



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 24 September 2014

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Scottish Parliament

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

Portfolio Question Time

Health and Wellbeing

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is portfolio questions. I would appreciate short and succinct questions and answers, in order to get in as many members as possible.

National Health Service (Senior Managers)

1. Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made in reducing the number of senior managers in the national health service. (S4O-03511)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): NHS Scotland was set a demanding target of reducing senior management posts by 25 per cent between April 2010 and April 2015. That target was exceeded one year early. By 31 March 2014, senior management posts had been reduced by 29.3 per cent. The savings from the reduction will continue to be reinvested in services in the national health service in Scotland.

Furthermore, unlike with trusts in England, the savings of more than £1 billion that NHS boards have made over the past five years through increasing efficiency, while also improving quality, have been retained and reinvested, and not returned to central Government.

Maureen Watt: Does the cabinet secretary believe that NHS Scotland would have made such substantial progress in reducing bureaucracy if we had followed the example of the Tories at Westminster, with their disastrous reorganisation and privatisation?

Alex Neil: No, I do not. The role of non-NHS providers in delivering NHS-funded care in England has increased markedly since 2006. In Scotland, we ensure high-quality healthcare provision by other means, including efficiency and productivity initiatives.

Consultants

2. Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how many consultants work in NHS Scotland. (S4O-03512)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): There is currently a record number of consultants working in Scotland's national health service, with NHS boards looking to recruit even more staff to increase capacity further. There were 5,037 whole-time-equivalent consultants working within the national health service in Scotland at June 2014, which represents an increase of 1,140 full-time equivalents, or 29.3 per cent, within the lifetime of this Government.

Kevin Stewart: The rise in the number of consultants under this SNP Government is welcome, although I have some concerns about recruitment of consultants at Aberdeen's accident and emergency services, which I hope can be resolved. Can the cabinet secretary offer any specific information about the number of junior doctors in the health service?

Alex Neil: Doctors in training within NHS Scotland have increased by 254.8 whole-time equivalents—from 5,361 to 5,591—during the lifetime of this Government, which equates to an increase of 4.8 per cent. It should be noted that the funded establishment of emergency medicine consultants in NHS Grampian has risen by 125.4 per cent during the period, with 80.3 per cent more consultants working in that specialty in NHS Grampian.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): The leaked minute of the meeting of NHS chief executives that was held on 6 August highlighted a number of issues requiring "immediate and transformational change", including consultant and other recruitment challenges. How is the cabinet secretary going to close the additional £450 million gap in his budget, much of which was apparently caused by the pursuit of initiatives that run contrary to his own 2020 policy?

Alex Neil: If Neil Findlay looks at the published information of the NHS territorial boards in Scotland in particular, he will see that the targets for savings for this year have already been exceeded, and that there is not a reduction of £450 million in the NHS budget in Scotland.

However, I do take the point that we need additional resources. Of course, had we been able to remove Trident from the Clyde, we would have had substantial additional resources available for the health service. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Alex Neil: I note that Neil Findlay voted to keep Trident on the Clyde.

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): Given the national and international shortage of consultants in certain specialties, can the cabinet secretary outline what research has been

undertaken to assess how many potential future consultants are currently in training, particularly in those specialties, and when they may enter the workforce?

Alex Neil: We are in constant contact with the board for academic medicine in Scotland under Sir David Carter, with the education secretary, with the universities and medical schools, as well as with the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and the individual royal colleges themselves. We are continually looking at vacancies—in particular, at those that have not been filled within a three-month period. There are certain specialties—paediatrics and general practice, for example—in which there is a United Kingdom and, in some cases, world-wide shortage of available qualified staff. As Nanette Milne knows, in some cases we are advertising overseas to recruit staff when we find it impossible to recruit in the UK. The situation is very challenging for some specialties.

NHS Lanarkshire (Staffing)

3. Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how it is addressing medical staffing issues in NHS Lanarkshire. (S4O-03513)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): The Scottish Government is supporting NHS Lanarkshire in aligning its staff to meet patient demand and the implementation of a number of site-specific actions.

The number of consultants in post in NHS Lanarkshire has increased by 59.8 per cent—or 159.1 whole-time equivalents—between September 2006 and June 2014. We have also seen a rise in the numbers of qualified nurses and midwives by 9.8 per cent, or 329 whole-time equivalents, during the same period.

A recent international recruitment exercise for accident and emergency and acute medicine trainee doctors has led to NHS Lanarkshire successfully recruiting to a specialty training 4—ST4—emergency medicine post.

Margaret McCulloch: NHS Lanarkshire board papers from last month say that medical staffing across all “front door” emergency services is fragile, and that models of care will require further review if vacant posts are not filled. What does the health board mean by “further review” and what contingencies are in place to maintain patient safety if the staffing situation deteriorates further?

Alex Neil: Unlike Labour, we will not be planning to close any accident and emergency departments.

We are recruiting people. When we took over, there were a total of eight whole-time-equivalent accident and emergency consultants in

Lanarkshire; there are now 32 full-time-equivalent accident and emergency consultants in Lanarkshire. Of course, because of the number of elderly people who have complex conditions, we cannot just look at the number of patients; we have also to consider the increasing complexity and co-morbidities of the patients who are presenting.

I do not want to underestimate the challenges that every modern health service and society faces in the face of an ageing population, but we have multiplied by a huge factor the number of accident and emergency consultants in Lanarkshire, compared to the pathetic record of the previous Labour Administration.

NHS Lanarkshire (Meetings)

4. Michael McMahon (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met NHS Lanarkshire. (S4O-03514)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): Ministers and Government officials regularly meet representatives of NHS Lanarkshire.

Michael McMahon: I know that the cabinet secretary is aware of the situation at Bellshill clinic, where a local general practice has had to co-locate because its facility burned down some years ago. It is now more than five years since that co-location took place. I know that the cabinet secretary is not responsible for the reasons behind that, and questions have to be asked about why the situation occurred, but the fact is that services that should be delivered at Bellshill clinic cannot be delivered because the GP practice is co-located in the facility. Staff tell me that that creates pressure on services at Monklands hospital in particular, because those services have to be delivered there. Does the cabinet secretary have contingency plans to address the problem? It cannot be allowed to continue for much longer.

Alex Neil: Michael McMahon makes a valid constituency point. I am aware of, and fully understand, the concerns in Bellshill. I would be happy to meet him to look at the current situation and the plans to deal with it. I accept that speedier action is required to deal with it, so I would be happy to convene a tripartite meeting between NHS Lanarkshire, Michael McMahon as the local member, and me, to see whether we can agree on a way forward.

Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP): The cabinet secretary is aware that we have issues at Hairmyres hospital in East Kilbride, with beds being occupied for longer than necessary because the local authority has not put home-care packages in place timeously. I know that action

has been taken in that regard, but can the cabinet secretary update me on progress?

Alex Neil: Delayed discharges have become more of an issue in recent months, although the scale of delayed discharges in Scotland is nothing like it used to be. In areas including Fife, Glasgow and South Lanarkshire in particular, delayed discharges have not been dealt with by the local authority as quickly as they should have been. As a result, we have put in an additional £5 million to deal with delayed discharges. Some of that money has gone to NHS Lanarkshire, specifically to help to deal with the situation in Hairmyres.

Based on the latest management information that I have available, Hairmyres has shown a degree of improvement, but there is still a major challenge because of the local authority's failure to provide the required level of care, whether it be residential care or assessments for care at home.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): The cabinet secretary is living in cloud-cuckoo-land if he does not think that this is the biggest issue in health and social care at the moment. It does him no service just to lay the blame at local authorities, when the Scottish Government is slashing local authority budgets every year. Can we start to get some reality into the proceedings? I would happily meet the cabinet secretary to discuss how we deal with delayed discharges, because it is the biggest issue in health and social care at the moment.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I presume that that was a question.

Alex Neil: I am always happy to meet members, particularly if they have solutions to offer to any problems. I have never found that in Neil Findlay's case.

The fact is that the scale of delayed discharges is nothing like it was five, six or seven years ago, when his party was in power. There has been a substantial reduction in the number of delayed discharges.

However, in certain areas we have not achieved the final reduction that I want to see for this year and projecting into next year. I merely stated that that is because of the time that local authorities are taking either to place people in residential care or to arrange home care—or, indeed, to undertake assessment. It is not a question of blame. It is a question of fact—but I know that Mr Findlay always gets confused with the facts.

Delayed Discharges

5. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what additional resources it is providing to address delayed discharges. (S4O-03515)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): I probably answered that in my answer to the previous question.

On 7 August 2014, I announced an additional £5 million for financial year 2014-15 to help health boards to improve the flow of patients through health and social care services. The funding has been carefully targeted to seven health board areas that face the most significant pressures from delayed discharge. The investment will enable them to accelerate progress towards sustainable change, drive down delays and release hospital capacity over the long term.

Our legislation to integrate health and social care will also ensure that health and social care is provided in the right place, at the right time, making the best use of available money, facilities and people.

Sarah Boyack: In his written response to a question from me in the recent purdah period, the cabinet secretary suggested that by next year he will have developed a methodology to assess the cost to individual health boards of delayed discharge. However, the upward trend in delayed discharge in the Lothians is a problem for us now.

We have heard that tackling delayed discharge could release between £100 million and £125 million for reinvestment elsewhere. Will the cabinet secretary clarify whether that resource will go to local authorities to address the issues that he has just identified of the lack of care packages and home care support by councils? Will he clarify what impact the £400 million to £450 million funding gap that Neil Findlay identified a few minutes ago will have on his efforts to transfer that resource from the national health service to our local authorities?

Alex Neil: That was a good question until the myth of the £450 million funding gap was mentioned.

Edinburgh has got more than £1 million—more than 20 per cent—of the £5 million. As Sarah Boyack knows, there is a strategic challenge in Edinburgh, which mainly arises because of the lack of social care capacity—residential care as well as care at home. Some of that is due to the fact that 25 per cent of people in residential care in Edinburgh are self-funders and the private sector tends to take them in rather than take in people referred by the local authority.

Sarah Boyack will also be aware that there are now regular meetings between the senior leadership—councillors and the chief executive and her team—in the City of Edinburgh Council and the senior team in the health board, including the chair and the chief executive. They have got together a plan to deal with the particular challenges in Edinburgh around delayed

discharges and associated issues. I believe that the plan that has been put in place is the right one. We need to think about how we can fund that. I recognise that Edinburgh is one of those areas with special challenges that have been building up for a number of years but which need to be tackled at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I must ask for more succinct questions and answers, or we will not make much progress.

Homeopathy and Complementary Medicine (South Scotland)

6. Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on national health service homeopathic and complementary medicine arrangements in South Scotland. (S4O-03516)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): The Scottish Government position is as set out in my answer to the oral parliamentary question that was asked by the member on 12 March 2014.

The Scottish Government recognises that complementary and alternative medicines may offer relief to some people living with a wide variety of conditions. It is for individual NHS boards to decide what therapies they make available, based on the needs of their resident populations, in line with national guidance.

Claudia Beamish: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer, but I would like to progress the issue beyond what was the case in March.

In the NHS Lanarkshire area, significant numbers of people have responded to the consultation, and a report about the services is imminent. I note that point in order to highlight the interests of my constituents in that area. More specifically, in the NHS Lothian area—which covers part of the region that I represent—I have heard constituents' concerns about conflicting advice from healthcare professionals and barriers to access to homeopathic care, often, as I understand it, in contradiction to NHS Lothian's statements.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I must ask for a question.

Claudia Beamish: What guidance is available to practitioners when making those decisions?

Alex Neil: If the member has evidence of contradictory or wrong advice, she should let me know, and we will take up the matter with the health board. I am happy to send her details of the guidance that we offer on these matters.

Scottish Ambulance Service

7. Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what additional support it is providing to the Scottish Ambulance Service in light of it not meeting a range of targets. (S4O-03517)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): The Scottish Government funds the Scottish Ambulance Service to provide a high-quality, safe and sustained emergency ambulance service to Scotland's population when they need it most. Setting and agreeing performance measures is part of that. It is encouraging to note that, nationally, performance this year continues to show improvement. Despite seeing a 10 per cent rise in the number of calls, the Scottish Ambulance Service's average response time is just 6.5 minutes across the whole of Scotland. However, we are not complacent—neither is the service—and we will continue to monitor and support the service.

Graeme Pearson: The cabinet secretary will be aware of reports of ambulances being sent significant distances to cover shortages in neighbouring areas and of issues to do with staff numbers and available funding. There are thousands of cases of ambulances taking more than 20 minutes to reach patients, and it is clear that, despite the efforts of front-line staff, the Scottish Ambulance Service is struggling to deliver the level of service that the public would expect. In light of that failure to meet a wide range of vital targets, will he provide further information on steps that are being taken to address the issues and the timeframe in which significant improvement is expected?

Alex Neil: I recognise that there are challenges, particularly in rural areas. I know that the area that the member represents faces specific challenges, not least because, in some areas, the road infrastructure does not always make it easy for the Scottish Ambulance Service to meet the targets that it sets itself.

Having said that, I should say that the service has achieved its target 74 per cent of the time. However, we recognise the need for further improvement. I am happy to send the member details of the improvements that the service is putting in place to improve performance and the quality of service that it provides.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): In considering areas where improvements might be made, will the cabinet secretary examine concerns that some of my constituents have raised with me about possible capacity issues with the road ambulance fleet in Aberdeen that appear to be delaying the transfer on to Aberdeen royal infirmary of patients who arrive by air ambulance

from Orkney and the other island groups? I am in correspondence with the Ambulance Service directly about that, but I would welcome any intervention that he might be able to make on the issue.

Alex Neil: If Liam McArthur writes to me with details of the issue, I will be happy to take it up with the Ambulance Service and see whether we can make substantial progress.

Unpaid Carers

8. James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it will take to improve support for unpaid carers. (S4O-03518)

The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson): We intend to introduce a carers bill that will extend and strengthen the rights of adult carers and young carers to help to ensure that they are much better supported.

We will continue to provide support to carers and young carers, investing nearly £114 million between 2007 and 2015 in a range of programmes and initiatives. That includes funding for carers initiatives through the reshaping care for older people change fund, providing funding to national health service boards for their carer information strategies and funding the voluntary sector short breaks fund.

Subject to parliamentary approval, we will invest a further £5 million in NHS boards' carer information strategies and a further £3 million in the short breaks fund in 2015-16.

James Dornan: I welcome the minister's comprehensive response. He will be aware that the carers allowance is the lowest income-replacement benefit in the United Kingdom. Does he agree that the UK Government should increase it to at least the level of jobseekers allowance as a matter of urgency?

Michael Matheson: I am aware that, as James Dornan highlights, the carers allowance is one of the lowest income-based benefits in the UK welfare system. Of course, during the referendum campaign, we set out clearly the need to tackle that and for an increase in the allowance. I add my voice to call on the UK Government to consider reviewing the overall level of carers allowance, which at times has felt as though it is the forgotten benefit for carers.

We should recognise the significant contribution that carers make to our society and acknowledge the fact that, if they did not provide that support, the cost to the taxpayer would be significantly more. They deserve not only practical support but financial support.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Will the minister consider improving support to young carers through the education maintenance allowance? The EMA requires excellent attendance, which is difficult for young carers to achieve because of their caring responsibilities. Under current legislation and guidance, individual circumstances are to be taken into account for young carers, but will the minister consider putting them on the same footing as care leavers so that their education maintenance allowance cannot be withdrawn from them?

Michael Matheson: Rhoda Grant will be aware that the Scottish Youth Parliament has made a number of recommendations on support for young carers, particularly in relation to the education maintenance allowance. My colleague Angela Constance made some changes to the guidance to reflect how the EMA should be provided to reflect the issues that the Scottish Youth Parliament raised. My colleague Mike Russell is due to meet representatives from the Scottish Youth Parliament to discuss those issues in more detail.

We are taking forward a range of measures under the carers policy to help to support young people in schools and in further and higher education. My colleagues on the education side are also considering what measures they can introduce, including whether they can take further actions under the EMA to provide further support to young carers in education.

Type 2 Diabetes (Research)

9. David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what research has been undertaken to determine if there is a link between the intake of sugar and an increased risk of type 2 diabetes. (S4O-03519)

The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson): The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition published its draft report for consultation on the links between intakes of carbohydrates, including sugars, and health on 26 June 2014.

The advisory committee report referred to evidence suggesting that sugary drinks are associated with increased risk of type 2 diabetes in adults. The report shows that diets that are high in sugar can contribute to excess calorie intake, which, if sustained, leads to weight gain and obesity. If an individual is overweight or obese, they are more prone to a range of serious health problems, including type 2 diabetes.

The Food Standards Agency in Scotland will review Scottish dietary advice, based on the report's final recommendations early in 2015.

David Stewart: Does the minister share my concern that we are facing a ticking time bomb

with the explosion of type 2 diabetes in Scotland? The minister will know that diabetes is the main cause of blindness among those of working age and contributes half the non-traumatic leg amputations.

A variety of studies such as the Stanford Medical School study have linked sugar intake with diabetes. Will the minister agree to meet me and Diabetes Scotland to work up new proposals to tackle and prevent Scotland's silent killer?

Michael Matheson: I am sure that the member will recognise that tackling obesity is a complex issue. It needs to be attacked and taken forward on a number of fronts. One involves improving individuals' health through participation in physical activity. However, importantly, this is also about changing people's dietary habits, which is not an easy challenge in the short term. That is why we have taken forward a range of measures with the food sector, from the reformulation programme right through to the supporting healthy choices framework, which we launched a few months ago. There is also our work on improving labelling so that when people purchase goods, they have a much greater understanding of the content of those products.

Of course, I am more than happy to meet the member and his colleagues to discuss whether there are specific measures that they feel that we could take forward together in order to help tackle what is a growing problem in western society that we need to ensure we tackle head on.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Jackson Carlaw—very briefly.

Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con): Does the minister agree that many people who purchase low-fat products, particularly dairy products, are unaware that those products often contain much higher levels of sugar than they might anticipate and that they are unwittingly potentially exposing themselves to diabetes?

Michael Matheson: We are doing a range of work with the Food Standards Agency Scotland to drill down into the issue so that the public understand much more clearly the choices that they are making.

The member has highlighted an area where individuals can often be confused in relation to the products that they are purchasing, which is why we pushed for front-of-label packaging. The traffic light system allows people to see products' contents much more clearly. We need to make further progress in that area and the FSA is doing some very interesting work in that field to ensure that we move forward.

National Health Service Boards (Meetings)

10. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what issues it discussed when it last met national health service boards. (S4O-03520)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): The Scottish Government last met NHS boards on 22 September 2014. The outcome of the referendum, seven-day services and the performance of NHS boards were the matters discussed.

Mary Scanlon: I wonder whether delayed discharge was discussed, given the many questions on that topic today. Each quarter, 150,000 bed days are occupied by delayed discharge patients, and one patient in NHS Highland had to wait for more than a year from the date of medical discharge to go home. What is the Scottish Government doing to support NHS Highland, which has responsibility for home carers, to recruit and retain staff in order to ensure that patients get care and support when and where they need it?

Alex Neil: The member will be aware of the report that we published jointly with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities earlier this year as a result of a review of residential care services. We are following up that report with a joint review of home care services.

I believe that the social care sector faces a number of challenges. For example, we are committed in principle to the need to introduce the living wage; we need a proper career structure for people working in the social care sector; and we recognise that the funding of independent providers is below what it needs to be to provide the level, standard and quality of care that is required. There is a whole range of other things as well.

We are looking at the implementation of the recommendations in the reports across the whole of Scotland because the description that Mary Scanlon outlined of the social care sector and NHS Highland could be applied to many other parts of the country. For example, in Aberdeen at the moment, people can very often earn more filling shelves in a supermarket than they can working in the social care sector.

We have to tackle the underlying strategic issues so that we get the social care sector in Scotland—including in the Highlands—into far better shape, and we need to deal with the very specific challenges in rural, remote rural and island communities.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that I must once again ask for shorter questions and answers or some members will be disappointed.

Cochlear Implant Processors

11. Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what the average waiting time is for children who require an upgraded cochlear implant processor. (S4O-03521)

The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson): If, on clinical assessment by the cochlear implant specialist team at Crosshouse hospital, it is considered that a cochlear implant processor needs upgrading, and there is a suitable processor in stock, there is no waiting time and it will be provided to the patient at the time of assessment. If a processor has to be ordered, it will normally take two to three weeks to be delivered. If, on clinical assessment, a patient is found to have a processor that is faulty but can be repaired, the patient will be provided with a like-for-like processor from stock while their processor is sent for repair. There is no waiting time for that process.

Patricia Ferguson: The minister will be aware that young people who have profound hearing difficulties and use cochlear implants face a very challenging environment—not least in the classroom, which can affect their ability to learn. As new technology becomes available, their parents are obviously anxious to secure the best possible opportunity for them.

Does the minister sympathise with the parents of one of my constituents who has been told that there are some 200 young children in the queue ahead of her before she is likely to have an upgraded cochlear implant processor? Does he believe that, in line with the rest of the country, processors should automatically be replaced after an interval of five years?

Michael Matheson: On Patricia Ferguson's final point about changing the cochlear implant processor every five years, NHS Scotland is in the process of implementing that policy. She will be aware that the national cochlear implant service that is provided at Crosshouse hospital in Kilmarnock is delivered nationally. As I have outlined, if a processor needs to be changed or repaired there is a process in place to enable that to happen within the specified waiting time if the processor is in stock.

If Patricia Ferguson wants to write to me with specific details on a particular type of cochlear implant that is not currently available through our national service, I will be happy to get the clinicians who are responsible for deciding on the approach in Scotland to respond to the specific issues affecting her constituent.

"The Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Framework 2011-15"

12. Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what evaluation it is undertaking of "The Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Framework 2011-15" and when it will publish the framework for work beyond 2015. (S4O-03522)

The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson): "The Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Framework 2011-15" comes to an end in 2015, and we have already commenced work to evaluate the progress that has been made. National health service boards and their partners in local authorities and the third sector are preparing reports on progress, which will be collated to present a national report on progress overall. Officials will visit each NHS board before the end of 2014 to hold detailed discussions on achievements, challenges and progress.

Our national monitoring and assurance group is carrying out an analysis of data to establish progress against each of the framework outcome indicators and a report of that work will be produced soon. A refreshed framework that sets out the future strategic direction in that area will be published in summer 2015.

Hanzala Malik: A study in Glasgow found a prevalence rate for hepatitis C among south Asian communities in Glasgow of up to 3.1 per cent, in comparison with approximately 0.6 per cent or less in the rest of the population. However, the current strategy makes only passing mention of awareness raising in ethnic minority communities. Can the minister assure members that the review framework will adopt a more thorough approach to tackling the virus in south Asian communities in Scotland, particularly in Glasgow?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Answer as briefly as possible, please, minister.

Michael Matheson: Our boards, which are broadly responsible for delivering the framework on the ground, are already doing that work. For example, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde undertakes a range of work with minority ethnic groups in Glasgow on blood-borne viruses.

We will of course consider, in reviewing the progress that has been made, what further steps must be taken, and that should be reflected in the new framework in 2015.

NHS Fife (Funding Shortfall)

13. Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what the impact on NHS Fife would be of the reported shortfall of up to £450 million in national health service funding. (S4O-03523)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): Let me be clear: there are no planned cuts to NHS funding. Read my lips: there are no planned cuts to NHS funding.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I would prefer not to, cabinet secretary.

Alex Neil: The Scottish Government has a record of protecting and increasing the NHS budget. NHS Fife, like all other territorial boards, will receive above-inflation resource increases in 2014-15 and 2015-16.

Jayne Baxter: Despite that response, it is absolutely clear that, at the moment, there are problems facing patients and staff across NHS Fife, with up to 40 vacant consultant posts needing to be filled and reports of the health board's increasing use of private firms such as Medinet. In August, patients awaiting surgery were sent home at the last minute as operations were cancelled because wards were full. Will the cabinet secretary join me in supporting calls for an independent inquiry into whether the model that NHS Fife is currently following is fit for purpose in meeting the needs of the people of Fife?

Alex Neil: Although I accept that NHS Fife, like every other health board in the civilised world, is facing particular challenges, its performance has improved dramatically in recent years, as has the quality of provision across a range of services. However, if the member has any specific concerns, I am happy to listen to those so that we can address them with NHS Fife.

National Health Service Funding

14. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how front-line services would be affected if the reported £400 million reduction in national health service funding is implemented. (S4O-03524)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): Let me make it absolutely clear: there are no planned cuts to NHS funding. The Scottish Government has a record of protecting and increasing the NHS budget, and our latest £12.1 billion resource budget—the first time that the budget has ever gone over £12 billion—reflects a funding increase in real terms for both this year and next.

Murdo Fraser: The leaked memo from NHS health board chiefs that was previously referred to said that boards would have to consider centralising hospitals and closing services. Can the cabinet secretary give us a cast-iron guarantee that, across Fife, Tayside and Forth valley, there will be no such centralising or closing of services? Specifically, can he give us that guarantee in relation to services at Perth royal infirmary?

Alex Neil: The memo that was leaked contained some thoughts of a number of chief executives and does not represent Government policy. The member knows perfectly well that any proposals for service redesign go through a very intense process, including a major process of public engagement. I certainly have no intention of redesigning services in a way that leads to any retrograde steps in the quality of provision. We will certainly always ensure that any proposals for change have to go through a comprehensive exercise of public engagement, as we have always done. The biggest threat to the national health service in Scotland is the £25 billion-worth of cuts that is being promised by George Osborne and Ed Balls. That is the real threat to the national health service in Scotland.

Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary confirm how the Scottish budget has been impacted since George Osborne became chancellor and by how much the NHS front-line budget in Fife has changed over the same period?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: A brief response, please, cabinet secretary.

Alex Neil: We have passed on every penny of the funding that has been allocated to us for health in Scotland. Just for the record, I point out that the Institute for Fiscal Studies report that tried to allege otherwise was factually incorrect, and I think that I am right in saying that the IFS has admitted its mistake—it got it wrong.

Accessible General Practitioner Services (Remote and Rural Areas)

15. Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how it supports the provision of accessible general practitioner services for people in remote and rural areas. (S4O-03525)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Alex Neil): We know that some health boards in Scotland face significant difficulties with recruiting in remote and rural areas. Some communities in the Highlands and Islands have been without a permanent GP for a while, and I completely understand how frustrating that is for residents. One key element of the recently agreed GP contract agreement is the change to golden hello payments for remote and rural areas from 1 January 2015, which will mean that health boards have more flexibility to specifically incentivise GPs to work in areas that are more difficult to recruit to. That will, we hope, make it easier for boards to meet the challenge of recruiting to remote, rural and deprived areas and help those communities that have faced a long wait for a permanent GP.

Jamie McGrigor: Is the minister aware of plans to reduce the number of GP consulting hours in Dalmally, which is one of the most geographically remote GP practices in the United Kingdom? The plans are apparently due to a lack of uplift in additional payments from the health board to support Dalmally surgery since 2004. Is he also aware of concerns in Inverary, nearby, where people have had to rely on locum GP cover for three years?

Will the minister raise those concerns with NHS Highland and work to ensure that communities in rural areas are not receiving a poorer level of GP cover than areas in the central belt receive? Does he agree that devolution was meant to improve living standards for everyone in Scotland?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Briefly, please, cabinet secretary.

Alex Neil: I am already doing everything that the member asked. I am going to Oban in October and I will be glad to meet him there, so that we can report on progress.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions.

Referendum Debate

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is the continuation of the debate on the First Minister's statement.

14:41

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): It is my pleasure to open the second part of our debate on the First Minister's statement.

I think that an observation can safely be made about the debate that we had yesterday. In the aftermath of the referendum, regardless of how disappointed those of us who were on the yes side of the campaign feel, and how exhilarated those on the no side feel about the result, there is a generally accepted conclusion that the whole process of the referendum—the engaged debate, the level of participation by members of the public, the legislative agreement about the holding of the referendum through the Edinburgh agreement, between the Scottish Government and the United Kingdom Government—created the conditions in which Scotland could have a full, open and engaged debate about the country's constitutional future. The outcome is that the referendum debate has been a credit to Scotland in respect of how it has been conducted, on all sides of the argument.

So many strengths have come out of the debate—the level of voter registration, the level of participation, the turnout and, in particular, the credit that participating 16 and 17-year-old voters were to the process, which I think is uniformly accepted across the Parliament—that Scotland can look to the referendum as an example of the democratic process having taken place to the highest possible standard, here in Scotland.

We now find ourselves in the aftermath of the referendum, looking forward—we are looking ahead to what will come next in Scotland. I confirm to Parliament that yesterday afternoon the Deputy First Minister and I met Lord Smith of Kelvin to confirm, as we have confirmed publicly, that the Scottish Government and the Scottish National Party will participate fully in the process that he is taking forward, in trying to secure agreement on the additional powers and responsibilities that will come to Scotland in the aftermath of the referendum.

Lord Smith said yesterday, quite fairly, that his task is not an easy one. At the outset of the process, it is important to consider the issues that he has to resolve. The Prime Minister said during the referendum:

“if you vote No ... ‘Business as usual’ is not on the ballot paper. The status quo is gone. This campaign has swept it

away. There is no going back to the way things were. A vote for No means real change”.

Gordon Brown said:

“the plan for a stronger Scottish Parliament we seek agreement on is for nothing less than a modern form of Scottish Home Rule within the United Kingdom”.

He is also quoted as saying:

“We’re going to be, within a year or two, as close to a federal state as you can be in a country where one nation is 85% of the population”.

Just for completeness, Danny Alexander said:

“Scotland will have more powers over its finances, more responsibility for raising taxation and more control over parts of the welfare system—effective Home Rule but within the security and stability of our successful United Kingdom.”

Those are the solemn commitments that were made to people in advance of the referendum last Thursday. We are happy to be engaged in a process of dialogue, over which Lord Smith will preside, in order to reach an agreement that lives up to the expectations that were set out in all those statements. In a number of ways, those statements go way beyond the proposals that were put forward by the three unionist parties well in advance of the referendum. Indeed, Gordon Brown’s comments about our being

“within a year or two ... close to a federal state”

were dramatically different from the proposals that his party put forward prior to the referendum, and set an important benchmark for the type and level of agreement that must be secured if a commitment is to be delivered on for those who, in good faith, voted no based on the expectation that additional significant powers would be devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): I welcome the cabinet secretary’s commitment to full participation in the process. Does he think that the process should be judged at its end, rather than negative comments being made by some people before the process has even begun?

John Swinney: I do not know why Mr Brown feels the need to raise that issue with me. I am the epitome of positivity in all my contributions to the debate. I had thought that Mr Brown would have moved on from his narrative from before the referendum. I say to Mr Brown that we are all positive now.

My next positive remark is that I welcome the terms of reference that Lord Smith published yesterday. He said that he is to

“facilitate an inclusive engagement process across Scotland to produce, by 30 November 2014, Heads of Agreement with recommendations for further devolution of powers to the Scottish Parliament.”

The key word is “inclusive”. We have excited—my goodness! Imagine the word “excited” being used in reference to politics and the Parliament—a tremendous amount of democratic engagement, as the Presiding Officer properly said before the debate commenced yesterday. The real test is whether we can capture the enthusiasm, ambition and energy that were represented by the mammoth turnout in the referendum, and ensure that the settlement that will be proposed by Lord Smith captures those ambitions and gives people in Scotland confidence that, despite the fact that my side of the argument was unsuccessful last Thursday, the Parliament’s powers will be decisively enhanced with the purpose of enabling us to address the challenges and issues that are faced by the people of our country.

14:47

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): Last week’s referendum was the biggest exercise of popular sovereignty in Scotland’s history. As John Swinney has just said, record numbers of people registered to vote and record numbers took part.

I met some inspiring voters who were born a century or more ago, when only adult male householders over the age of 21 had the right to vote. They were determined that their voices be heard. Many other voters, such as my younger daughter Iona, were born in the past 17 years, after we agreed in our previous referendum that there should be a Scottish Parliament. Every vote in last week’s referendum was of equal value and, in response to the question whether Scotland should be an independent country, a clear majority voted no.

Scotland and England have shared a common head of state and head of Government for over 400 years, and we have shared a common Parliament for more than 300 years. Last week, for the first time, the whole of the people of Scotland were invited to vote on whether to sustain that union and we, the people of Scotland, have determined for ourselves that our country should continue as part of one United Kingdom.

The 2 million people who voted no were not, as has been suggested, merely the largest minority in an electorate divided among no voters, yes voters and non-voters; they were, rather, a clear majority of those who chose to take part. Alex Salmond yesterday described the Scottish assembly referendum of 1979 as “a botched job” because non-voters were counted as if they were against the majority view, with the result that

“the side that gained the most votes was unable to have its wishes put into effect.”—[*Official Report*, 23 September 2014; c 3.]

Those who lost last week's vote should not make the same mistake that was made in 1979. They should accept the result as the sovereign will of the people of Scotland, expressed by a clear majority of those who chose to exercise their sovereign rights.

The idea of popular sovereignty has deep roots in Scottish history. The community of the realm of the 1300s or the 1600s was a much smaller and more limited elite than the mass electorate of today, or even that of 1914. The point about popular sovereignty is that it is the final word. Those who support the sovereignty of the people must not then pick apart the results to find a narrative that suits them better.

Two million people voted for Scotland to stay in the union. They did so because that, in their judgment, was the best direction for Scotland to take. They were not "gulled" or "tricked" into making that judgment; nor did they do so only in response to the issues that got most attention in the short campaign. Polish voters in Aberdeen, for example, voted for Scotland to remain in the UK for much the same reasons as most other Aberdonians voted no.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Lewis Macdonald: I will give way in a moment.

They, too, value the benefits of Scotland's membership of the wider British union. Yesterday's claim that Poles voted no through fear is an insult to their intelligence and a slur on the integrity of those who argued that our nations are better together.

Kevin Stewart: There were many, many Poles in Aberdeen who were threatened by no campaigners that they would be deported if there were a yes vote. Those threats were so severe that the yes campaign wrote to many Polish voters. Does Lewis Macdonald deny that that happened?

Lewis Macdonald: Kevin Stewart would have done himself a favour by accepting the proposition that I put to him: voters, of whatever ethnic group or national origin, made a decision on the basis of the information that was in front of them, and did so with an intelligent understanding of the issues that were at stake.

Kevin Stewart: Fear and lies!

The Presiding Officer: Mr Stewart, stop shouting across the chamber.

Lewis Macdonald: It is equally wrong to claim that pensioners voted for the union only because they were misled, or that they failed to take into account the interests of future generations. Denunciations of older voters should have no

place in the discourse of a modern democratic society. The wisdom and experience of elders is highly valued in many cultures around the world, in part because older people think more than most about what the world will be like after they have gone. It was precisely because of what they judged to be in the best interests of their children and grandchildren that so many older people voted for Scotland to stay in the British union. Future generations will be grateful for their maturity and judgment in doing so.

The truth is that all those who had a vote had a choice before them: independence or a self-governing Scotland within the UK. More than 55 per cent of those who voted chose devolution, not independence. That majority included majorities in most age groups and most local council areas, but Scotland was for this purpose one constituency, and the will of the Scottish people as a whole has been made clear.

The commitments that have been given by the Labour Party and other parties over recent weeks and months will lay the basis for future devolution, which will be delivered following next year's election.

Alex Salmond said last week that he accepts the verdict of the people, and called on everyone else who had campaigned for Scottish independence to do the same. I am glad that Nicola Sturgeon this morning made a commitment to work with others on developing proposals for further devolution.

I know how tough it can be to lose at the end of a hard-fought campaign; it is easy for a person to believe that they are entitled to win because they think that they have made their case. It is easier still to go into denial or to look for someone to blame when one falls at the final hurdle. However, we all need to accept and move on from last week's clear decision and work together across parties to secure the changes in our country that will make it an even better place.

14:54

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): One of the many positive aspects of the campaign was the sheer level of engagement. Members of our communities engaged at all levels. Whether through social media, at public meetings or by watching the big television debates, people were extremely interested in the debate. Who would not be interested in the biggest and most important debate that Scotland has ever had?

It was a busy campaign, regardless of whether you were on the yes or no side. I am quite sure that energy drink sales went through the roof, with many campaigners drinking them all the time; indeed, I am trying to get many team Paisley

members off of what is, by this stage, almost an addiction.

I am glad to say that the people of Paisley voted yes. Paisley is a yes town. Traditional working-class areas wanted independence for Scotland. People in Glenbar, Foxbar, Paisley's east end and Ferguslie Park, where turnout is traditionally low, came out in massive numbers to vote for radical change. That is the type of engagement that we, as politicians, must embrace. We must ensure that those people continue to feel powerful and continue to want to engage. They felt that their vote would make a difference. My fellow buddies embraced the change that was being offered and wanted to go for a different system in the future. I hope that the Westminster elite remember that when they make their decisions.

Yesterday, we had many campaigning stories. Young people shook our hands on their way to school and we were congratulated at polling stations for the work that we were doing. A young man who had visited the Parliament shouted at me in the street. He said, "It's Georgie boy—let's talk to him." He told me how he was voting. Matthew, who works for me, asked what other politician is treated that way in the streets of Paisley, but I take such treatment as a compliment. *[Interruption.]* Someone said that there is no one else called George in Paisley. I experienced an awkward moment when a young voter from Paisley grammar school came up to me and said that she wanted to take a selfie. While she was taking the picture, she said, "I adore you, George." I found that quite awkward and creepy, but it just shows the extent to which 16 and 17-year-old voters got engaged with the process.

Some young women from Paisley—the Paisley girls—spoke to Ed Miliband and Douglas Alexander about child poverty. They recorded the meeting. As well as asking Mr Miliband about child poverty, they told him that they intended to vote for independence and asked what he could offer them and their children for the future. Mr Miliband looked at them blankly and Douglas Alexander tried desperately to explain Labour's position. One of the young women said, "You're paying for Trident and I can't get a house in Paisley." That is the kind of issue that they discussed. Those young women saw independence as a way forward.

On a number of occasions, we saw the Margo mobile and Jim Sillars. It was great to campaign with him again. It reminded me of my younger days—in 1988, I campaigned with Iain Lawson, Gil Paterson and Jim Sillars in a snappy bus. It was good to go to areas such as Morar Drive in Foxbar, which was bedecked in yes posters. People in those areas, which have traditionally had low turnouts, were desperate to get radical change.

The sheer magnitude of the campaign of the yes activists, who worked with members of the Scottish Socialist Party and the Green Party, was fantastic. On the Saturday after the referendum, I was on my second pint in my local bar when a woman came up to me and said, "George, can you ask Alex Salmond why he has given up as First Minister when he was the person—along with Nicola Sturgeon—who convinced me to vote yes?" *[Laughter.]*

The Presiding Officer: Settle down.

George Adam: Who can forget that thousands of people from all over the county walked through the streets of Paisley in blue and white carrying their yes banners? They wanted to make a difference and they knew how important what was happening was. Locally, we are ensuring that we engage with all the people who were part of the campaign. We have to keep them politicised. We must ensure that they do not get fed up and feel disenfranchised as the Westminster elite think that it is business as usual and go back to their traditional games.

Yesterday at the Labour Party conference, it was almost as if the referendum had not really happened and there was a desire to carry on with Westminster's games. This is not a game. We are dealing with people's lives. Whether people voted yes or no, they voted for change. What has happened to the vow that was made? Let us talk about that vow. Surely it was not like a Lib Dem pledge—surely it meant something. Under that vow, the three no parties agreed that

"the Scottish parliament is permanent and extensive new powers for the parliament will be delivered by the process and to the timetable agreed and announced by our three parties, starting on 19 September".

I think that that timetable is a wee bit behind, because things started to change on the morning of 19 September.

All that I am saying is that Scotland demands change, just as my constituency demands change. My constituents and I will be watching the elite in the Westminster establishment as they make the relevant decisions over the next few years. They have to do something; it is not business as usual.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Adam. After hearing that story about your constituent's adoration, I can say only that there is no accounting for taste. *[Laughter.]*

15:00

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): Is it okay for me to start, Presiding Officer? I did not want to interrupt you while you were in full flow. I am not sure, but I think that George Adam might

be making a point of order—or at least having a few words—later on.

It was great and fantastic to see so many engaged in Scotland's future and what it meant to them, and I thank everyone most sincerely for their work. There were people who were involved in political parties, and those who were involved in none; there were the local communities; and there were groups such as women for independence, radical independence, generation yes, the national collective and Labour for independence. There were many more, and I apologise for forgetting some. All I can say is that they were inspiring. There were the pop-up cafes that popped up everywhere, the street stalls, the public meetings and the debates that took place in pubs, on buses, in subways and on the street. The place was alive; the campaign was compelling, and it was great to be a part of it.

Glasgow, in particular, was awash with yes campaigners, yes window posters and events that were all—and I mean all—conducted with great humour, positivity and confidence. Indeed, confidence is the word that should be used. It was fantastic not only to watch what was going on but to ask people to become engaged and go out and vote, and I am very proud that not only my Kelvin constituency but my home city of Glasgow delivered a resounding yes for Scotland.

Our job now is to continue our engagement with people and ensure that they continue to take part and become even more involved. In fact, one of the central planks of the yes campaign was not only to get and keep people involved in the campaign but to push them forward in their involvement. The genie is out of the bottle, and it will not go back in.

We now have to think about what we are going to do with the confidence that the people of Scotland have put in the campaign, particularly now that the vow is, as John Swinney so eloquently made clear a few minutes ago, unravelling before our eyes. How, given the month-long purdah, were those who made the vow allowed to make what I would call false promises three days before the referendum? The vow is unravelling, and I hope that work will be carried out and things will come forward.

The better together parties will pay a heavy price for what they did in the campaign. In fact, they are already doing so, as it appears that the membership of the Scottish National Party is now greater than the membership of the Labour, Tory and Lib Dem parties in the whole of Scotland.

As for the no campaign—or, I should say, the misinformation and fear campaign—which was led by the Labour Party in particular, it is absolutely true that pensioners, vulnerable people and our

migrant communities were frightened. I have never seen such a campaign or people stoop so low. Pensioners were told that they would not get their pensions and that they had better stock up on food. However, a letter from the Department for Work and Pensions that I gave to all pensioners groups made it clear that nothing was going to happen. That letter says:

"If Scotland does become Independent this will have no effect on your State Pension".

Why was that not put out in the media? Why did the television companies not cover that? It was left to activists to tell pensioners. It was disgraceful.

Vulnerable people—people with learning difficulties who were on disability allowance—were told on their doorsteps that their benefits would stop. Imagine stooping so low as to say that to vulnerable people.

Polish migrants and others were told that they would no longer be able to stay in Scotland. How can those involved hold their heads up when they said that to people? They should be holding their heads in shame. It was not a victory; there was absolute misinformation, and people should be ashamed of themselves.

I ask again: why was that not represented in the media? Why did the media not cover that? We really have to look at that. I thank the *Sunday Herald* for printing the truth of the matter. The rest of the media have to look inward at themselves. They have to look at how they produced and projected the referendum.

The referendum was not fair; misinformation and fear went out. In fact, pensioners have come to me and said that they were—

Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Sandra White: No, I will not.

We have got the result. I said to the many young activists who hung their heads at the count on Friday morning that they have nothing to be ashamed of. They worked as hard as possible, and the yes campaign was fantastic. Labour members are the ones who have to look at themselves. They did nothing. They relied on fear and the British state to do their work for them, and that will come back to haunt them.

15:06

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): I want to make a forward-looking and constructive contribution to the debate.

I genuinely welcome both what John Swinney said in his speech and the tone in which he said it. He said quite clearly that the Scottish Government intends to participate fully in the process with Lord

Smith of Kelvin. I welcome that entirely and think that that is the right approach.

John Swinney also said that

“we are all positive now”.

The previous couple of contributions that we have heard completely contradicted that statement. Of course, John Swinney had no control over the speeches that have just been made but it is really important that if we are all—as Scotland and the UK—to get the most out of the process, good will and the best endeavours of all the unionist parties, the Scottish Government, the Green Party and, indeed, civic Scotland and the people of Scotland will be needed. John Swinney in particular has a great deal to add to the process via his experience with the land and buildings transaction tax, the landfill tax and the Scottish rate of income tax so far.

It is critical that the Scottish Government means what it says when it says that it will participate fully. We cannot affect what was said at the weekend, what has been said over the course of this week and even what has been said this afternoon, but it is important that the Scottish Government stands by what Mr Swinney said, does not snipe from the sidelines on the process, and does not criticise it before it has begun. If the Scottish Government does not like the outcome and does not think that the process has delivered over time, I am sure that it will say so, but it is quite wrong to criticise it and say that it is not delivering before it has started. It is critical that the Scottish Government puts everything into the process.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):

Can the member clarify for us or assure us that, once the three parties at Westminster have reached an agreement on what powers should be devolved, they would be willing to negotiate on that position and that it would not be a fixed position that the SNP or the Government would have to accept?

Gavin Brown: John Mason has seen exactly what I have seen over the past week. Within an hour of the referendum result being obvious, the Prime Minister made a formal statement to the country and appointed the hugely respected Lord Smith of Kelvin, who is respected by the Scottish Government for his youth unemployment work, which led to the appointment of Angela Constance, and for his work with the Commonwealth games. He is equally respected by the UK Government for his work with the Green Investment Bank. From his statement yesterday, he has made it clear that he is speaking to the five largest parties in Scotland, but he intends to go outside the political process in forming views and ultimately a recommendation. We should all

welcome that. Again, I have to say that it is really important that, if the process is to succeed and if it has any prospect of delivering for Scotland, everybody has to get on board, and we must not snipe from the sidelines before it has fully begun.

There is another message that I wanted to push forward. The eyes of the world were on Scotland last week, but they are still on it and they will be on it for the foreseeable future, and it is really important that the Scottish Government makes it very clear in early course that Scotland is open for business. There has been uncertainty over the past couple of months and some investment decisions have been put on hold because of the referendum.

John Swinney: Which ones?

Gavin Brown: There was a report in the *Edinburgh Evening News* on Monday regarding the sale of the former Point hotel in Edinburgh, for which a specific clause in the contract had said that the sale of the hotel would go ahead only if the result of the referendum was a no vote. That is just one example, but we know from the property market that a number of property sales included referendum clauses. We know that investment has been put on hold in some cases and it would be better for the cabinet secretary to make it very clear that Scotland is open for business than to question some of the facts and evidence out there.

We have heard statements from business in the past couple of days. For example, Standard Life said:

“It is now important that we all move forward with respect and work together constructively in the best interests of Scotland and the United Kingdom.”

Philip Shaw of Investec said:

“North of the border, it will be important for the Scottish government to assuage the business community there to neutralise any risks that the independence debate tempted some companies to redomicile or transfer some of their operations to England or Wales.”

I do not know who is closing the debate for the Scottish Government, but I would welcome a formal statement from the Government that Scotland is open for business and that it will do all in its power to help our economy grow.

Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (Ind):

Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The member is in his last minute.

Gavin Brown: More than ever, economic growth has a direct impact on the Scottish Government's budget. Whether it involves the land and buildings transaction tax, which comes into force in April next year, or the Scottish rate of income tax, which will come into force in 2016,

there will be a direct impact on our budget if we get this wrong.

Perhaps there is one way in which the Scottish Government could begin. In every year that I have been a member of this Parliament, the first meeting after the summer recess has had an announcement of a programme for government. The very first action of the Scottish Government after the recess has been to stand up and tell the chamber and Scotland at large what bills will happen during the next year and what the Government's plan is for the next year. However, as far as I am aware we will not have an announcement of a programme for government this week or next week, and I do not think that parliamentary business has been finalised for the week after that. It is critical that the Government tells us today when we will have a programme for government so that everyone can see that Scotland is genuinely open for business.

15:12

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): I wonder whether Gavin Brown believes that Scotland was closed for business. As I recall, we have had record high inward investment in Scotland over the past year and record investment in oil and gas. That is not being closed for business—Scotland has been open for business and remains open for business.

I heard Ross Martin of the Scottish Council for Development and Industry say this morning that the UK and Scottish Governments should work together. My understanding is that Scotland did not stop working with the Westminster Government. Perhaps that Government had closed its ears to the needs of Scotland and Scotland's people.

I associate myself with the cabinet secretary's comments this afternoon and I endorse everything that he said. I was slightly concerned by the tone of Lewis Macdonald's contribution to the debate. He is asking us to work together, put aside our differences and accept the referendum result—which I do—but I was concerned about his tone. When my colleague and friend Kevin Stewart asked Mr Macdonald about the accusations with regard to the Polish immigrants in Aberdeen, Mr Macdonald would not deny that there had been a fear campaign in Aberdeen. I would not subscribe to any fear campaign or any such behaviour at all.

I have come back to the chamber enthused and excited, but I was enthused and excited before I left for the purdah period. That was partly because the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee had a fantastic session in which not just politicians but people from civic Scotland and all the industries were invited to talk about their aspirations for

Scotland whether there was a yes vote or a no vote at the end of the day. We were energised and excited by that, and I believe that I still am.

Part of that is because the people of Scotland came out in droves. Some 85 per cent of the people wanted to take part in the decision-making process, and the 16 and 17-year-olds who came out to vote for the first time energised and enthused many other people, perhaps encouraging their parents to go out and vote—again, maybe for the first time.

I was in the Kintore polling office, and two young girls in their school uniforms came out skipping and singing. They had been voting for the first time. I have no idea which way they voted, but their enthusiasm and excitement was something to behold. At another polling station I was advised that a gentleman had come in and voted for the first time. He was 66. Again, I have no idea which way he voted, but he felt compelled to come out on this occasion to vote. We have a lot to be proud of. We should be proud of our people, who came out to vote and to take Scotland forward. It is a Scotland for change and a Scotland that will go in a different direction.

Presiding Officer, I say to you and to members in the chamber that I am not and do not believe that I have ever been a narrow-minded nationalist. I believe that I am someone who has great vision for this country, for its future and for the people of Scotland. I believe that the constituency that I represent has enormous potential for Scotland. With the oil and gas industry and renewables in the north-east, we are world leaders.

I come from a very mixed constituency. There is great affluence within the constituency that I represent. I represent royal Deeside—and I have no idea what Her Majesty was actually thinking with regard to the referendum, despite what Mr Cameron says. However, my constituency also has parts that are not so affluent, and I think that those areas were looking towards Scotland and looking towards the yes campaign to give them self-belief and perhaps an opportunity to move forward, too.

I was enthused and excited during the campaign, and I remain enthused and excited, because I believe that we have an opportunity to move forward. It is not that we are better together. We are better when we work for the people of Scotland.

15:17

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): As many speakers have emphasised, there is a great deal to celebrate in what has happened in Scotland in the past few weeks, particularly the turnout and the level of the

political engagement, but I do have some regrets. I will mention only one, because I do not really want to dwell on the past, but I regret the polarisation that we saw. It was to some extent inevitable, but I think that it was intensified by the tendency to invent the enemy rather than respect the other side.

What do I mean by that? I suppose that, from my point of view, one of the things that particularly annoyed me was the way that some—I am not saying “all”—yes supporters took upon themselves the mantle of social justice, thought that it was their exclusive preserve and therefore accused many people on the other side of voting for selfish purposes, perhaps, or for their own interest, whereas respect would have required recognition that we, too, believed that what we were doing was in the interests of social justice and equality—we just thought there was a different way of achieving it.

John Mason: I accept what the member says, but does he accept that, on the whole, it was a case of richer areas voting no and poorer areas voting yes?

Malcolm Chisholm: I think that that is an overgeneralisation. I am going to come on to that point.

I am not absolving my side from also, sometimes, misrepresenting the other side, but I think that we should let the past be the past. There it is, immutable. What we should concentrate on now is the future—creating a future that does not exist yet but which will be determined by the decisions that we make. Now is the time for respect, for abandoning polarisation, for coming together as much as possible and certainly for nurturing the culture of participation and involvement that was boosted so much by the referendum campaign.

In that context, I welcome much of what Nicola Sturgeon said this morning. I send her my best wishes. I was going to say a few other nice things about her, which she may not have welcomed, but since she has abandoned the debate I will leave that for another day.

I will mention one concern that I have about what Nicola Sturgeon said this morning. She refused to rule out a referendum in the next parliamentary session. That is completely contrary to what the First Minister said during the campaign and to what she said about it being a decision for a generation. This morning, it seemed that a political generation might have become a mere five years. I was hoping that Nicola Sturgeon would respond to that point in the winding-up speech that I thought she would make, but someone else might well do so.

Looking forward, the two big issues for us are the new powers that we will receive, and how to make use of them and the powers that we currently have. Important as the new powers are, even more important is how we use all the powers that we will soon have. This is partly a response to John Mason’s point, but I know that many people in the communities that I hold most dear voted yes—by no means all of them did so, but many of them did. I believe that they did that in the hope of more social justice. The challenge for us is to start delivering that social justice with the powers that we have now and those that we will soon acquire.

For example, why is there no poverty and inequality assessment of all the policies in all the legislation that we look at in this Parliament?

Dennis Robertson: I understand what the member is saying, but we do not have the powers to change welfare reform, which is impacting on some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Malcolm Chisholm: Yes, but I regret that all we hear about during the debate around social justice and equality is what we cannot do. We need to concentrate far more on what we can do.

John Swinney: I am a bit surprised at Malcolm Chisholm’s remarks about the lack of an equalities assessment, given that he knows that, every year, I publish an equalities impact assessment of all the Government’s budget measures. That assessment summarises the impact of the entirety of public expenditure that is under our control.

Malcolm Chisholm: Of course I know that, but there is no focus on poverty and inequality, and that is what I was referring to.

To give one other example, much as I support more devolution to local government, why are there not more national initiatives to combat poverty and disadvantage, such as the fairer Scotland fund, which the current Government abolished?

Issues of social justice and equality are going to be my number 1 priority for my last 18 months in this Parliament. I know that they will also be the number 1 priority of the Labour group in the Parliament, and I hope that they will become the number 1 priority of the Scottish Government.

I have one minute left in which to deal with powers, so I will say two things. First, there is a clear timetable and, contrary to what Sandra White said, there will be delivery in accordance with that timetable. Secondly—this is something that I have noted in the comments of many yes supporters in the past few days—what was promised by the leaders and Gordon Brown was not devo max. I can see that some people are trying to set this up: if it is not devo max, the leaders will have reneged on their promise. They never promised devo max.

We know that Gordon Brown does not support devo max. Everybody knows that none of the better together parties supports devo max. Devo max does not exist anywhere in the world.

Members: Oh!

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Malcolm Chisholm: I certainly support extensive fiscal and other powers coming to the Scottish Parliament. I might not be entirely satisfied with the level of devolution that is delivered, but I will certainly welcome it. Devolution is a process, not an event. It is a process that we can continue because of the no vote last week.

I know that, in the very near future, we will have the start of a semi-autonomous state within a fiscally federal UK, and I hope that everyone in the chamber will welcome that.

15:24

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): Like other members, I congratulate all those who participated in the democratic process, whichever way they voted. Most of my speech will focus on the 2 million Scots who voted no, but I start by thanking the 1.6 million Scots who voted yes and who went to the polls with hope in their hearts. I am truly sorry that those hopes were dashed.

I welcome Lord Smith's appointment and I implore him to remember those 1.6 million people—the 45 per cent. He must include the wider grass-roots yes campaign in his discussions, not just the political parties.

I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests. It states that I write a column for the *Daily Record*, which published the infamous vow by the leaders of the three main unionist parties before the vote. The vow was presented as offering substantial powers to the Scottish Parliament. Surveys such as the 2013 Scottish social attitudes survey show that 63 per cent of Scots favour either independence or the devolution of all powers except defence and foreign affairs, and the vow was sold as delivering that. The *Daily Record* said that

"all three UK party leaders"

are

"now committed to offering devo-max powers to Scotland."

The Edinburgh *Evening News*, which serves a city where the no vote was above the national average, said:

"Vote No, and we get more say on our own affairs through devo max."

Other papers made similar statements.

The vow had an effect, as did the intervention of former Prime Minister Gordon Brown a week earlier. We know that from the Ashcroft poll of 2,000 voters, which was conducted on 18 and 19 September. It found that one in four of those who voted no did so mainly because they believed that more powers were coming to the Scottish Parliament.

Malcolm Chisholm: I am absolutely sure that more and substantial powers will come. Joan McAlpine has quoted newspapers. Can she quote any politician involved at the time using the words "devo max"?

Joan McAlpine: On Monday 8 September in his speech to Loanhead miners welfare club, Gordon Brown said that the status quo was "no longer an option" and that his proposal was

"like home rule in the UK. We would be moving quite close to something near to federalism in a country where 85 per cent of the population is from one nation."

The author and Better Together donor Joanne Rowling clearly believed that she was putting her money on devo max. On 6 September she tweeted that she would back anyone who delivered devo max, and on 10 September she tweeted to her 3.7 million followers on Twitter:

"In the event of a no vote we are now being offered home rule plus economic advantages of union."

Whether it is called home rule, devo max or federalism, that offer goes well beyond the existing offers from the unionist parties.

Malcolm Chisholm says there is no example of devo max in the world. In Europe, the Basque Country is regarded as having a devo max system. The regional Government there raises and retains its own revenue and gives a quota back to Madrid to cover defence and foreign affairs.

The word "federalism" has been used, too, so let us look at examples of that system. Alberta in Canada, for example, has access to a share of its oil revenue, as do Texas and Alaska in the United States. The Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act stipulates that 37.5 per cent of all revenues from offshore oil in the Gulf states are to be shared with the states of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. Of course, Scotland gets none of its oil revenue and none of the unionist parties plans offer us a share.

It was not just the vow and Gordon Brown that influenced no voters. The Ashcroft poll shows that the biggest reasons for voting no were concerns about economic wellbeing. Throughout the campaign, the UK Treasury produced material that claimed that Scotland would be economically better off in the UK. As I recall, the figure for the union dividend that Danny Alexander used was

£1,400 a head. We on the yes side disputed that figure. I do not want to rerun the arguments of the referendum campaign, but the union dividend depends on the Barnett formula remaining in place. Let us not forget, the Barnett formula was a sop to Scots in the 1970s, designed to compensate us for the loss of our oil revenues. Only via true devo max could Barnett be scrapped in a way that would not leave Scotland worse off, which would mean allocating 100 per cent of the taxes raised here in Scotland.

Last December, the Prime Minister wrote to the First Minister to dismiss suggestions of any threat to Barnett. The vow also said that the Barnett formula would remain in place, which was a repetition of promises made by better together politicians at every level of the campaign. I recall lots of local debates that I had with David Mundell MP in which he accused me of scaremongering when I suggested that there was a threat to Barnett.

This week, *The Times* has reported a Downing Street source saying that Barnett will not be retained in its current form, and Tory and Labour MPs are lining up to demand that Scotland's funding is cut. Without Barnett or true devo max there is no union dividend. We could lose £4 billion from our budget, which would force us to raise taxes to make up the shortfall. If that happens, thousands of people will have been misled into casting a vote for no. The unionist parties now have a moral obligation to stand by their promises to the electorate. If they fail and break their solemn vows and promises there will be, in the words of Billy Connolly, "hell to pay".

15:30

Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP):

Here we are. Six days have already passed since we—the people who live here—voted no to Scotland becoming an independent country. It is important to specify that we, the people who live here in Scotland, voted no. A majority of the people—55 per cent—voted no. We voted no. Yet, after the First Minister's statement yesterday and the cabinet secretary's speech today, this side of the chamber seems to be serene, positive and full of energy while the political parties that decided to campaign against independence look deflated and unhappy. Who would have thought that a resigning First Minister would have a spring in his step? This North East Scotland MSP is as positive about the future as the Aberdeenshire East MSP with whom I share an office.

I have witnessed how much the member for Aberdeenshire East is loved across the north-east. I can describe the experience of campaigning with him in the last few weeks in his constituency—in Inverurie, Turriff, Ellon, Newmachar and so on—

only as like being in a huge flash mob. People—yes voters, no voters, SNP members and others—all wanted to thank the First Minister for giving us the opportunity to rediscover democracy.

I could not do this yesterday, so I will do it today. I add my personal thanks to Alex Salmond, our leader, and the man who changed Scotland for ever and, more importantly, for the better. I look forward to working alongside the MSP for Aberdeenshire East, as long as he stops going on about his successful Beyoncé diet.

People of the north-east will not be surprised to hear that I also look forward to joining #teamsturgeon. Nicola Sturgeon has come many times to the north-east. She filled a room of more than 300 people in Inverurie, where we ran out of chairs. We campaigned in Stonehaven, together with Nigel Don and Maureen Watt, and we ran out of umbrellas. Nicola Sturgeon also stopped in Aberdeen, on Union Street, to support all the groups for yes that emerged in the campaign. Again, just as with our First Minister, our Deputy First Minister ran out of time to speak to everyone who came to greet her.

Who in the no campaign can claim to have received such a welcome? David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Johann Lamont knew better not to be seen in the streets of the north-east of Scotland. I look forward to our incoming First Minister's many visits to the north-east.

I am immensely proud of the campaign in the north-east—a campaign that not only energised people but empowered them. Yesterday, Mark MacDonald MSP spoke about the indy quines, and I agree that Gillian Martin, her sister Lindsay and many more north-east women made a fantastic contribution to the campaign.

I read online that Gillian Martin will be featured in a documentary called "And Then You Win" on how the people of Scotland—and women in particular—have built the biggest grass-roots campaign that Scotland has seen in living memory.

Other groups made a massive contribution in the campaign, reaching people who we politicians have failed to reach over the years. The national collective has been a revelation to many—a revelation that politics should not be left to politicians. Ross, David and Alex, from my wee town of Westhill, were at the forefront of the movement that challenged us all to imagine a better Scotland. The people of generation yes are not going anywhere. They are not going back to eat their cereal.

I would like to mention the many people who have been active on both sides of the debate in the past two years. I am proud to have shared a platform many times with Kenny Anderson from

Business for Scotland, a group that is keeping up its work after the referendum. Articulate, inspiring and with facts to hand, Kenny, like Gillian and many others, would make a real difference if they were sitting in this chamber and I dare say would make a fantastic contribution on the green benches of Westminster as early as next year.

Online, in the streets, at public meetings, on the doorsteps, at work or at home, the debate has been electrifying and I understand why the people of Scotland never want to feel politically disenfranchised again. We have shown the world with the fantastic turnout of 3.6 million people that, for democracy to stay alive, it must be exercised.

More powers for Scotland is a must and my vow to the 2 million who voted no because they wanted more powers from Westminster is that I will do all that I can to get those powers.

My advice to the many disenfranchised people in England who do not have a voice is to choose a candidate who will empower them with policies such as extending the right to vote to 16 and 17-year-olds as early as in the 2015 general election and to people such as me—European Union nationals who live in the United Kingdom. Some members know that I do not have a vote in next year's elections. My advice is also to support a candidate with policies such as getting rid of Trident or addressing the democratic deficit in the UK by establishing an English Parliament similar to the Scottish Parliament.

We all have a voice and most of us have a vote, which people should use to become what they want to be. It seems that, today, everyone in Scotland wants to be a member of the SNP.

The summer of independence may be over but the age of self-determination has only just begun. We watched the Arab spring on our televisions and the world has witnessed the Scottish summer, so let us encourage the rest of the people in the western world to engage with politics like never before.

15:36

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab): In 2011, 61,964 electors cast their votes in the parliamentary constituencies of Dumfriesshire, and Galloway and West Dumfries. Last week, 106,653 people—87.5 per cent of the registered electorate—cast their votes in the referendum, of whom 70,039 voted for Scotland to remain part of the United Kingdom. Therefore, more people in Dumfries and Galloway voted no than voted for all the parties in the most recent Scottish Parliament election. Our sampling at the count suggests that, in the Dumfriesshire constituency, support for no ran at over 70 per cent. That is not surprising considering our closeness to the border and our

links with Carlisle which, as I have said in previous speeches, is our closest city and the city to which we look for work, leisure and transport connectivity.

Joan McAlpine: I accept the figures that Elaine Murray cites, but will she accept that the gap between the Dumfries and Galloway yes vote and the national average for the yes vote closed by 8 points on the 1997 figure? We are 8 points closer to the national average for the yes vote than we were in 1997.

Elaine Murray: The vote in 1997 was rather different from the one this year.

Over the many months of the campaign, it became clear to me that the majority of my constituents supported our remaining part of the United Kingdom—not because they were scared, but because they could see positive benefits from membership of the UK and our close association with Cumbria and Carlisle. The changes that could come through increased devolution at local level in Scotland and England can lead to better co-operation across the Solway basin, and to economic development that would benefit both sides of the border.

When the First Minister announced his resignation on Friday, I felt that he was taking the honourable course, notwithstanding his references to holding feet to the fire, which I find to be a rather unpleasant analogy. It cannot have been an easy decision for him, and although I strongly disagree with his views on the best constitutional arrangements for Scotland, no one can doubt the sincerity of his passion for his country. I will miss being told at First Minister's questions that I will be the "first person to welcome" some success of the SNP Government. I expect that Ms Sturgeon will develop her own put-down lines.

Some of the First Minister's statements, and those of others, since then have caused me greater concern. A lot of assertions have been made regarding how different sections of Scottish society voted, many of which are based on Lord Ashcroft's post-referendum poll. Some of the data are based on very small samples—only 14 16 and 17-year-olds and only 84 18 to 24-year-olds, for example—so I doubt whether much credibility can be attached to the results.

I also appreciate that supporters of independence are extremely disappointed and angered by last week's result. That has been clear from some of the speeches in the debate and, indeed, from the torrent of abuse that I received on social media for suggesting that we could work together in Scotland.

Like Lewis Macdonald, I also find it disturbing that certain sections of the electorate—older voters, for example—are being blamed for the

result. Over the months, I spoke to voters over 55 and over 65 who thought long and hard about how they should vote on the basis of what was best for their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, not of what was best for them.

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): I agree that we all want to move on. However, on the scaremongering tactics that led people to those decisions, can Elaine Murray remind us—she is surely aware of the pensions guarantee letter from the Department for Work and Pensions—just how many better together billboards said, “Don’t put your pension at risk”?

Elaine Murray: I have never scaremongered and, all through the campaign, I respected the views of people who disagreed with me, even if they did not respect my views.

With regard to 16 and 17-year-olds voting in elections, Labour has already agreed to that. The referendum has demonstrated why those young people should permanently join the franchise, because the engagement of 16 and 17-year-olds—whether it was through school hustings, in the streets or on polling day itself—was encouraging and refreshing.

Last Thursday, I was outside one of the polling stations—

Christian Allard: Will Elaine Murray take an intervention?

Elaine Murray: No. I have had enough, thank you.

I was outside a polling station when the school bus left in the afternoon. The passengers were obviously excited to see the activity around the polling station. Some put their thumbs up when they saw me; others put other fingers up, although I think that it was probably meant in a cheerful way. Some who voted on the way home from school did not quite get the nature of a secret ballot and eagerly shouted out their voting intentions as they entered the polling place.

On the central issue of further powers for the Scottish Parliament, there has been an attempt to portray UK politicians as having reneged on that. Ed Miliband, for one, has made it quite clear that he is not going to do so. However, David Cameron’s attempt last weekend to make further devolution for Scotland dependent on a timetable for English devolution was ridiculous. It would be a nonsense to link the process with devolution in England. Powers for a Scottish Parliament have been discussed in various forms for several decades, but there have been no such discussions about how devolution in England could work. That is why there should be a constitutional convention on English devolution after the next general

election. However, progress on Scottish devolution must start now and must progress according to the promised timetable.

Finally, we must not make the mistake of thinking that further powers for the Scottish Parliament is the end of the story. This Scottish Government has centralised power, resulting in parts of Scotland—including Dumfries and Galloway—feeling remote from Edinburgh. That, too, has to change: devolution must also involve ceding power from Edinburgh to local authorities and enabling local people to have real influence on local decision making. That is the way forward to a bright future for Scotland, for its regions and for the UK. This is, indeed, the dawn of a new era. This is an exciting new chapter in the story of devolution in the UK. Personally, I think that it is a great privilege to be part of it.

15:42

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): At around 6.30 am on Friday morning, after the referendum result had become clear, I received a text from my sister that I want to share. Emily is my 9-year-old niece, and my sister’s oldest daughter, Beth, is 14.

“Emily just woke up. Her first two words were, ‘mummy, Independence?’ ‘No, darling.’ ‘Is it not?’ was her reply. Just found out my oldest daughter joined the SNP. Paid £2 for the privilege. Well done Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire you all worked extremely hard. I have never seen the Vale like this before!”—

That is my home town—

“Even when mum voted”—

she is very frail—

“in her slippers I was very proud of her Robert! Try and sleep both of you. We are all very proud in this household”.

It made me cry. It made me cry tears of pride, however, not tears of despair.

I tell that story because similar conversations will have been had right across Scotland, as huge numbers—1.6 million people—voted for a positive vision to empower the Scottish people, enhance all our futures and win our nation’s independence. There seems to be a suggestion from some people in the no campaign that such a huge groundswell of aspiration and hope for the Scottish people will simply melt away. It will not and it has not. Do not underestimate the civic pride that is felt by those in our truly amazing grass-roots campaign. Be in no doubt that it will grow, strengthen and prosper. The realisation of many people—including, I suspect, many who voted no—is that the natural end point shall be an independent Scotland.

Let me also be clear that I accept the verdict of the people of Scotland that they are not, as yet, ready for Scottish independence. They were ready

in Glasgow: 53.5 per cent wanted to see our nation become independent. I focused my efforts on the campaign in Maryhill and Springburn and I saw wonderful volunteers doing so much to try to make our independence dream become a reality: Libby, Ronnie, Blair, Gillian, Fiona and Peter—I could go on and on, listing names.

Those people gave freely of their time—and their heads, hearts and souls—and I am extremely grateful to all those who did so. Fifty-seven per cent of Maryhill and Springburn said a clear yes to Scottish independence. It was the former Labour heartlands that voted yes in a big way in Maryhill and Springburn, despite Labour standing outside polling stations with posters declaring, “Labour Says No”. Labour just did not get the fact that the referendum was about the people of Scotland and not about politicians.

Labour regularly said that the referendum was about Scotland versus Salmond, thereby demonising a man and an independence movement, playing party politics and playing on fears. Such tactics have left Labour with nowhere to go in Glasgow or, I suspect, in Scotland. The party should be thoroughly ashamed of those tactics. However, despite the 57 per cent yes vote in Maryhill and Springburn, it is my democratically elected job to represent all my electorate, including those who voted no across the Glasgow region.

The mandate that was given by the people of Scotland following a no vote, and following the vow that was made by three desperate UK leaders to give substantial further powers, is for the delivery of a powerhouse Parliament within the UK: one that can defend the Scottish people against the attacks that the UK Government now routinely makes on our most vulnerable people. We need a Parliament that not only has extended borrowing powers, but ensures that the wealth that we generate in Scotland is returned directly to Scotland, through full tax powers in this place. We must reinvest that wealth in protecting the most vulnerable people in our society, and not send the wealth that we generate into the hands of a right-wing Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer to decide what is returned.

If *devo max* is the mandate that has been given, Scotland should retain all its wealth and, if it so decides, sign a cheque back to Westminster for defence and foreign affairs. That is one possible model—although I will always fight for independence—that would let the people of Scotland decide whether the UK is really a good deal or not.

The people of Scotland have given the UK a mandate to deliver on that vow, and if that vow is broken a new mandate should be sought. However, it will not be those in the 45 per cent

throughout Scotland who should ask for that renewed mandate: they have made their position clear. Perhaps it will be the 25 per cent of no voters who said that their central reason for voting no was the vow of substantial further powers.

However, it is my duty to make new powers short of independence work as best they can for Scotland. We need to make them work for the 100,000 disabled adults who are at risk from disability living allowance reforms; for the carers who get a raw deal from the UK benefits system; for the sanctioned benefits claimants for whom the system is not humane; and for the mothers who want transformational childcare. The no campaign said that it would work for all those people, and its members have to step up to the plate and prove that they can do so.

When the story of Scotland’s independence movement is written, I have no idea how many pages will be in that book, but I am confident that the final page will say, “Scotland is an independent nation.” That will open a new chapter in Scotland’s history that will see the flourishing of our nation, and realise the vision that all the people of Scotland have for a better future for future generations.

15:48

Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): Several months ago, on the topic of the referendum, my good friend Mike MacKenzie eloquently put it to me that

“We are lucky to have front row seats in the theatre of history.”

We all did: not just those of us in the chamber, but the many people who were engaged in those theatres in the streets, the houses, the countryside and the pubs, where thousands of players and actors took part with good humour and, in some cases, tears, and with many kindnesses.

On Friday morning, I reminded myself of Henry Ford’s quotation that

“History is more or less bunk”,

but Mike MacKenzie’s position was much more persuasive and tenable than that. We have lived, and we are living, through a major period of history, after which nothing politically, economically and socially in Scotland will ever be the same again.

It is a credit to both sides of the campaign that we have embraced and we are embracing the consequences, and we will embrace the ultimate consequences. It is not finished yet. On Friday, some of us may have been down, but we were definitely not downhearted. On the Monday before the referendum, we held a meeting in the Market inn in Ayr of 100 organisers and team leaders—

people from various political parties and associated organisations, and from none. There was a collective vibrancy in pursuit of one overarching aim. On Friday night, we had a party—it was a party—in Ayr town hall, which fortified their view that their team and their cause should continue. However, I congratulate the no side on the outcome, temporary though it may be.

In general, we cannot castigate the Scotland-based press and media, which presumed to a better degree of impartiality, and for which they should be commended. Of course, that approach was not reflected by their colleagues in the London press and other media. A daily wail that suggested that pestilence would spread across the land, that monster mice and birds were invading and that aliens had landed added nothing to the constructive debate that was shared by both sides of the campaign on the ground.

We will each have an event to write in our personal history books. Mine was receiving a ticket to attend a Gordon Brown speech to the Labour—not better together—faithful at Rugby park in Kilmarnock. I was told that it was to start at 11 o'clock. I would not say that I am suspicious and I would not dare to comment on the event organisers' competence, but I checked elsewhere and found that it was to start at 10.15. I got there from Ayr with minutes to spare, and was stopped at the door while stewards went off to make what they said was a phone call. While that was happening, I was unwittingly shown into the meeting by a young unknowing steward. I had my questions ready, so members will imagine my total despair when, at the end of the meeting, the chairperson said that there were to be no questions. I wonder why. That was democracy at work.

Lewis Macdonald is no longer in the chamber, so I will share with him later some of the details that were not recorded in the press coverage of the meeting. I do not diminish the role that the former Prime Minister played in the result. In my book, the roles that were played by those who were less directly affected and who were involved by others was unforgivable. Let me give two examples of that. Sir Martin Sorrell of WPP, one arm of which is the polling company TNS, warned us about the uncertainty of independence. Given the uncertain future of the quarter of a million children who are living in poverty in Scotland, we should not have received lectures from someone who is sitting on a £30 million annual income.

Secondly, Bob Dudley, the chief executive of BP, predicted uncertainty around oil incomes and longevity. That was just after workers on the monster Clair Ridge field had been given full salary until the end of September and told not to come back until after that. At the same time, BP

had just placed in Korea a £150 million order for oil drilling equipment. All that was, of course, coincident with the secret visit by the Prime Minister, with no journalists and no cameras. Apparently, Alistair Carmichael said to a local Shetland journalist that the visit was the best-kept secret west of Shetland. Well, I say to him that it is not a secret now.

The integrity of the campaign on the ground in Scotland on both sides was commendable. However, the noises off stage right, such as the ones that I have just mentioned from those outriders for the Westminster Government, were not.

We now move forward to write another page in the history books. I believe that those in the Scottish body politic will address the proposed new powers, if they determine to do so, not without partiality but with the integrity that I mentioned. I trust that the UK Government will apply the same approach, but I doubt it. It was its allegation—not ours—that oil is declining. It borrowed £120 billion in 2012—the figure would have been £131.5 billion without the oil—and it will have a debt of £1.57 trillion by 2017. Given all that, the UK Government had a duty in the campaign to explain to pensioners, carers, health workers, people who are on benefits and others how it will pay that debt, but it manifestly failed to do so.

Despite those concerns, we accept the verdict. We accept that we cannot rewrite history; we also recognise the continued need to meet aspirations—especially those of the young, many of whom were at that party last Friday.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must draw to a close.

Chic Brodie: I am closing now.

As we write the future, we will ensure that a vow is a promise well kept—else the UK Government shall reap what it sows.

15:55

Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab): I welcome John Swinney's contribution in the opening speech this afternoon. He struck the right tone, making clear his view and the view of the Scottish Government.

John Swinney's speech was in stark contrast to some of the speeches from his back benchers, during which I have felt as though I was sitting through a therapy session in a support group for people who are suffering. [*Laughter.*] I understand some of that—[*Interruption.*] I did not mean that to sound flippant. I have known Sandra White for many years—back to the days of Renfrew District Council—and I know how passionate she is about

independence. The issue has driven her all her life. I well understand why people who lost out in the referendum last week are feeling angry, bitter, frustrated and disappointed; that is only natural, and those of us who are on the other side of the debate need to accept that it will take time for some of those feelings to work through.

However, how people are feeling does not excuse the comments of, for example, Christian Allard, who made the threat to Opposition politicians that they had better not be seen in the streets of north-east Scotland. Such contributions have no place here.

Christian Allard: I would like to clarify what I said. It was absolutely not a threat. I was saying that the leaders of the Opposition were not seen in the streets of Aberdeen. That is it. I did not say that they are not welcome in the streets of Aberdeen—certainly not.

Hugh Henry: That is not what I heard. We can check the *Official Report* to see exactly what the member said.

I suppose that, as part of the anger therapy process, we must listen to Bob Doris say that there

“shall be an independent Scotland”

and then, in the next sentence, “I accept the verdict”. The verdict of the silent majority last week was overwhelmingly that Scotland does not want to leave the United Kingdom. Scotland clearly said no to separation. By all means, SNP members should get it out of their system and express all their feelings and frustration here. However—

George Adam: Will the member take an intervention?

Hugh Henry: No, thank you.

However, we need to recognise that we have an endorsement that we have never had previously. It is a positive, historic endorsement. Scotland wants to be part of the United Kingdom. The view of the silent majority needs to be accepted and we need to move on. Alex Salmond said on behalf of the Scottish Government that this was a once-in-a-lifetime referendum, and no one from the Scottish Government or the SNP contradicted him.

If there had been a majority of one vote in favour of independence, we would have had to accept the vote.

Kevin Stewart: Will the member give way?

Hugh Henry: No, thank you.

However, there has been a decisive majority, by almost 400,000 votes, for the other side. We need to accept that and move on.

Can we move on to what actually happened in the historic referendum and that huge vote across Scotland? Yes, people were voting to stay within the United Kingdom but, as many members said, people were also voting for change. People did not want what is happening just now to continue.

Some people may well have voted for additional powers. However, the majority of the people to whom I spoke who said that they were voting yes—including Labour voters—told me that they were voting against austerity, for better public services and for a better future. They thought that there was something on offer from the yes side.

The majority of voters clearly did not accept the economic and social arguments that were being made by the yes side. However, if we accept for a minute that there is a mood to change, we should be willing to reach out across the parties and work together to make that change happen. On health, let us put aside all the rhetoric about privatisation and so on. No party in this Parliament wants to privatise the health service, so can we all now work together to address the problems that are being confronted by the health service in Scotland? Can we put our collective wit and minds together to come up with solutions? Can we say that young people in this country want the chance of a college education and look at what we can do to make that possible? Can we accept that our local government services are under threat and that financial pressures are faced by the Scottish Government, the UK Government and, indeed, Governments throughout the world? Can we work together to come up with solutions that protect vulnerable people such as those in my constituency whose services have been squeezed because of a lack of money going to them? Can we accept that the people have spoken and now move on and work together to make a reality of the aspiration for a better country?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Colin Beattie, after whose speech we will move to the closing speeches.

16:01

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): I pay tribute to the First Minister. The Scottish National Party has made incredible strides during the 20 years of his leadership, going from being a party with little elected representation to winning two Scottish Parliament elections in a row, the second of which gave us the mandate for an independence referendum. That has been in no way due to chance; the First Minister's leadership, his effective partnership with the Deputy First Minister and the policies that have been pursued to make Scotland a more equitable society, even in the light of Westminster's austerity programmes, have

struck a powerful chord with the Scottish electorate. That we were unable to achieve independence this time round speaks not of any failings but of the desperate and, frankly, sometimes unsavoury tactics of Westminster, which foolishly assumed that a no vote was in the bag.

I have been a proud member of the SNP for many years—perhaps even as long as Stewart Stevenson has been—and I have seen capable leaders come and go, yet it is my belief that the First Minister has led the party to its greatest achievements to date. We have only to look at how our membership has risen dramatically since the polls closed last Thursday to see how people are attracted to our ideals. Our overall membership is now more than 58,000—an increase of 33,000 in the past few days—and we are the third biggest party in the UK. I gladly welcome all new members, especially in my role as the party treasurer, and I keenly look forward to both next year's general election and the Scottish Parliament election in 2016.

One thing that we know from the referendum is that politics in Scotland has changed for the better. We can all be proud of the fact that the Scottish people have never been as engaged in a political event as they were in the lead-up to last Thursday's polls. A truly incredible 97 per cent of the electorate registered to vote and the turnout reached almost 85 per cent. To put that in perspective, the turnouts at the 1979 and 1997 referendums were 63 per cent and 60 per cent respectively. The vast majority of people in Scotland were clearly energised and involved in the debate.

When voters were asked whether they felt that deciding Scotland's future was something of which they could be proud, 82 per cent said yes once the don't knows were excluded. Conversations over the referendum sprang up everywhere, from trains and buses to pubs, clubs, golf courses and football matches, and Scotland can take pride in its ability to hold a largely mature and sensible debate among its citizens. I believe that we provided a democratic model for the world to follow.

The statistics show that the yes campaign's use of social media was not only innovative but a key factor in reaching a new demographic. While almost all the traditional forms of media advocated a no vote, the yes campaign successfully utilised Facebook and received more than 322,000 page likes compared with the 219,000 that the better together campaign received. The yes campaign also secured 100,000 followers on Twitter compared with the better together campaign's 40,000 followers. We harnessed our social media skills to engage the wider electorate. It is clear that, by using that method, we were able to

bypass editorial bias and Westminster pressure to get across our message plainly and simply.

Allowing young people to take part in the referendum is a step that should be extended to all elections. I met many 16 and 17-year-olds, speaking to groups of up to 150. It was hugely satisfying to discuss independence and other issues with them. I was told by some that they had originally planned to vote no, sometimes influenced by their parents' plans. However, the more they read and talked about it, the more they came to the conclusion that independence offered them a brighter future. It is clear that those teenagers were some of the most well-read of my constituents on the independence debate.

Where do we go from here? As part of the referendum process, we know that the Westminster parties have offered the people of Scotland new powers and have apparently agreed to a timetable under which those would be delivered. Of those who voted no, 25 per cent did so because of that promise, resulting in a clear majority of voters who wanted some form of change for Scotland.

The leaders of the Westminster parties were so desperate to win that they even declared their commitment to more powers on the front page of the *Daily Record*. However, only hours after the result was declared, the pledge was apparently falling apart. David Cameron was the first to break ranks in linking further Scottish devolution to solving the West Lothian question. Cameron has in effect admitted that his signature on the pledge is worthless.

No doubt Cameron was pressured by the actions and statements of his back benchers. I am sure that what they said will live long in the memory of our electorate who voted for more powers in the Scottish Parliament. We were told that there would be a "bloodbath". Christopher Chope, Tory MP for Christchurch, said that we should recognise that there is no guarantee that the pledge

"would be implemented in the United Kingdom Parliament."

Nadine Dorries, the Tories' very own celebrity MP, spelled out her thoughts when she mocked Scotland as being subsidised in order

"to eat deep-fried mars bars".

I hope that Ms Dorries does not speak for her whole party.

No sooner had Michael Gove jumped on the bandwagon than Ed Miliband was forced to jump off it—agreeing with David Cameron on more powers for the Scottish people was one thing, but putting that on a platform with English votes for English people was a step too far. One wonders

why that had not been thought of prior to the referendum vote.

Let us not forget as well that no less a leading light than Gordon Brown has promised us that the plans will come to fruition according to the clear timetable that he set out. I am sure that keen-eared members will have noted that, despite Mr Brown being largely credited with saving the no campaign, his name was curiously absent last Monday when Ed Miliband thanked those Labour Party members who helped win the referendum. Members should make of that what they will, but it does not fill me with confidence that the devolution timetable is being taken all that seriously.

We will be watching every step that Westminster takes. We may have lost this battle, but I am absolutely confident that we will win the war and achieve independence for this nation.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before we move on to closing speeches, I remind all members who have taken part in the debate yesterday or today that, unless they have let the Presiding Officer know that they would not be here for good reason, they should be present for the closing speeches.

16:08

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): Scotland has voted no and I respect the democratic outcome of the vote. In fact, Scotland did so much more than vote: Scotland became a participative democracy and the change was almost palpable. We must strive to maintain that level of participation.

The vote did not deliver the result that the majority of—but not all—Greens campaigned for. However, it has delivered change. We may not have an opportunity to develop a written constitution, but “constitution” is a word that we use to refer to our physical state as regards vitality, health and strength. In that regard, I am encouraged and optimistic.

Alex Salmond was right when he said yesterday that there is

“a new spirit abroad in this land”

and that

“we are a better nation today”.—[*Official Report*, 23 September 2014; c 8.]

I agree. People who have never attended a political meeting in their lives came along and took part in the debate; people who would not have come along to a traditional hustings where politicians debate their manifestos came along with their questions and their own manifestos.

There are those who feel that other issues were sidelined as we discussed the constitution, but that

is not a view that I share and it is not the experience of the thousands of people who debated Scotland's future in the meetings that I attended in church and school halls and even on the stage of Dunfermline's Alhambra theatre.

A narrow debate would never have energised Scotland in the way that the referendum campaign has. The debate was broadened, deepened, energised and given a life of its own by the many diverse groups, organisations and individuals who took part. A woman who attended a discussion with an all-woman panel at Edinburgh College of Art stood up and said, “I can't believe I'm standing up to speak in public and take part in a meeting about how my country is governed.”

Many people found their feet and their voices in the campaign. Many groups, including women for independence, the radical independence campaign, common weal, the national collective and business for Scotland, made sure that people from all walks of life were involved and represented in the campaign. We can learn much from those groups about engagement. Social media was invaluable in the campaign. It helped to level what was a very unlevel playing field from the point of view of support from corporate print media. The nature of campaigning itself was transformed in the campaign.

I took part in debates with people from all the organisations that I have mentioned and with people from none of them, and I was unfailingly impressed. I took part in debates with our youngest voters and they demonstrated why they should be fully involved in the democratic process. I welcome the growing consensus for votes at 16.

A meeting in Falkirk that was organised by the national collective will be long remembered by all who were there. Young actors, speakers and poets took part, as well as the prominent playwright Alan Bissett. I was staggered by their talent. It was a Friday night and, even when there was an interval, no one left. The meeting carried on way beyond its scheduled end. There were six traditional political speakers, who were interspersed with outstanding Scottish artists. It was a model for the new politics in the new Scotland. A woman with disabilities who relies on benefits for her income told the meeting that she felt that she was voiceless and that the referendum campaign was finally giving her the means to get her message across to those politicians whose policies were making her life ever more challenging.

That insistent, increasingly confident voice led to the announcement of the vow by David Cameron, Nick Clegg and Ed Miliband, in which they recognised that the status quo is simply unacceptable. As tight as the timescales that Lord Smith has been given to work to are, we must do

all that we can to ensure that those who contributed so much to the debate are given every opportunity to contribute to that process, too.

Debate in Scotland has flourished not in spite of but because of the diversity of speakers on behalf of the yes and no campaigns. It is no secret that the Greens and the SNP have many policy differences, as do the better together parties, but we all have common ground and we must all now work together for the best outcome.

Yesterday, Ken Macintosh suggested that among those who had lost the vote there might be a temptation to “lash out in anger”; not at all. He said that people were “genuinely scared”, and Murdo Fraser said that, for some people,

“even the debate was a threat to their identity.”—[*Official Report*, 23 September 2014; c 56.]

My experience was a far more positive one. People questioned assertions while relishing involvement. I hope that the debate has demonstrated to all that we can disagree with one another and remain friends, and we in the Parliament have a duty to continue to demonstrate that.

I do not accept the narrative of a hostile and bitter campaign that some have put forward. I believe that we should focus on the outstanding level of engagement and the overwhelmingly positive level of participation in the vote. The campaign was carried on in a passionate yet respectful manner. It was intense but, by and large, it was tolerant and engaging, and at times it was even entertaining. The narrative is a positive one.

So what now? The vow must be made real and we must deliver for all of Scotland’s people—everyone who voted and everyone who did not. The Greens were not campaigning for a wee version of Westminster. Let us engage with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities paper on local democracy and my party’s review. The referendum debate has shown us that democracy begins at street level.

In this energy and resource-rich country, fuel poverty persists, food banks proliferate and equal pay feels far away. Regardless of who takes over the Westminster reins next May, the levels of austerity that have been promised go beyond anything that has yet been experienced but, as the Presiding Officer said yesterday, those who got off their settees are not going back to them. Politics in Scotland must be open to all who wish to have a fairer and more equal nation. We should be ambitious in our vision of what we can do and willing to work together to make it happen. If we do that, another, better Scotland is possible.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Thank you, Ms Johnstone.

Before I call Alison McInnes, I point out to members that this is the continuation of the debate that started yesterday, so it would not be unreasonable for those who took part yesterday to be in the chamber for the closing speeches. I have a note of their names, and I want to say that I am not pleased.

16:15

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): This has been a long, interesting and, I think, necessary debate. We all agree that there were a number of remarkable things about the referendum, the first of which was the turnout. At 85 per cent, it was a victory for democracy. There is no doubt that there was an appetite to be involved and that people realised that their vote counted. Voter apathy? I do not think so. On 18 September 2014, indifference was conquered.

The second remarkable thing was the vote for 16 and 17-year-olds. Like everyone else, I was delighted by how those new young voters got involved. Liberal Democrats have long supported votes at 16, and it is great that there is now cross-party agreement to look at extending the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds for all elections. Our decision to extend the franchise for this most important of decisions here in Scotland might act as a catalyst for change across the UK.

The third remarkable thing was the engagement in the political process. This was no dry constitutional debate; it enlivened people around the country. Debates and discussions took place in village halls, student unions, church groups and youth groups, in living rooms and around kitchen tables. Books were written, plays and poems were penned and acres of newsprint, comment and analysis were created. The BBC, which was pilloried and picketed by the nationalists, actually provided an immense amount of coverage on all its platforms—radio, TV and online—and gave direct voice to citizens through countless debates and phone-ins. I particularly praise the way in which it gave voice to young people in “Radio 1’s Big Conversation” with Edith Bowman and “The Big, Big Debate” at the Hydro.

People around Scotland agreed that we could and should have a better future, and that we all want a fairer Scotland. What we disagreed on was whether we needed to leave the UK and set up a completely new state in order to do that. However, we must all agree that the vote was fair and robust, that it settled the question, and that everyone’s vote counted equally.

Many insults have been thrown over the past few months. Many can be dismissed as the

actions of hotheads, but the First Minister's saying that there is no such thing as a no vote, only a deferred yes; that no voters were "tricked" and duped; that older no voters should look in the mirror and justify their vote to the younger generation; and that what has now been established as the settled will of the Scottish people can somehow be overturned, are insults of a different order to Scots around this country.

Alex Salmond might have announced that he is standing down, but he is still the First Minister of this country and he should be speaking on behalf of all Scots and abiding by the Edinburgh agreement. Part of the agreement, which he says was included at his own insistence, states that the outcome will be respected. Was he so cocksure that yes would win that he thought that that was only a one-way obligation? Let us hear it loud and clear from him and his nationalists: the sovereign will of the Scottish people is that we remain a part of the UK. The role of Alex Salmond and his successor is to work on that vision of a stronger Scottish Parliament within the United Kingdom, so there should be no more stoking the fires of division.

Palpable on polling day was the sense of purpose as people poured into the polling stations to cast their votes. There was a quiet determination among many voters, as has been evidenced by the result. Over many months, I have talked to thousands of voters face to face and on their doorsteps; more important, I listened and knew that the shy noes were there all along. If people had taken time to listen on the doorstep, they would have heard that message. In the fervour of their cause, yes voters made a lot of noise, talked a lot and partied a lot, but the mistake that they made was that they forgot to listen. They drowned out the quieter voices, sometimes carelessly and without understanding that many people preferred not to broadcast their views. Nevertheless, those voices had thoughtful and strongly held views of their own.

Sometimes, however, the drowning out was deliberate, as when better together street stalls were "visited" by crowds of yes campaigners; when Jim Murphy's street-corner talks were disrupted; and when on the eve of the poll, nine better together helpers—not political activists—in Inverurie in Aberdeenshire were surrounded for half an hour by hordes of chanting yes campaigners in a most intimidating way. It worries me that such things are still happening. Many of those who voted yes are asserting that their vote was somehow the right one and that either they were robbed, or that somehow the no votes counted for less.

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): Will Alison McInnes take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer: The member is not taking an intervention.

Alison McInnes: The danger is that the binary choice in the ballot created polarisation. We need to remember that everyone who voted cares about Scotland, so we must now all work together to bring about the better Scotland that everyone who voted agrees is worth striving for. That is why I was pleased to hear Nicola Sturgeon say this morning that she would work with others and seek common cause on the issues that unite us.

We all agree that we need to sustain the energy and interest in political discourse. There is much that we can do to renew our democracy in Scotland. It is not all about what Westminster devolves to us; it is also about how we in the Scottish Parliament share our power.

Alex Rowley was right yesterday to argue for stronger local government. Scotland is one of the most centralised countries in Europe. We now have a unique opportunity to re-examine the relationship between local and national government in Scotland and to put it on a formally codified footing. "Local Matters: COSLA's Vision for Stronger Local Democracy in Scotland" and our home rule for Scotland report both offer routes towards that.

The Presiding Officer: You need to wind up.

Alison McInnes: Let me end by returning to what the Presiding Officer said yesterday. She said:

"It is now for us to embrace and nurture the desire for political expression. It cannot and must not be business as usual."—[*Official Report*, 23 September 2014; c 1.]

In responding to that, I acknowledge that we do not have all the answers. Politics is too important to be left to the politicians. We could do worse than look at the Electoral Reform Society's 13-month-long citizen-led democracy max inquiry into a vision for a good Scottish democracy.

Friends—let us keep listening, let us work together, and let us make Scotland better.

16:21

Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con): I thank Alison McInnes for her speech.

At the end of a very long debate, I single out one contribution in particular: the one that we heard just before 5 o'clock yesterday afternoon from the First Minister. He was at play with the Parliament while giving his summation speech and thoroughly enjoyed himself. It was a master-class in summation speeches in that he smiled warmly

to everyone who had made a contribution in the debate and then embraced with a stiletto those who disagreed with him. I think that he had enjoyed his afternoon immensely, and who can begrudge him that? It came at the end of a torrid, turgid and dramatic week for him.

I do not think that it was clear from many of the contributions that I heard during the debate that there had been, in fact, an emphatic defeat for those who sought the independence of Scotland from the United Kingdom. The defeat was emphatic in the sense that, when the Labour Party beat the Conservative Party in 1945 in what was called a landslide, it did so by 8 points. In modern political terms, the great hyped campaign of President Obama, when he won in what was described as a landslide, was secured with a majority of 6 points. In the referendum, there was a majority of 10 points. If it had been a presidential-type election, 28 of the 32 states would have voted to stay with the United Kingdom. The 85 per cent of Scotland that spoke now stand at odds with the 50 per cent who voted for the Scottish Parliament. As Neil Findlay said yesterday, the sovereign will—that is the term that is often expressed by the party of Government—of the people of Scotland has been spoken, and their sovereign will is that Scotland will remain within the United Kingdom.

I, too, welcome the contribution of 16 and 17-year-olds, which was remarkably free of cynicism. I say to those people who now seek to pay lip service to the result, but who then set it aside, seek to ignore it, and carry on as if it had not been the result that we actually achieved, that they must not betray with a cynical response to the voice of that democracy the young people who contributed to the debate.

I pay tribute to MSPs from across the chamber. The contributions of Kezia Dugdale, Nicola Sturgeon, Patrick Harvie and Ruth Davidson all demonstrated how the Parliament contributed positively, enthusiastically and well to the debate that took place. I think that Patrick Harvie said that the concern that some had that we would find ourselves split asunder did not come about.

At the risk of telling a story against myself, I will tell members a short story. Patrick Harvie talked about the families, friends and neighbours who found themselves divided; such was the case for my own family, I have to say. One of my sons was persuaded by the arguments of the party sitting opposite me.

Members: Yes!

Jackson Carlaw: Can I tell members what he did? I voted by post and so did he, and he mixed our two ballots together. I was photographed

posting my ballot but I actually have no idea what I was posting. [*Laughter.*]

However, as the First Minister said, we did not have a result that was determined by one vote. Had we had such a result, there would have been recrimination across Scotland and people would have said “If only you had ...”, but it is the decisive nature of the result that allows people on different sides of the argument to come together.

There has been some discussion over the proposed new powers. I want to rest with “the epitome of positivity” that Mr Swinney claimed himself to be earlier this afternoon. It is important that the Scottish National Party and the Government participate in the debate on new powers. I hope that we arrive at a conclusion that is the sum of, and not a division of, the ambitions of the parties’ policies in terms of the new powers that will come forward.

For the immediate period ahead there are two areas that I do not think have been touched on in the debate: leadership and the challenge for this Parliament. On leadership, I hope that there is a contest within the Scottish National Party for the leadership of Scotland. Apparently, according to the SNP, it was an affront to democracy when Gordon Brown succeeded Tony Blair in office, and it was an affront to democracy when John Major succeeded Margaret Thatcher. However, in one important respect the SNP is to join the establishment in that it now believes that Nicola Sturgeon should succeed Alex Salmond as First Minister without there being any input from the public. However, I think that it is even slightly more embarrassing than that, because if we look at the ballot paper that people completed for the 2011 Scottish election, we can see that it says beside the words “Scottish National Party”:

“Alex Salmond for First Minister”.

Hundreds of thousands of Scots elected the Government on the basis that it would be Alex Salmond who would be the First Minister. There is the democratic deficit writ large for all to see. [*Laughter.*]

Christina McKelvie: Will Jackson Carlaw take an intervention?

Jackson Carlaw: No, thank you. I know from the speech that Ms McKelvie gave yesterday afternoon that she has ruled herself out.

When this Parliament was founded, Edwin Morgan said that a

“nest of fearties is what they do not want.”

I therefore hope that if there is not to be a contest for the position of First Minister, there will be one for position of the deputy leader. I say that because contests provoke ideas, and the difficulty

that we have just now is that it is not altogether clear what the SNP believes the next 18 months of this Parliament will be used to do.

For the past three years we have been told that the only solution to anything is independence. That solution is now off the agenda. When Gavin Brown challenged John Swinney as to when we might have a debate on the Government's programme, Joe FitzPatrick shook his head as if Gavin Brown were being completely unreasonable. I hope that we are not going to be expected to wait until the outcome of the SNP leadership election in November before Parliament is told what the business of the next 18 months will be. We need to know what the SNP's ambition for Scotland is for the next 18 months on the issues that now need the attention that has been denied them. I see that Mr FitzPatrick wants to tell me when we will have that debate.

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Joe FitzPatrick): I can confirm that Mr Swinney will provide in his closing speech the information that Mr Carlaw seeks.

Jackson Carlaw: I look forward to that.

However, I hope that we get a proper contest from the SNP for the deputy leadership. I want to see campaigns up and about for "Chic for chief", "Joan for justice" and "Sandra for Glasgow UDI". Yesterday, I saw Mr Mackay and Mr Yousaf having a Granita-type conversation in the Scottish Parliament canteen. I hope that they all stand and give us the opportunity to see a proper contest.

Presiding Officer, I think that the final challenge is one to which you alluded at the start of our proceedings yesterday. In 2016, this Parliament will be quite different. The MSPs who are elected will need to understand what the contract of employment will be. The business that we will have to conduct will be quite different. Hugh Henry, myself, Jack McConnell and others in the previous Parliament queried the way in which we are established. It may well be that we will require to sit on more days of the week. It may well be that Parliament will need to ensure that the MSPs who are here in the next Parliament are properly resourced. It may need to be that MPs who have previously seen their career being at Westminster see it as being here. I would like to see Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs coming here. That would be a bit harder for us—[*Laughter.*]—and, in the case of the SNP, certainly a lot less productive.

The people of Scotland are now looking at the referendum result in the rear-view mirror. The view now through the windscreen is forward to the business of the next 18 months, the establishment and delivery of the additional settled powers to this Parliament and ensuring that the Parliament that

meets in 2016 when those powers start to arrive is capable of giving proper scrutiny and leadership to the people of Scotland.

16:30

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Many members have spoken over the past two days of the privilege of participating in the referendum campaign. For me, there was the added dimension of fighting that campaign in my constituency of East Lothian. Not only is East Lothian the birthplace of the saltire—by legend, a gift from God to King Angus of the Picts—but it is also the birthplace of the very idea of a union between Scotland and England.

John Mair—philosopher, rationalist, born in Tantallon and educated in Haddington—was the very first to suggest, 500 years ago, that collaboration in a negotiated union rather than destructive competition, which in those days was often on the battlefield, was a better future for Scotland. It was an idea that waited 200 years for its time to come and, as the First Minister pointed out yesterday, 300 more for democratic endorsement, which it now has, and resoundingly so.

Of course, that endorsement was not for the union that was envisaged by Mair, but rather for the vision that was elaborated last century by an adopted son of East Lothian, John P Mackintosh, who argued the case for a powerful Scottish Parliament in a strong and modern United Kingdom. We stand now in the very embodiment of that, with Mackintosh's words etched into the very stone of our Parliament on the threshold of the Donald Dewar room and devolution etched into our very body politic by not one but now two referenda. So I am proud that, last Thursday, East Lothian said no to independence and yes to a devolved Scotland as part of the United Kingdom, and that Scotland itself followed suit.

Many have praised the electorate and celebrated the fact that an unprecedented 85 per cent turned out to vote, and rightly so. However, it is not enough to praise the electorate or celebrate their numbers. We must respect their decision or we treat them with contempt. It is quite wrong to suggest, as the First Minister did at the weekend and Joan McAlpine did again today, that "no" voters were tricked by promises on new powers. I could as easily argue that yes voters were gulled by wildly exaggerated promises of oil revenues or dishonest threats to the NHS.

As for promises unravelling, I could ask what happened to the promise that the referendum would settle the independence question for a lifetime. How many hours did that promise last? The truth is that any politician who tries to tell

voters that they were fooled is naught but the fool themselves.

John Mason: Will the member give way?

Iain Gray: Briefly.

John Mason: I take the point that the member is making. Would he accept that, the day after a Conservative and Lib Dem victory at Westminster, he and his party would accept and respect that but immediately start working for another victory?

Iain Gray: The member cannot seriously be equating a fundamental constitutional question such as this with the normal run of elections.

Anyone who fought this campaign knows that, however people voted, they had thought long and hard. There was no monopoly of logic, scepticism, altruism, enthusiasm, pride, passion or above all patriotism on either side of the ballot paper, nor of hope or fear. Let me make a general point about hope, because many speakers have talked about it. Hope is a precious commodity, and politics should always nurture hope, but the peddling of false hope is the prerogative of the snake oil salesman down the centuries, and we should call it out wherever it is offered.

As Lewis Macdonald made clear in his contribution, democracy denies us the luxury of claiming that people were voting for or against this or that. It demands that we accept the verdict they deliver on the question that we put before them. So we on the no side must acknowledge that a substantial number of people voted yes, and the yes side must accept that the outcome was a decisive majority of more than 10 per cent. Almost 25 per cent more people said no to independence than said yes. Above all, we must all respect the decision. Someone wrote:

"And when you gaze long into an abyss the abyss also gazes into you."

It has been an energetic and inspirational campaign and many members have provided stories of that, most memorably perhaps Georgie-boy Adam and perhaps most eloquently Alison Johnstone towards the end. We have also heard stories of its divisiveness, not least from Alison McInnes in her closing speech. Of another nation, Lincoln said:

"A house divided against itself cannot stand."

A historic decision has been taken, but real choices remain. We on this side can ignore the message of that substantial yes vote, but that would be foolish. A no vote was still a vote for a changed Scotland. We must deliver on the promises made, and we will. The Government could choose to lead Scotland to the endless revisitation of the people's decision and condemn

this nation to continuing uncertainty. That would be irresponsible.

Alternatively, we can unite behind the outcome, disagreeing where we must but, on the fundamental question of independence, healing the divisions because we can. That is surely our obligation. Let us not seek to make a distinction between how young and old voted, or between men and women, or city and rural Scotland. Let us not look for ambiguity in a clear result. Instead, let us look for the common ground: yes and no voters want Scotland to prosper and to be fairer.

On our economic prospects, last week Alex Salmond talked about the Scotland of Adam Smith, but Adam Smith said:

"The Union was a measure from which infinite Good has been derived to this country."

That is the authentic discourse of the enlightenment echoing down to us, but we can find it right here in the white paper. Look at the economic platform. It says that we must have a stable currency union, the Bank of England as the lender of last resort, membership of the EU, a single energy market, a single financial services regulatory system, UK-wide research funding, access to Ministry of Defence contracts and, of course, free movement of people, goods and services across the UK. Those are the real job-creating powers that we have now, that are secure. Having rediscovered that, our job is to rededicate ourselves to using them to the maximum benefit of Scotland, its businesses and its people—to win even more investment in our renewables industry, and to help our universities to attract yet more funding for ever more imaginative, innovative and brilliant research.

Let us turn to the thirst for social justice that the campaign revealed on all sides. How profoundly we have had to revisit those principles of pooling and sharing resources, and how we distribute wealth and opportunity as well as power. The people have decided that we do that, but that we do it within the framework of a united kingdom and strengthened devolution. Let us not dedicate ourselves to questioning that but to making it work.

I have one example. Labour announced yesterday that it will tax properties that are worth £2 million and use the proceeds for the NHS. In truth, there might not be many such properties, relatively speaking, in Scotland. However, it is exactly the pooling and sharing of resources across the UK that means that we can tax the mansions in Belgravia and redistribute some of the proceeds to employ general practitioners and health visitors in Easterhouse, Muirhouse and Whitfield if we have the will to do that.

I turn to the common ground of the franchise. I agree with so many members that 16 and 17-year-

olds' exercise of their votes was exemplary and I add my voice to those from all sides who say that they should now have the vote in all elections.

If we choose to look forward from the referendum decision, not always to look back at it; if we choose to stand on the common ground that it has cleared for us and do so with open minds, then we can see that we are in the foothills of great progress.

It is no secret that I once aspired to be First Minister, nor that it was the people's will that that was not my destiny—damn them. If Ms Sturgeon, as seems likely, succeeds to that privileged office, she will have earned it by her hard work, but it will be hers only by that expression of the people's will three years ago, which I interpret rather more generously than Mr Carlaw did.

She will also inherit the solemn mandate of last Thursday: that the people of Scotland charge her with taking this nation forward in the enduring historic partnership of the United Kingdom—four nations, but one family. She can choose to accept that mandate and seek to unite us, or she can choose to dispute it, which will certainly divide us. She cannot do both.

We cannot speak truly of unity in the language of division. We cannot heal with words to wound. We cannot have John Swinney at 2.40 describing the referendum as a model of democracy, and Sandra White at 3 pm saying that it was not fair. We cannot declaim one Scotland on Friday and declare permanent revolution on Sunday, as the First Minister did.

We will hear what Ms Sturgeon has to say in the days ahead, but, as politicians, we should remember this every day: vox populi, vox dei. The voice of the people is the voice of God. Scotland's people spoke last Thursday. They spoke in plain English, Lallans, Doric and Norn, and even in what my leader calls the tongue of God, Gaelic. They said that we are better, we are bigger and we are always stronger together. [*Applause.*]

16:43

John Swinney: The debate has been a fascinating tour round the referendum campaign from all perspectives and we have had some intriguing insights into how people occupied themselves during the past four weeks of their lives. I do not often say this, but I am glad that I was not in Paisley during the referendum campaign, because I would not have liked to be an observer of what on earth George Adam was getting up to.

We have heard accounts of all that has been going on from around the country. Perhaps the

greatest test of our imagination was the one that Jackson Carlaw gave us of

“a Granita-type conversation in the Scottish Parliament canteen.”

I am still wrestling with that concept in my mind: how could Jackson Carlaw have inadvertently conflated the Granita restaurant with the Scottish Parliament canteen? The similarity is food, but I suspect that the similarity ends there—unless he is going to a different part of the canteen from the one that I go to. Nonetheless, it was an interesting test of the imagination.

Let me reflect on one of the points in this debate on which everyone has been agreed. Alison McInnes, Iain Gray and others have forcefully made the point about the contribution of 16 and 17-year-old voters to the electoral process. Not everyone said initially that it was a good idea—I seem to remember that there was division in the Parliament about whether it should happen, but we reached agreement, it happened and was legislated for, and everybody in this chamber now agrees that giving the vote to 16 and 17-year-olds is the right thing to do. However, we cannot do anything about it. We do not have the legislative power in this Parliament to effect what every one of us agrees is the right thing to do. I do not say that in order to put division out there; I just state it as one of those indelible facts that Iain Gray and Jackson Carlaw were going on about. It is a fact. Every one of us is in total and vigorous agreement about 16 and 17-year-olds having the right to vote in all elections, but we cannot put that into practice.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I agree with the cabinet secretary that this Parliament should of course have the ability to resolve that issue, as well as other electoral issues that affect this Parliament. However, I would say that, if we get that power, or if a change is made in some other place so that voting at 16 becomes the norm, voter education for young people, particularly in a school context, will have to be achieved. The consistency that we sought in the referendum, which was not achieved everywhere, will have to be achieved as well. Does the cabinet secretary agree that voter education is something that we could crack on with right now, while we continue to make the case for votes at 16, whether that is decided here or elsewhere?

John Swinney: I am all for effective, dispassionate voter education. One of the things that irritated me during the referendum campaign was people saying, “I don't have enough information.” On a daily basis, I could hardly get in my front door for information sitting behind it. There is a lot that we can do to encourage and motivate voter education in a dispassionate way, and the Government will play its part in that.

To return to my point, there is consensus—a universal opinion—in this Parliament that 16 and 17-year-olds should be able to vote in all contests, but we do not have the legislative ability to put that into practice.

I am sure that the Government, along with the leadership of all the other political parties, will sign a letter to the Prime Minister to say, “Look, we should have the franchise extended to 16 and 17-year-olds.” I am all for that. We can all work together on that. However, crucially, we cannot control whether that happens. That is one of the points of regret that I have about the outcome of the referendum.

Lewis Macdonald: Does the cabinet secretary accept that the election next year of a United Kingdom Government that would legislate for 16 and 17-year-olds to have the vote would bring that benefit not only to Scotland but to the rest of the UK as well?

John Swinney: Of course it would. That is a statement of fact. I am only making the point that here we are, a bunch of grown-up people who have been elected by the Scottish electorate to represent the interests of our country in this place, and we cannot make that decision. Instead, we must wait for somebody else to decide that it is right to do so. That is simply a point of regret that I have about the outcome of the referendum.

One of the major points of debate today has been the focus on the issue of inequality that emerged in the referendum. None of us could have failed to be struck by the amount of the debate that concentrated on the desire of individuals to tackle the enduring inequality that has built up in our society. Before the referendum, we debated endlessly the Scottish Government's position that the United Kingdom was the fourth most unequal country in the world. Mr Fraser and others took issue with that position but, nevertheless, all of us would accept that inequality was a central part of the debate that we had during the referendum campaign.

That issue also had an effect in motivating the high turnout from areas of the country that—as Sandra White, George Adam, Bob Doris and others mentioned—have previously not participated in elections or contests, because people in those places never saw any point in doing so. Why did they participate this time? Because they saw the opportunity that was presented by the referendum. Some of them might have turned out to vote no, but lots of them turned out to vote yes. Crucially, lots of them turned out because they saw the referendum as a means of addressing the inequality that exists in our society.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): The cabinet secretary makes a serious point. Why, therefore,

was there so little redistributive policy in the white paper?

John Swinney: I say with the greatest of respect to Mr Findlay that I am trying to move the debate on to some of the issues that we—*[Laughter.]* Are we not supposed to be moving on positively? I hear Mr Brown guffawing. I thought that we were supposed to be moving on positively.

My point is that people were motivated by the desire to tackle those issues of inequality and that, in the Parliament, we should take that message seriously in the arguments that we advance. That is why I was somewhat bewildered by Malcolm Chisholm's speech, in which, if I understood him correctly, he asked the Government to do something to assess income inequality. The Government has very little ability to affect issues of income inequality, but it has the opportunity to assess the policy commitments that it makes through the equalities impact assessment that it undertakes annually. I would have thought that Mr Chisholm would welcome that.

Malcolm Chisholm: My point was about finding out what effect all the Government's policies and legislation have on various income groups and to what extent they are part of combating poverty.

John Swinney: That is done by the Government's equalities impact assessment. I would have thought that Mr Chisholm would know that.

Another point that was made in the debate concerned the importance of decentralising commitments and provisions to different parts of the country. Mr Chisholm criticised us again for apparently abolishing the fairer Scotland fund, which was all about tackling inequality. We did not abolish the fairer Scotland fund; we devolved the fund to local government in exactly the fashion that the Labour Party demands that we decentralise significant resources. We devolved £1 billion to local government, and Labour moans like billy-oh about what we have done. Perhaps we would take it a bit more seriously if it did not do that.

One of the other central points in the debate was the promise of more powers. I set out in my earlier speech the Scottish Government's willingness to take part in the process over which Lord Smith is presiding and to give good will and commitment.

Dr Murray said that David Cameron's attempts to link the Scottish process with the process in England were ridiculous and unacceptable and I agree with her in that respect. However, that rather explains why we were getting agitated over the weekend that there was some backsliding on the solemn commitments—the vow; we cannot call it a pledge, because “pledge” is a somewhat

devalued term in some parts of the chamber—and it is perhaps why Alistair Darling felt it necessary to say on television on Sunday:

“It was promised, it’s got to be delivered, and anyone who”

betrays

“on that will pay a very heavy price for years to come.”

It was not just the Scottish Government thinking that some backsliding was going on; it was clear even in the heart of the better together campaign that that was happening.

That brings me on to the nature of what was promised. Joan McAlpine went through all that detail expertly in her speech. In the course of the referendum campaign, we were promised devo max, home rule and something akin to federalism. Call it what you want, it was an offer—a proposition—of extensive powers.

That is where Mr Carlaw made a helpful contribution—I never thought that I would live to say that about him. He said that he was embarking on the discussions with Lord Smith from the position that the sum of the position, not the division of the propositions that were being put forward, was what had to be achieved out of Lord Smith’s work.

In a sense, that captures the point that I tried to put across in my earlier speech: we must not go into that process trying to tick a few boxes and get a bit of an agreement on what powers might be transferred without thinking about the commitments that the UK political parties made to the people of Scotland, about which Joan McAlpine talked. We must live up to the expectations that were created in the 85 per cent of the population who came out to vote, the overwhelming majority of whom voted in favour of more powers for the Parliament. The 45 per cent who voted yes were clearly voting for more powers for the Parliament, but so did a sizeable proportion of those who voted no because, as we have been told, a no vote was a vote for change as well. Because those individuals voted for extensive powers, there is an overwhelming mandate in Scotland for extensive additional powers to be granted to the Parliament and, if it is to be successful, the Smith process must fulfil those expectations across the political spectrum.

Gavin Brown: Does Mr Swinney therefore disagree with his back benchers, who say that the vow will not be honoured and the promises will not be delivered? Is it wrong to say that at this stage?

John Swinney: Let us just let the process take its course. *[Interruption.]* Exactly. I am agreeing with Mr Brown. What is he getting all agitated about? *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

John Swinney: This is what gets me about parliamentary debates every so often. *[Interruption.]* When a Government is trying to advance an agenda that reflects the fact that we are trying to make genuine progress in addressing the need to strengthen the powers of the Parliament, why can that not be received with some good will from the Opposition parties rather than the sneering that we get all the time?

During the referendum campaign, a lot was said about the national health service. I want to say a couple of words about the NHS. On 17 September, the Labour Party tweeted to the assembled country:

“Worried about the future of the NHS? It’s safe with a No vote.”

On 22 September, the Labour Party tweeted to the assembled masses:

“Want to be part of saving the NHS? Join us (it only takes 3 minutes)”.

The Labour Party embarked on the referendum campaign by telling us that a no vote would secure the national health service, yet we all know that Andy Burnham is telling the country today that a no vote is delivering privatisation of the health service in exactly the way that we feared during the referendum campaign.

Mr FitzPatrick said earlier that I would set out details about the programme for government. To respond to Mr Brown’s point, the programme for government will be published once the new First Minister is elected. That has been conveyed to business managers today.

I also say to Mr Brown that Scotland is open for business; it has always been open for business. *[Interruption.]* The chancellor came to Scotland in 2011 and told us that Scotland would suffer because of having a referendum and that inward investment to Scotland would dry up. However, since 2011, we have had record years of inward investment success despite the siren warnings that somehow the constitutional process would undermine Scotland’s economy. Unemployment is falling, employment is at a record high and economic inactivity is lower than the rest of the UK, so all those siren warnings have been to no avail, given the economic performance of Scotland.

Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): So Mr Swinney is saying that Scotland has to be on pause again while the SNP gets its leadership into order.

John Swinney: We are carrying on doing all the things that we normally do, such as expanding apprenticeships—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

John Swinney: —delivering childcare, abolishing prescription charges, making sure that council tax is frozen and delivering free education for higher education students. Those are all the things that this Government has done, using the full powers of a devolved Parliament as we are able to use them to deliver economic success for the people of our country.

The Scottish Government's programme has been well set out to people in Scotland. We will continue to implement the policy programme of the Government. We will set out our budget on 9 October, reaffirming the commitment that we have made to the people of Scotland that we will use the resources at our disposal to strengthen the Scottish economy and to ensure that we protect public services in the manner that we have done to date, that we will take forward the investment in the low-carbon agenda and that we will deliver on our commitments to the people of Scotland.

The referendum last Thursday was an exercise in significant democratic participation in the wellbeing of the people of Scotland. The people came to their conclusion, which the Government accepts, but we will continue to be ambitious for the people of Scotland and to deliver the very best that we possibly can. That ambition has been at the heart of this Government since 2007, and it will remain so.

Business Motions

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-10978, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revision to the business programme for tomorrow, Thursday 25 September.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the programme of business for Thursday 25 September 2014—

after

<i>followed by</i>	Scottish Government	Debate:
	Accessible Tourism	

insert

<i>followed by</i>	Scottish Government	Debate:
	Membership of the Committee of the Regions, COSLA Nominations—[Joe FitzPatrick.]	

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-10979, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 30 September 2014

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Housing Supply

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 1 October 2014

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Infrastructure, Investment and Cities;
Culture and External Affairs

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Ryder Cup 2014

followed by Scottish Government Debate: UN Climate Summit 2014

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 2 October 2014

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
followed by Members' Business
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Stage 1 Debate: Food (Scotland) Bill
followed by Financial Resolution: Food (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 7 October 2014

2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Courts Reform (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 8 October 2014

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
 Education and Lifelong Learning
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 9 October 2014

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
followed by Members' Business
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is decision time. There are no questions to be put as result of today's business.

Skills Partnerships

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-10860, in the name of Claudia Beamish, on skills partnerships. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises what it considers the important role of Skills Partnerships in South Scotland and across the country; believes that the partnerships illustrate successful collaboration between colleges and local employers, which is in line with the recommendations of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, particularly for college courses, to meet the changing needs of local and regional economies; understands that Skills Partnerships allow particular sectors to share knowledge and best practice; recognises the value of skills partnerships across a range of sectors, including energy, finance and creative arts; considers that skills development is a crucial factor in career progression and that skills partnerships can play a major role in contributing to development; recognises that the partnerships operate throughout Scotland, which shows that the model can be applied to any college sector collaboration and is sustainable beyond the life of the project; believes that skills partnerships are a vehicle through which collaboration between colleges for outreach work can take place, especially in rural areas where courses can be inaccessible, and considers that, in the case of energy skills partnerships, this approach ensures that the right skills are being delivered and Scotland has the workforce, skills and competence required by all sectors and ensures that the industry can grow to meet increased demand and embrace new technologies, as well as offering transferable skills courses to allow Scotland to move toward a low-carbon economy.

17:02

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I am pleased to bring to the chamber this very practical debate, and I thank my Labour and cross-party colleagues for signing my motion, which allows us to discuss the value of developing skills partnerships in Scotland.

As I am sure we are all aware, skills partnerships can take many forms and are structured to a greater or lesser degree of formality. They all have in common the purpose of developing the skills of people who work in particular sectors through knowledge sharing, placements, courses or funding. In many cases, colleges or other educational institutions work alongside professional organisations to develop the skills of graduates or school leavers, which enables geographical sharing and in many cases avoids the duplication of courses.

Secure jobs with a fair wage are at the heart of our future. The development of skills partnerships is invaluable in helping to drive forward job opportunities, career development and

transferable skills in all sectors, although the fair wage is, of course, also driven by Government commitments.

There are many different types of partnership that focus on the range of skills that are required in the working world. I am sure that members in the chamber will want to focus on particular areas, depending on their interests and the relevance to their constituencies.

I will give an overview of a selection of skills partnerships—not only existing partnerships, but those with potential, such as rural, financial and hospitality partnerships. I will also focus more closely on energy skills partnerships, on which a lot of good work has already been done and which hold great potential for our low-carbon future.

Members will be aware of the good work that is done by Skills Development Scotland, which works with a wide range of national and local partners to support people and businesses to develop and apply skills, helping them to reach their potential.

The ability to react to the changing structure of the economy, which is SDS's stated aim, is essential for creating skills that are fit for purpose and a strong skills base across Scotland's workforce in a number of sectors.

Through its skills investment plans, SDS works to ensure that future employment demands are met and to allow the economy to grow in a sustainable way. Sectors such as engineering, life sciences, tourism, finance and food and drink are all addressed by SDS's investment plans. New College Lanarkshire, which has campuses throughout the area, is doing a fine job of developing skills through partnerships. As well as working alongside the University of Stirling to develop a potential degree programme in dental nursing, the college is working with SDS and the local authority on areas such as engineering, through the modern apprenticeship scheme on its Motherwell campus.

As a regional MSP for South Scotland and a member of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, I have a keen interest in rural affairs. A number of skills partnerships are aimed at developing skills in rural and farming sectors. Those partnerships will, I hope, help our young people so that they do not have to leave their communities. In Dumfries and Galloway, a project was launched recently to help young people to work in the dairy sector. That unique partnership, which has been created by Scotland's Rural College, NFU Scotland, Dumfries and Galloway employment total access point and SDS, offers school leavers 12-week placements on local farms. As the college points out on its website,

"Host farmers will have the benefit of working with a young trainee, while the wider local dairy sector will benefit from an increase in 'work ready' individuals with references."

We all know that people in the hospitality sector are often poorly paid and that there are poor career development paths. Skills partnerships can play a major role in ensuring that young people in particular can expand their skill sets and increase their employment options. The skills partnerships tend to be based on specific accredited courses. In Glasgow, young people who are still at school and who are looking to get into the hospitality business can take a course at the equivalent of standard grade, which is delivered in partnership with schools and a college. Such vocational courses give people an understanding of the various roles and responsibilities in the sector, from working in a kitchen to working front of house, and allow people to develop skills in communication, numeracy and problem solving.

The energy market can be organised in many ways, and it can be challenging for community groups to develop community energy plans. I have been working with Jen Ross from the University of Edinburgh and organisations that are active in community energy to develop a MOOC—for members who do not know, a MOOC is a massive open online course—on community energy, which could be classed as a skills partnership in itself.

My visit to Ayrshire College renewable energy department earlier this year, where I met lecturers and students, highlighted for me the great changes that have been happening in Scotland. All plumbing and electrical courses now include renewables awareness. There were roofs to fit solar systems on and turbines to allow students to develop maintenance skills. Ayrshire College is part of the energy skills partnership and works with the Crichton campus in Dumfries and others.

SDS and the energy skills partnership have done a great deal of work on energy. In August, at a meeting in Hamilton, I discussed the work that SDS is doing in the energy sector. I was encouraged to hear that a number of funding initiatives have been put in place to realise the Scottish Government's ambition, which we all share, to create a low-carbon economy in Scotland and to give real strength to new jobs.

I was particularly encouraged by the work of energy skills Scotland, an arm of SDS that was established by the Scottish Government in partnership with industry. It is a way of simplifying access to a range of energy skills, resources and support across the public sector, and it involves collaborative relationships with academia, industry, skills stakeholders and the public sector. Energy skills Scotland quite rightly recognises the need for tailored courses. I hope that, through our discussion of such courses, we will raise

awareness of the opportunities that exist for people who want to diversify their skill sets.

By promoting a number of career pathways for students, it is possible that, through the energy skills partnership, Scotland's colleges can turn that sort of support into real job opportunities. That will also contribute to achieving the Government's energy ambition and help us all to tackle climate change.

As an MSP for a largely rural region, South Scotland, I am aware of the challenges that face people who live in remote and inaccessible areas when it comes to accessing courses. There is significant potential for outreach programmes in that regard, and I hope that the cabinet secretary will comment on the potential for developing such programmes through Scottish Government support.

The issue might be logistically challenging, but it is imperative that it is addressed if we are to enable young people to stay in our communities. The Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee heard a lot about that this morning. I see that fellow members of the committee, such as Angus MacDonald, have remained here for the debate. Outreach programmes are an essential way forward.

I hope that the cabinet secretary will reassure us on the matter and, more broadly, tell us about skills partnerships that the Scottish Government intends to support, to improve job opportunities for young people, people who are transferring skills and people who are returning to work when maternity leave and other issues, such as mental ill health, have created a gap in their employment record. I hope that the cabinet secretary will comment in that regard.

17:11

Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I congratulate Claudia Beamish on securing the debate. Few things are more important than equipping the next generation with the skills that they need if they are to earn a living. It is about enabling our young folk not just to get jobs but to secure meaningful careers as the basis on which to build fulfilling and productive lives.

Few sectors offer greater opportunities in that regard than does the energy sector. I am disappointed that our further education sector did not realise the opportunities that the energy sector presents much earlier.

That was brought home to me in 2005, when I became aware of the Islay wave bus—the first bus in the world to be powered by wave energy. The wave bus was brought into service around 2002, but it broke down shortly after its arrival, and sat

unrepaired and unused ever since. The reason for that unfortunate situation was that no one appeared to have the skills or ability to fix the bus. Back then, I met a lot of people who understood the theory behind renewable technologies but very few who understood the nuts and bolts and the practicalities.

I am afraid that often that is still the case. The situation has hardly improved throughout much of the Highlands and Islands. For instance, numerous small wind turbines have developed problems and broken down because repair and maintenance skills are much rarer than they ought to be. Problems often arise as a result of faulty installation, sometimes simply because the turbines are not properly torqued down on their concrete bases, which sets up a vibration that can destroy gear boxes and bearings.

That is basic engineering. The skills shortage in an industry that has so much promise is unacceptable. Installation of small-scale renewable technologies across much of the Highlands and Islands is severely limited and is much more expensive than it ought to be, because of the lack of installers who have the necessary microgeneration certification scheme approvals.

Correcting the situation is a challenge and an opportunity for our further education sector. Partnerships with employers should predominate. I was greatly impressed by the Nigg skills academy, which I visited earlier in the summer. I am delighted that the Scottish Government has supported the academy, which operates in partnership with industry and offers meaningful and appropriate training. I congratulate Alastair Kennedy, the facility's chair, on the excellent work that he is doing, and I applaud his ambition to expand the facility, either on site or under a franchise model, so that the approach can be used elsewhere. The skills that are taught at the academy are appropriate to the oil and gas and renewables sectors, in which we are told that there are significant skills shortages.

I was also pleased to learn that the most highly skilled welders are often women. That is interesting, as it challenges preconceptions about some of our career and employment opportunities. We need to overcome the cultural perception that such careers are unpleasant, unrewarding and only for men. We must encourage our further education sector to become better at anticipating economic opportunities and developments and to offer training in appropriate and relevant disciplines. We must also encourage it to work more closely with industry and employers to ensure that training dovetails better with actual requirements. Skills partnerships are a step in the right direction.

17:15

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I am more than happy to take part in the debate although, as I discovered when I made a few opening remarks at an event in my constituency last Saturday to commemorate the life and works of James Clerk Maxwell, I now have considerable difficulty in speaking any language other than what I can only call referendumspeak. So focused have all our efforts been over the past month that talking about anything else requires—for me, at least—great powers of concentration, which I hope I have. I will try hard not to stray from the subject of the motion.

Like other members, I congratulate Claudia Beamish on bringing the debate to the chamber this evening. I will concentrate my few remarks on the impact that skills partnerships can, and indeed should, have in rural Scotland. I very much agree with the section of the motion that states that the Parliament

“believes that skills partnerships are a vehicle through which collaboration between colleges for outreach work can take place, especially in rural areas where courses can be inaccessible, and considers that, in the case of energy skills partnerships, this approach ensures that the right skills are being delivered”.

Ever since I became an MSP, I have tried to argue, wherever it is right to do so, that colleges in particular, although also our universities, should deliver the skills and training that are most needed within their local economies. Although that applies in all parts of Scotland, it applies nowhere more than in Dumfries and Galloway, where a perfect example of the worth of skills partnerships can be found. The cabinet secretary will be aware of that example, as she visited it in April 2013.

Scottish Power is at the start of a massive and, some would say, long overdue investment programme in south-west Scotland, which involves the renewal and replacement of almost all its existing infrastructure. That is opening up a wealth of opportunities for skilled engineering and construction jobs, and Scottish Power, in its wisdom, has identified that, alongside the required training, local knowledge could only be of benefit to employees in such a rural part of the country. Therefore, in conjunction with Dumfries and Galloway College, SP Energy Networks has developed a specialist 12-week course to provide a group of already semi-qualified and semi-skilled individuals with the necessary training to become fully qualified main overhead line contractors with automatic full-time employment guaranteed on completion of the course. That has to be an almost perfect example of the theory of skills partnerships delivering the best possible outcome in a practical way, with local people being trained locally in skills that are badly needed within the local economy. It cannot possibly get any better than that, although

there are many other fine examples, of which Claudia Beamish mentioned some.

Nevertheless, I suspect that there will be many examples of skills partnerships being less effective and not quite as joined up in their thinking. In some cases, there may be a danger of them becoming a tick-box exercise. I sometimes ask myself whether skills partnerships are really effective within the hospitality sector—which has been mentioned—and within public service. I suspect that they are not, but I am totally open to argument on that. We should perhaps take a long, hard look at the many and varied examples of skills partnerships that now exist throughout the country, evaluating which work best in delivering for their local economy and taking a hard look at those that do not. As always, we should then encourage and expand the identified examples of best practice and think again about the rest.

17:20

Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland (Lab)): I, too, congratulate Claudia Beamish on securing the debate, which is a welcome opportunity to discuss skills partnerships and their contribution to the economy not just in the south of Scotland but across all Scotland. I also add that I am the joint convener of the cross-party group on skills.

In recent years, the college sector has rightly been the focus of rigorous debate in the Parliament. However, just as we debate our differences so, too, must we recognise innovation, progress and potential.

The purpose of skills partnerships is to provide a better level of collaboration among Scotland's colleges, training providers and specific industries. Their purpose is also to map the opportunities available in different sectors, to plan the investment needed to nurture those opportunities and then to co-ordinate how those opportunities are made available to people who are training, progressing into work or looking for a decent start in life. Training and college learning can better reflect the realities of work in key sectors, with a greater emphasis on workplace learning and more of an understanding in the further education sector of the skills needs of industry.

The motion and the Wood commission report draw particular attention to the energy skills partnership, and that is what I will focus my remarks on. We can see how that partnership is making a difference in the south of Scotland through the overhead linesman training at Dumfries and Galloway College, the prospect of further training in jointing and cabling and the work with SDS, Dumfries and Galloway College and Ayr College to develop wind turbine training. However,

the energy skills partnership serves Scotland as a whole. It must assess the demands and the skills needs of the energy sector in every part of Scotland and focus partners and providers on addressing them.

In my region, South Lanarkshire College, Forth Valley College and New College Lanarkshire all participate in the energy skills partnership. South Lanarkshire College, in conjunction with the local authority and Skills Development Scotland, has established an energy academy on its campus. Working with business, the energy academy helps build the capacity of companies that can create green jobs in the installation of microrenewables, energy efficient boilers and the maintenance of wind turbines.

The energy skills partnership ensures that the good work in South Lanarkshire to strengthen the skills base in energy does not happen in isolation. Throughout the energy sector, the skills partnership helps to meet the demands of employers and the aspirations of trainees. It develops pathways for progression into work or further learning and it can and, indeed, must help us to green the Scottish economy.

The collaborative effort, exemplified in skills partnerships, is essential in developing skills in the energy sector and in other sectors of importance to the Scottish economy. Partnership is not enough. We need to see results. We need to support our colleges, our training providers and local employers. What we have before us is not the finished article but a model and a principle on which to build.

17:23

The Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women's Employment (Angela Constance): I am very grateful to Claudia Beamish for her practical motion and the consensual debate that has ensued. She is quite right to highlight the tremendously important work of skills partnerships in the south of Scotland and across the country, along with the crucial role of our colleges and employers.

This Government has long been committed to developing a skills system aligned to employer and local labour market demand. Even prior to the report of the commission for developing Scotland's young workforce, we believed that it is critical to Scotland's economic growth that we provide employers with a workforce with the right skills and expertise to enable them to compete in what is becoming an increasingly international market. That is reflected in the Government's economic strategy and the post-16 reforms.

I believe that that commitment has put Scotland in a good place. Findings from the UK

Commission for Employment and Skills show that employers in Scotland are doing more to develop the skills of their staff than employers in the rest of the UK—65 per cent of employees are receiving training. In addition, the majority of employers find education leavers to be well prepared for work, and 78 per cent of employers are satisfied with the work-readiness of college leavers. However, that does not mean that we can sit back. We must ensure that employers continue to have access to a highly skilled workforce and, importantly, that our young people have the chance to start and progress in the exciting careers that can and should be available.

I was pleased that Claudia Beamish mentioned the good work that Skills Development Scotland is doing through the development of the sectoral skills investment plans. She is right that that is being done in partnership with industry and wider partners. We are seeking to better understand what skills and expertise employers need now and in the future so that we can align our provision accordingly.

A number of those plans have already been published for sectors such as the energy and digital technologies sectors, and further reports for other sectors are due later in the year. The key benefit of those plans is that they are developed collaboratively between employers and the public sector, as are the actions that are agreed to meet the skills demands.

Building on that success, SDS has also been working with the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council, local authorities and others to develop regional skills assessments to help to improve understanding of the skills and labour market demands that exist in the regions. I believe that that is particularly important for the Highlands and Islands and rural Scotland. Those skills assessments will provide valuable information and insight to help college regions and wider employability providers understand what employers in their regions need.

As the motion highlights, a number of highly successful skills partnerships are already operating across Scotland, including the highly successful energy skills partnership, which a number of members have mentioned. Those partnerships provide a great vehicle for employers to engage with learning and training providers to allow them to inform and influence provision to better meet their needs. That can only benefit employers and, crucially, the employment prospects of young men and women across Scotland. However, as has been said, we must ensure that the skills investment plans connect with all the various partnerships and, in particular, with the young workforce agenda. We must try collaboratively to corral the extensive work that is

being done in the various sectors. Ms Beamish also referred to the important connections with the low-carbon economy and the on-going aim of tackling climate change, to which all parliamentarians are signed up.

I am grateful for the opportunity to reiterate the importance of the ambitions that are outlined in the report of the commission for developing Scotland's young workforce. As I said to Parliament earlier this year, I believe that its conclusions are inarguable, and I judge it to be imperative that we transform the employment prospects of young people in Scotland. That is why we are working jointly with local government and others—including, crucially, employers—on that agenda, and implementation plans will be brought back to Parliament later in the autumn.

I acknowledge that, as Claudia Beamish outlined, in implementing the recommendations of the young workforce commission, we are building on an array of exciting and innovative partnerships across the country. Claudia Beamish and Margaret McCulloch spoke about the good work that is being done in Lanarkshire and about the importance of such partnerships to sustaining the rural economy. Ms Beamish, in particular, mentioned the importance of flexible outreach courses, particularly the MOOCs. I give her an undertaking that I or Mr Russell will write to her to give her a good overview of provision in that area and the plans to make improvements in it.

The Scottish funding council has been looking at this area for a number of years now, and it has established some important learning networks.

As for the disappointment that Mike MacKenzie expressed and the critique that he made, I draw his attention to the good work that has been done by Energy Skills Scotland and the Scottish Government with regard to the massive, £0.5 million investment in the wind and marine training network. We have also made good progress with wind turbine operations and maintenance modern apprenticeships. Energy Skills Scotland has been successful in ensuring 1,000 transitional training places in the energy sector, which is particularly important for some of the groups that Ms Beamish mentioned in her speech.

I should say to Alex Fergusson that I remember that great visit to Dumfries and Galloway College, which is doing great work with significant employers in the energy sector. Indeed, I was quite overwhelmed when I saw the young people climbing on the overhead lines to carry out crucial maintenance work. It is a great example of collaboration.

We need to keep a close eye on and scrutinise what works, because we will always learn from what works as well as what does not work quite as

effectively. However, the important thing about skills partnerships is that they are, indeed, partnerships and that they are done collaboratively. We have talked in detail about the energy skills partnership, and I have no doubt that its success will be replicated in other sectors across Scotland. However, as I am sure Mr Fergusson will accept, we have to work collaboratively with employers. It is not a simple matter of Government telling employers what to do.

Finally, I pay tribute to the good work that is being done with colleges the length and breadth of Scotland. They are outward looking, are embracing change and are working very closely with employers to improve the employment prospects of people of all ages.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes Claudia Beamish's members' business debate on skills partnerships.

Meeting closed at 17:32.

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