tuition fees, promised that they would be abolished and then voted against abolition. Now, of course, Johann Lamont says that everything, including student fees, is on the table.

Labour members have so much brass neck that I am surprised that they can even turn their heads.

The point that I made at the beginning and on which I will end is that it is incumbent on us as politicians and political leaders to challenge attitudes. For the past year and a half, those in Westminster have disgracefully danced to the UKIP tune on immigration. Although some parties have done it more, I say to Kezia Dugdale that her own party's MP, Diane Abbott, has warned her leader not to be

“a milk-and-water Farage”.

The Labour MP said that the party leader, Ed Miliband, risks alienating ethnic minority communities in the chase for the anti-immigration vote.

My point is that it is not possible to out-UKIP UKIP. That is why UKIP romped home in England but came in fourth in Scotland, where the Scottish Government has consistently challenged it.

Kezia Dugdale: Will the minister give way?

Humza Yousaf: No, I will not. I am just about to finish up.

I am the proud son of immigrants, but equally I am very proud of this Government when it comes to immigration because it does not pander or conform to but challenges the right-wing narrative of xenophobia surrounding immigration. Only through independence will we have the powers to create a fairer controlled immigration system that will meet Scotland's educational, social and cultural needs. I hope that Scotland will see the day when we have the power to reintroduce the post-study work visa and entice the best students from across the world to Scotland. We will all be enriched indeed by that.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S4M-010147.3, in the name of Neil Bibby, which seeks to amend motion S4M-010147, in the name of Humza Yousaf, on the impact of immigration policy on higher education in Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)

Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 29, Against 70, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that if the amendment in the name of Liz Smith is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Liam McArthur falls.

The next question is, that amendment S4M-010147.1, in the name of Liz Smith, which seeks to amend motion S4M-010147, in the name of Humza Yousaf, on the impact of immigration

policy on higher education in Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)

MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 11, Against 89, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-010147.2, in the name of Liam McArthur, which seeks to amend motion S4M-010147, in the name of Humza Yousaf, on the impact of immigration policy on higher education in Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)

McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 3, Against 97, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-010147, in the name of Humza Yousaf, on the impact of immigration policy on higher education in Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)

Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 60, Against 40, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament is proud that Scotland is an attractive destination for international students; recognises that a culturally diverse student and teaching body in Scottish higher education institutions enriches intellectual, social and cultural life; welcomes the valuable contribution that international students make to the Scottish economy; shares the serious concerns raised by university principals and vice-chancellors that current UK immigration policy is damaging to the higher education sector and to Scotland's international reputation; believes that Scotland must distance itself from the negative rhetoric of the UK Government and its restrictive immigration policies, and further believes that an immigration policy designed to meet Scotland's needs, including a post-study work visa scheme, is needed to meet Scotland's educational, social and economic ambitions.

Meeting closed at 17:05.

Correction

Humza Yousaf has identified an error in his contribution and provided the following correction.

The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf):

At col 31669, paragraph 8—

Original text—

In fact, he attended a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Mike Russell, and his officials.

Corrected text—

In fact, he attended a meeting with officials arranged by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Mike Russell.

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