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Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 1 October 2014

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CONTENTS

	Col.
PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME	1
INVESTMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CITIES	1
Full Fiscal Autonomy (Infrastructure, Investment and Cities Strategic Planning)	1
Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal	2
Road Transport Projects (South Scotland)	3
Aberdeen Harbour Development	4
Child Benefit Freeze (Impact on Child Poverty)	5
Local Bus Services (Hospitals and Other Essential Services)	7
Help to Buy Scheme	8
Child Benefit Cap (Impact on Poverty)	9
CULTURE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS	10
Edinburgh International Culture Summit (Positive Outcomes)	10
Historic Buildings Renovation (West Scotland)	11
2014 Major Events Strategy (Analysis)	12
International Development Fund (Kurdistan Region of Iraq)	13
Traditional Scottish Music and Dance (Support)	15
Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Meetings)	16
Museums and Libraries (Closures)	17
RYDER CUP 2014	19
<i>Motion moved—[Shona Robison].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners' Rights (Shona Robison)	19
Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)	22
Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	25
Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP)	27
John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)	29
Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)	30
Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)	31
Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP)	33
Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab)	35
Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP)	36
Liz Smith	37
Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab)	39
Shona Robison	41
UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE SUMMIT 2014	45
<i>Motion moved—[Paul Wheelhouse].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Claudia Beamish].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Jamie McGrigor].</i>	
The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse)	45
Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab)	50
Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	53
Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)	55
Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab)	56
Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)	58
Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)	59
Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP)	60
Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)	62
Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green)	64
Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)	65
Claudia Beamish	67
Paul Wheelhouse	69
BUSINESS MOTIONS	74
<i>Motions moved—[Joe FitzPatrick]—and agreed to.</i>	
DECISION TIME	76

ONLINE BENEFIT CLAIMANTS	83
<i>Motion debated—[Graeme Dey].</i>	
Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP)	83
Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP).....	86
Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)	87
Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)	89
Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)	91
David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)	92
The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess).....	94

Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 1 October 2014

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

Portfolio Question Time

Investment, Infrastructure and Cities

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): Good afternoon, everyone. The first item of business this afternoon is portfolio questions.

Full Fiscal Autonomy (Infrastructure, Investment and Cities Strategic Planning)

1. Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how full fiscal autonomy would impact on its strategic planning for areas that fall under the infrastructure, investment and cities portfolio. (S4O-03541)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Nicola Sturgeon): Control of Scotland's resources would allow the Scottish Government significant greater flexibility to invest in strategic projects with the aim of boosting economic performance, enhancing opportunity, providing better public services and improving the environment for the people of Scotland.

Sandra White: Given the role that civic society and a number of grass-roots groups play in shaping public debate around the new powers and how they can be used, how does the Scottish Government plan to include groups from across civic Scotland in the forthcoming negotiations with the Smith commission?

Nicola Sturgeon: First, I take the opportunity to welcome Lord Smith's intention to engage with civic society and the grass-roots groups that played such a key role in the referendum campaign. The importance of doing so is something that John Swinney and I stressed to Lord Smith when we met him last week.

The Scottish Government also intends to engage fully with civic Scotland and grass-roots organisations as proposals for further devolution are developed, and we will be encouraging—and do encourage—all organisations across civic Scotland to play a full role in Lord Smith's commission. He has set a deadline of the end of this month for groups to submit proposals to him, and I encourage all those with an interest to do so.

Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal

2. Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how it will introduce the Glasgow and Clyde valley city deal. (S4O-03542)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Nicola Sturgeon): Glasgow is our largest city and it forms a key part of Scotland's economy. The Scottish Government has signed a city deal for Glasgow and Clyde valley that will deliver significant benefits for the region and, I believe, for Scotland as a whole. As the member will be aware, we have committed more than £500 million to the deal, which will run for 20 years until the financial year 2034-35.

The intention is that funding will be released in five-year tranches. The release of funding will be subject to gateway reviews and is contingent on Glasgow and Clyde valley adopting satisfactory governance and assurance processes.

Drew Smith: Probably the biggest barrier to Glasgow's economic growth that this Government has created remains the issue of an effective surface transport link to Glasgow's airport. What steps will the Scottish Government now take to ensure that the opportunity of a city deal is maximised and to finally take forward a practical solution for a fast connection by rail between Glasgow city centre and Glasgow airport? Does the cabinet secretary now accept that the Scottish Government's decision to scrap the previous Glasgow airport rail link scheme, which resulted in the land on which it would have been run being sold off at considerable loss to the public purse, looks as short-sighted as it was misguided?

Nicola Sturgeon: No, I do not accept that. The reasons for that Government decision have been well rehearsed and, I think, are well understood. I know that the member was accusing the Scottish Government, and not the people of Glasgow, of being short-sighted, but I take the opportunity to say that the people of Glasgow demonstrated anything but short-sightedness when they voted yes in the referendum a couple of weeks ago. [Interruption.]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Nicola Sturgeon: On the specific question that the member asked, he will be aware that the city deal makes it clear that improvements in terms of surface access will cover the projects emerging from the Glasgow airport study, and our work on tram-train will inform those. Glasgow City Council and Renfrewshire Council are to take forward delivery, and the feasibility study in that respect is currently being finalised.

That all said, as a signal of our on-going commitment to improve rail travel in the

Renfrewshire area, we have already provided enhanced passenger services and 38 new class 380 trains, providing 130 additional carriages, through the Paisley corridor improvement. This Government remains committed to ensuring that we continue to improve rail transport, and I have no doubt that the commitment demonstrated by the city deal will allow the local authorities that are involved in it to continue to make progress as well.

James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): The feasibility study that the cabinet secretary mentioned has been on-going for some time. Can she confirm when it will be completed and when work will begin on a timetable for the introduction of the airport rail link, including budgetary implications? Also, will she state whether she has had discussions with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth about the inclusion of provisions for city deal funding in the budget that will be published next Thursday?

Nicola Sturgeon: In relation to the second part of James Kelly's question, I am sure that it will not surprise him to hear that I have frequent and regular discussions with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth. He will present his budget to the Scottish Parliament next week. I will not say any more about the budget than that at this stage, except to note that, as I said in my answer to Drew Smith's original question, the Scottish Government's commitment to the city deal has been made absolutely clear.

On the feasibility study, as I said in response to Drew Smith, we are currently finalising that work. It is important that it is done thoroughly, robustly and properly. The work has highlighted some challenges to the delivery of any rail link, and we will continue to work with the councils to address them. Of course, Glasgow City Council and Renfrewshire Council would take forward delivery of any project.

The Government's commitment to work with the councils is well understood and I think that we will continue to make progress.

Road Transport Projects (South Scotland)

3. Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government what road transport projects it plans for South Scotland. (S4O-03543)

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): The Scottish Government continues to invest in road transport projects in South Scotland in accordance with the motorway and trunk road programme and the infrastructure investment plan.

Jim Hume: The minister will be aware that freight traffic through Scottish ports has increased significantly over the past decade, with the

majority of traffic going through Stranraer and Cairnryan. That means that the A75 is experiencing a greater volume of heavy goods vehicle traffic, which is particularly affecting Springholm and Crocketford—the only two settlements on the A75 that have not been bypassed.

Does the minister share my safety concerns over the continuation of a situation in which HGVs thunder through the heart of two villages that are simply not designed for that purpose? Will he agree to meet me and local campaigners to find a solution to those safety concerns?

Keith Brown: Of course I am happy to meet the member to discuss the matter. However, it is worth pointing to the work that we have already done on the A75 Hardgrove to Kinmount project, which has a construction cost of £9 million and involved the construction of a new 3.6km section of wide, single two-lane carriageway trunk road, as well as other works that we have undertaken on the A75, such as the Dunragit bypass. A number of bypasses have been constructed and other improvements made in order to make the A75 safer. Those works could have been done some time ago, but this Government has taken them forward.

As I said, I am more than happy to meet the member to discuss the issue that he has raised.

Aberdeen Harbour Development

4. Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the proposed Aberdeen harbour development. (S4O-03544)

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): The proposed expansion has been identified as a national development in the national planning framework 3.

Aberdeen Harbour Board is currently undertaking preliminary environmental impact assessment work, along with consulting stakeholders and the public on the proposals.

Christian Allard: I know that the Scottish Government has greatly helped Fraserburgh and Peterhead harbours. What kind of assistance is the Scottish Government planning to give other north-east harbours, given the ever-increasing demands on them from sectors such as energy, tourism and, of course, fishing?

Keith Brown: Christian Allard makes a good point. Aberdeen harbour's huge success and the demand to use it have had a positive impact on other harbours in the north-east. If we can help, we will. We have engaged with those harbours. For example, I visited Montrose harbour, where we have funded additional work to help it to deal

with the additional demand that it has experienced.

We stand ready to help harbours in the north-east, not least through European fisheries funding, where that is applicable, and the Scottish Government emergency harbour scheme. Already, in excess of £16 million has been awarded to fisheries harbours in the north-east of Scotland under those schemes. That has supported harbour improvements and emergency works that have directly aided fisheries sectors.

As Christian Allard suggests, there has been a huge increase in the demand for the use of many of those harbours, some of it related to fisheries and some of it related to the overspill, as it were, from Aberdeen. We will continue to engage with the harbours to ensure that they meet that demand and encourage further demand.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland (Lab)): Will the minister confirm that the planned development of Aberdeen harbour will further support the growth of offshore renewable energy in the North Sea? Does the Scottish Government agree that the offshore wind demonstrator project in Aberdeen bay is of importance, not just locally and nationally, but to the European renewables sector as a whole?

Keith Brown: The two developments that Lewis Macdonald mentions are very much on the harbour authority's mind, which is why it is making the improvements. He will also know that a number of sites around the harbour have been taken over by the companies involved in the sectors that he mentions. That has led to a huge increase in demand, which the harbour authority is trying to address. We are supportive of that approach.

I have been to the harbour three times, I think, to speak to the people there and make sure that we help them where we can. The potential for renewables is huge but, as Lewis Macdonald also knows, there is a huge upsurge in demand in oil-related activity. We are aware of what Lewis Macdonald mentions and are supportive of what the harbour authority is trying to do, but it is for the authority in the first instance to talk to local partners and produce its plans.

Child Benefit Freeze (Impact on Child Poverty)

5. Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it has made an assessment of the impact on child poverty in Scotland of any United Kingdom Government freeze on child benefit. (S4O-03545)

The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess): Scottish Government analysis estimates that freezing the child benefit rates for the three years from 2011-12 to 2014-15

will reduce child benefit expenditure in Scotland by around £290 million. That will affect families with children where no one in the household earns more than £60,000. The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that an additional 50,000 children will be living in relative poverty by 2020 due to the UK welfare reforms. The figure could be as high as 100,000 after housing costs are taken into account. That is simply unacceptable in a country as wealthy as Scotland.

Annabelle Ewing: Does the minister share my concern that, whether the Tories or Labour get in at Westminster next year, the real losers will be the hard-pressed families in Fife and throughout Scotland who will be hit in the pocket by the real-terms cuts to child benefit that both those Westminster parties propose?

Margaret Burgess: Yes, I share the member's concerns that the continued real-terms cuts to child benefit and other working-age benefits and tax credits that the Labour Party and Conservative Party have announced will result in reductions in household incomes for families in Scotland that already struggle to make ends meet. The mantra has been "Making work pay", but that has clearly failed. Six out of 10 of our children who are in poverty now live in working households. Those households are reliant on tax credits and other benefits to raise their household incomes. Reducing their incomes in real terms only pushes them further into poverty.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Levels of child poverty are going the wrong way and it is a concern for all. The exchange between Annabelle Ewing and the minister was most interesting, because it might interest members to note that not one word in the white paper on independence or the report of the expert group on welfare sets a different course from that of the UK Government. If the minister disagrees, could she point me to the page of either document that says otherwise?

Margaret Burgess: There are a number of things in the white paper regarding reducing child poverty. The expert working group also talked about raising the minimum wage to the level of the living wage. We had our childcare package.

Jackie Baillie: What antisocial behaviour out child benefit?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Margaret Burgess: There are a number of issues, because child poverty is not simply dependent on an hourly rate of pay, as the Labour Party seems to think. It is a combination of rates of pay, the number of hours worked, the tax and welfare system, childcare and getting people into work. All of those were addressed in the white paper and all remain priorities for the Government.

Local Bus Services (Hospitals and Other Essential Services)

6. Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what consideration it has given to ensuring the continued viability of local bus services that have hospitals and other essential services on their routes. (S4O-03546)

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): Generally, the provision of local bus services and routes is a commercial matter for individual bus operators. Local transport authorities can choose to subsidise socially necessary services that are not provided commercially. Some health boards already work with local authorities and regional transport partnerships to support socially necessary bus services that provide access to local health facilities. The Scottish Government provides an annual bus service operators grant—currently £50 million—that aims to keep fares at an affordable level and support the overall bus network by enabling bus operators to run services that might not otherwise be commercially viable.

Jayne Baxter: As the minister will be aware, not all bus services are profitable but, for many people in rural and remote communities, they are essential if they are to reach vital services such as hospital out-patient appointments. If irregular or unreliable services mean that patients from remote and rural communities miss their appointments, is there scope to take a different approach to planning for and funding such vital public services by regarding them as an investment in those other services rather than a cost? Is there also scope to promote a little bit more partnership working in the cross-sectoral cost benefit analysis?

Keith Brown: That is why, as I suggested in my initial answer, both local authorities and regional transport partnerships as well as some health authorities take that approach and provide services that do not make a commercial profit. If the member is aware, however, of individual services that are unreliable or late running, there is a specific remedy for that through the traffic commissioner for Scotland. I am happy to provide the member with more information about that if she wants to seek redress in that way.

I also mentioned the £50 million BSOG. The idea behind that is to try to ensure that some services, which might not otherwise be commercially viable, can run. We can bear down on the cost of fares as well so there are provisions in place. I am more than willing to listen to further suggestions because there is a review going on with the bus users group to consider how we can better co-ordinate the services that are currently in place. I am happy to discuss that with the member

and to provide her with more information about the role of the traffic commissioner.

Help to Buy Scheme

7. Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what conclusions it has drawn from the funding for the help to buy scheme being fully allocated within three months. (S4O-03547)

The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess): The Scottish Government continues to consider the impact of all our home ownership and industry support schemes, including the help to buy (Scotland) scheme. It is clear from recent experience that that scheme has been very successful in achieving its stated aims of stimulating demand, supporting home ownership, supporting industry and encouraging wider economic activity and growth.

Ken Macintosh: I am sure that the minister will be aware of the dismay and disappointment that is felt by many potential applicants and by people in the housing industry about the funds running out so quickly. Has any analysis been carried out in particular of unmet demand for the help to buy scheme? Does the minister have a view on amending the criteria that are used to decide on applications under the help to buy scheme?

Margaret Burgess: The help to buy scheme is monitored monthly by our partners in industry, the Council of Mortgage Lenders and Homes for Scotland. The scheme has been running for a year and the demand has well exceeded the expectations of the house-building industry and the Council of Mortgage Lenders. They initially anticipated £220 million for the scheme, but the amount has been significantly higher and we topped it up by a further £50 million this financial year. However, the scheme is currently under consideration and all the issues that the member raised are under active consideration.

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): Yesterday, during the housing supply debate, the minister stated that the budget for help to buy for next year is £100 million, which is £40 million less than this year, and that applications are being sought now. When does she expect that pot to run out?

Margaret Burgess: This is a demand-led scheme, as I said. It was primarily set up to stimulate the housing industry, which it has done, and to create wider economic activity. What we have said is that £100 million has been set aside for 2015-16 and that applications are currently being made. Nobody has been prevented from making an application, and we are still monitoring the scheme monthly. I refer the member to the answer that I gave to Ken Macintosh.

Child Benefit Cap (Impact on Poverty)

8. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how an extension of the 1 per cent cap on child benefit to 2017 would impact on its poverty strategy. (S4O-03548)

The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess): Our analysis suggests that extending the 1 per cent cap would reduce child benefit expenditure in Scotland by around £10 million in 2016-17.

As outlined in my earlier response, our efforts to tackle poverty in Scotland are already being undermined by the current range of welfare and benefits changes that are being imposed by the United Kingdom Government. Our most recently published statistics show that the reduction in poverty in Scotland that we have seen in recent years is now being reversed. Overall, the changes threaten the success of our preventative approach to tackling child poverty and the actions that we are taking to improve outcomes for children and deliver the wealthier and fairer society that we aspire to.

Colin Beattie: Does the minister agree with me that Westminster should agree to devolve welfare powers to allow the Scottish Government to protect its citizens from these cuts?

Margaret Burgess: The UK parties have made much of their commitment to devolve further welfare powers, yet in their proposals they refer only to limited powers. In order to tackle poverty and protect citizens from these cuts, we want to deliver new powers for Scotland that are capable of making a real difference to people's lives. We will therefore work with the Smith commission in good faith and strongly argue the case for more powers for Scotland.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): On that basis, what would the minister do on child benefit? I give her a second chance to tell me which page of the white paper or the report of the expert group on welfare points to an approach to child benefit that is different from that of the UK.

Margaret Burgess: The Labour Party has signed up to the austerity cuts that we are already experiencing under the coalition at Westminster. We made it very clear that we would not be part of that, and we covered all those points in the white paper, as I explained in my earlier answer. It is clear that Labour is embarrassed by the position of its Westminster masters.

Culture and External Affairs

Edinburgh International Culture Summit (Positive Outcomes)

1. Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what the positive outcomes are of the international culture summit held in Edinburgh in August 2014. (S4O-03551)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The second Edinburgh international culture summit at the Scottish Parliament was hailed as a great success by participants and delegates. The summit brought together 25 international Government delegations from six continents, including speakers, arts leaders and culture experts from around the world. It was recognised as a truly global collaboration on the current role of culture and the arts, and it included calls for culture to be placed at the centre of Government policy making and for a more unified voice for the arts around the world.

My meetings with other culture ministers helped to deepen and strengthen our international links. For example, the Japanese minister is particularly interested in the Commonwealth games cultural programme and legacy as Japan prepares for the 2020 Olympic games.

In total, we received requests during the summit from 16 Governments that wished to work further with us, and we continue to explore those opportunities.

Gil Paterson: Does the cabinet secretary agree that the Edinburgh international culture summit was a unique opportunity for culture ministers, artists, thinkers and arts leaders from around the world to come together to share ideas and discuss the power, position and profile of the arts, culture and creative industries, which have enhanced Scotland's global reputation?

Fiona Hyslop: Scotland indeed has a strong global reputation for arts and culture. The opportunity to be seen as a world leader in progressing the debate has particularly enhanced the reputation of Scotland and the Parliament, and of all the participants. The summit is a unique opportunity not just to bring together ministers, but to promote direct dialogue and creative thinking between artists from all the different parts of the world.

Big challenges were presented to Scotland, but there was also a celebration of Scottish culture. The "Scottish Ten" exhibition was held in the Parliament, and the great Scottish tapestry was on show during the summit. Presiding Officer, you may be interested to know that the delegations had the opportunity to make their own mark on the

Scottish tapestry by stitching a specially commissioned summit panel. I am sure that the delegations will remember the challenges that they faced not only in thinking, but in stitching.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That goes without saying.

Historic Buildings Renovation (West Scotland)

2. Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how much it spent in 2013-14 on renovating historic buildings in West Scotland. (S4O-03552)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government supports the conservation, repair and restoration of historic buildings through Historic Scotland's work. Historic Scotland's building repair grant provided grant support totalling £974,000 in the West Scotland region in 2013-14.

Scottish Government regeneration funding also contributed to the restoration of two historic buildings in West Scotland in 2013-14—Trinity church in Irvine and the former police station in the Ardrossan health centre facility—with grants provided totalling £895,535.

Historic Scotland provides expert advice and support and is responsible for properties in care in West Scotland, carrying out conservation work, maintenance and sympathetic repair.

Mary Fee: What is the Scottish Government's strategy to encourage local people and community groups to get involved in looking after and promoting historic properties?

Fiona Hyslop: That is one of the areas that I am particularly keen on. Historic Scotland has programmes in place to help to bring communities together. There are some good examples of that, and I take part in one in my constituency.

I refer the member to "Our Place in Time", the first-ever historic environment strategy for Scotland, which involves all the relevant agencies and not just Historic Scotland. Yesterday, I had a meeting with Ken Calman from the National Trust for Scotland. All the agencies and organisations are involved in helping to identify how we can support volunteers who are working to promote their local sites. For example, Archaeology Scotland has been supporting the adopt-a-monument scheme, and we are keen to support it, too.

There are different avenues, and if the member has any particular examples that she is interested in, I am happy to provide her with details later.

2014 Major Events Strategy (Analysis)

3. Michael McMahon (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to analyse the impact of its 2014 major events strategy. (S4O-03553)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The year 2014 has been one in which we have extended a welcome to the world. Interim results have confirmed the anticipated positive impacts of what was widely regarded as the best Commonwealth games ever and the record numbers of visitors to the events that formed part of the homecoming 2014 programme.

The Ryder cup, along with Scotland's second year of homecoming and the Commonwealth games, will be the subject of independent evaluation, and the findings for each of those signature elements of Scotland's major events strategy will be published by spring 2015. We have just witnessed a very successful Ryder cup competition, which showcased yet again that Scotland is the perfect stage for major events. I am sure that the Parliament will want to join me in congratulating all those who were involved with its delivery and the European Ryder cup team on their victory. [*Applause.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Absolutely.

Michael McMahon: I certainly join the cabinet secretary in congratulating all who were involved on the success last weekend that was clearly not just for the tournament but for the whole of Scotland, as was the case with the Commonwealth games.

Does the cabinet secretary accept that the many community-based events and festivals that occurred in relation to the year of homecoming also require support if they are to continue the success that they achieved this year? How much attention will be paid to the development of and continued support for the community-based organisations that certainly made a major contribution to the year of homecoming?

Fiona Hyslop: I share the member's appreciation of all the festivals that take place in support of our major events. Obviously, the original question was about some of those major events. During the summer, we had a debate in Parliament about our community festivals, the aim of which was precisely to recognise that, although events such as the Edinburgh international festival and the Commonwealth games cultural programme are important, so too are all the community festivals that take place.

Just last week, we announced funding for the winter festivals, some of which are based on existing smaller community festivals. One of our

strengths in Scotland is that, at different times of the year, people can come here and find festivals exploding all over the country. That is part of the legacy of the years of homecoming and the themed years, and it is one way in which we can capitalise on that warm welcome that I talked about in the debate and on the fact that we are the perfect stage for people coming to visit not just in the summer but throughout the year.

International Development Fund (Kurdistan Region of Iraq)

4. Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): I declare an interest in that I have visited the Kurdistan Regional Government, at the invitation of the ministry of interior.

To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to use its international development fund to provide support to the Kurdistan region of Iraq. (S4O-03554)

The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf): The Scottish Government does not currently have any plans to provide financial support to the Kurdistan region of Iraq through our international development fund. However, we are closely monitoring the situation and remain very concerned about the plight of people who have been affected by the recent violence, which of course we condemn in the strongest possible terms.

Hanzala Malik: I am glad that the minister shares my concern about the Kurdistan region of Iraq, which has not only borne the brunt of the humanitarian crisis that has been caused by the violent progress of Isil militants but been severely underdeveloped as a result of generations of oppression. Yesterday, the minister stated that the issues in the Kurdistan region of Iraq require

“a long-term strategic approach”.—[*Official Report*, 30 September 2014; c 8.]

I agree with that whole-heartedly, and I am glad that he takes that view.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It would be helpful if you would ask a question, please.

Hanzala Malik: Given those circumstances, will the minister take steps to ensure that the long-term strategic view for the international development fund includes the Kurdistan area of Iraq, and will he support the new organisation called KISS—Kurdistan is Supported by Scotland—which is fundraising to send doctors from Scotland to refugee camps in Kurdistan, which I have visited? I look forward to the minister’s support in encouraging military and medical aid to Kurdistan.

Humza Yousaf: I recognise the work that Hanzala Malik has done in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. I am more than happy to meet him at any time to discuss ways that we could support Kurdistan, and to meet the new organisation—KISS, I think he called it. I am meeting representatives of the Kurdistan Regional Government next week, at an event that Hanzala Malik will probably also attend. I am happy to discuss further ways that we can support Kurdistan.

At the crux of Hanzala Malik’s question is the fundamental point that there must be a long-term strategic vision that protects the rights and freedoms of the people of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, and I am happy to give support in that way.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): At topical question time yesterday, I made a similar declaration to Hanzala Malik’s declaration.

Specifically on the question today, in providing humanitarian support to the Kurdish region of Iraq, would the Scottish Government consider using expertise from our national health service where appropriate, to assist if we can, and will it draw on our pharmaceutical sector, which may be able to help with access to vital medicines in refugee camps?

Humza Yousaf: I note Bob Doris’s work in Kurdistan, in Iraq and in Syria. The issues of NHS support and medicine support from Scotland’s pharmaceutical industry were raised in a meeting with Bob Doris last week. I am more than happy to explore those issues, and I think that Bob Doris is going to write some correspondence to that effect, following our meeting, to engage with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing.

Members will not find this Government coming short with any assistance that we are able to provide.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The progress made by Isil in June came as a big shock to the international community. It is clear that the group’s advance was facilitated by not just the unrest in Syria but the inability of the Iraqi army to successfully fight back in the north of Iraq. It is therefore very important that, alongside air strikes, we need to be sure that Iraq has the ability to make progress on the ground.

Will the minister join me in welcoming the announcement in September that the United Kingdom had agreed to supply heavy machineguns and 0.5 million rounds of ammunition to the Peshmerga fighters in northern Iraq?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is not a question on international aid, so you do not need to answer it, minister.

Traditional Scottish Music and Dance (Support)

5. Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support traditional Scottish music and dance. (S4O-03555)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): In recognition of Scotland's vibrant traditional arts and their importance to our cultural heritage and our national identity, the Scottish Government provides significant support to ensure that our traditional music and dance continue to flourish and to shape Scotland's culture for future generations.

Alongside promotion and support through EventScotland for major events, including homecoming Scotland 2014, the Scottish Government supports the traditional music and dance sector primarily through Creative Scotland, which disburses more than £2 million each year to organisations, individuals and festivals that directly form part of the sector. They include activity in the year of homecoming and the 2014 culture programme, as well as the fèis movement, the Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland, Hands up for Trad, BBC Alba and the "Piping Live!" festival

Dr Simpson: Some 18 years ago the previous funding body, the Scottish Arts Council, said that the dysfunctional system of traditional dance, which was made up of very small groups across Scotland, required an umbrella organisation. That organisation was set up and funded by the Scottish Arts Council for some years, but three or four years ago the grant was halved, then terminated, which meant the closure of the organisation's office in Alloa. Traditional dance no longer has a small professional umbrella organisation that focuses its activities. Will the minister comment on that?

Fiona Hyslop: I cannot comment on what happened 18 years ago, although Richard Simpson is asking about an event that occurred that many years ago. He might not be aware of this, but all the various aspects of Scottish traditional culture and arts have come together under one body called Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland—TRACS—which brings together dance, music and storytelling. Only this morning I launched the 2014 storytelling festival, which is supported by TRACS, and which brings together the traditional arts sector. It has taken forward the collaboration between music, dance and all different aspects of the Scottish traditions. I am happy to write to Richard Simpson with a wider explanation of where dance fits in that umbrella group.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Meetings)

6. Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and what matters were discussed. (S4O-03556)

The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf): The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs last met the Minister of State for Europe, the Rt Hon David Lidington MP, at a meeting of the joint ministerial committee on Europe on 16 June 2014. The readout of that meeting was provided to the convener of the European and External Relations Committee on 30 June 2014.

We often correspond with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on other matters. This week I have been in touch with the FCO about the case of Muhammad Asghar, the Scot who is currently on death row in Pakistan.

Graeme Dey: On that specific point, what representation has the Scottish Government made on behalf of Muhammad Asghar, the 70-year-old Scot who has been sentenced to death in Pakistan over blasphemy charges? As the minister will be aware, it has been reported that Mr Asghar was shot by a prison guard in the jail in Rawalpindi where he was being held. Mr Asghar is said to have a history of mental illness. Does the minister share members' concerns for this individual's health and wellbeing?

Humza Yousaf: Yes. We are extremely concerned about the plight of Muhammad Asghar and have been for many months. The First Minister has intervened in the case and has spoken directly with Mohammad Sarwar, the Governor of the Punjab, where Muhammad Asghar is being held. I spoke to the FCO this week as well as speaking to Governor Sarwar, other Pakistani authorities, the family lawyer and the family themselves.

There are two immediate priorities. First, we have to ensure that Muhammad Asghar is kept safe and secure, which means his not being returned to Adiala prison, where he was shot. Secondly, we want to ensure that Muhammad Asghar gets the appropriate medical attention. He is severely mentally unwell and he needs a psychiatric assessment and medication to improve his health. Those are the immediate priorities, as well as working with the family, the legal team and the Pakistani authorities to secure Mr Asghar's return. I assure Graeme Dey that we are extremely concerned and that the Scottish Government is doing everything within its power to ensure Mr Asghar's health, safety and security.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Does the minister agree that the security and prosperity of Hong Kong is underpinned by

the fundamental freedoms and rights that are stated in the Sino-British joint declaration? Does he agree that those freedoms are best guaranteed by the transition to universal suffrage?

Humza Yousaf: Yes, I agree with those points. I saw the statement that the FCO made on 29 September, in which it reiterated those points. We agree that those freedoms can best be guaranteed through the transition to universal suffrage. We hope that the upcoming consultation period will produce arrangements that will allow a meaningful advance for democracy in Hong Kong. We encourage all parties to engage constructively in discussions to that end. I agree entirely with the two points that Jamie McGrigor raised.

Museums and Libraries (Closures)

7. Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what figures it has on the closure of museums and libraries over the last five years. (S4O-03557)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Library and Information Council advises that from 2008-09 to 2012-13, 22 public libraries in Scotland were closed, reducing the total from 628 to 606. That equates to 3.6 per cent in Scotland compared to 7.9 per cent in England, 11.1 per cent in Wales and 11.5 per cent in Northern Ireland for the same period. In 2013-14 a further four public libraries closed reducing the total to 602.

Figures on museums, including closures, are not held centrally. It is estimated that there are about 400 museums in Scotland.

Margaret McDougall: Given that budgets are so tight, many councils are considering cuts to culture and arts budgets during consultations of the public. As a result, many more museums and libraries could be put under threat in the future. What is the Scottish Government doing to make sure that local libraries and museums are sustained? They make a valuable contribution to civic life and are often the only opportunity that less well-off people have to learn about their local history or to access books and computers, and increase their opportunities in life.

Fiona Hyslop: I assure members that support for our local libraries is such that, in the joint meeting that we have with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which involves all the conveners of culture services across Scotland, libraries have been a frequent discussion point for us. As a Government, we will do what we can to support the growing and developing role of libraries. Despite the severe restrictions that are placed on us by the Westminster budget, local authorities—which have no statutory responsibility for arts and culture—have generally not cut their

culture budgets more than any other budgets. We will keep that dialogue going and, with the support of our local authority colleagues, we will continue to support our local libraries.

Ryder Cup 2014

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-11030, in the name of Shona Robison, on the Ryder cup 2014. I invite members to note that we are quite tight for time this afternoon. I call Shona Robison to speak to and move the motion.

14:40

The Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners' Rights (Shona Robison): It is good to be able to have this short debate to mark the spectacular success of the Ryder cup, which was summed up in yesterday's *Scotsman*:

"It provided drama aplenty over three days, during which there was not a squeak of complaint from any of the 24 players. In terms of spectator viewing, it was quite possibly one of the best we have seen, not just for an event that had 45,000 spectators attending each day but for any tournament ever staged in this country."

On Sunday evening, Sky Sports broadcaster Butch Harman commented:

"This is by far the best organised Ryder Cup ever. It has been phenomenal."

It was also a success because of the stunning victory of the European team, led by captain Paul McGinley, which means that Europe holds the title for the third time in a row.

The television audience across the world was more than 500 million people, and for the 250,000 fans who came from 96 different countries to watch the best players from Europe and the USA it was an amazing experience. Many of them enjoyed events such as the fantastic gala concert that was held last Wednesday at the SSE Hydro. The Falkirk kelpies and Edinburgh's air traffic control tower were also lit up in gold in celebration of Scotland's hosting of the Ryder cup. What a week of weather, too, with the sun rising at Gleneagles for the opening tee-off to welcome the fans in the packed grandstands.

Importantly, the Ryder cup was a success because of the legacy benefits, which we will debate in a moment, as well as the huge amount of work that was undertaken by the many partners that are listed in the motion. I pay particular tribute to VisitScotland and its events directorate, EventScotland, for the work that they have done.

The Ryder cup will provide great economic benefits to Scotland, both locally and nationally. We are already seeing examples of that impact. One golf club in Angus reported an estimated income of £15,000 a day during the Ryder cup, and a golf club in Ayrshire saw its visitor numbers shoot up by 74 per cent compared with the same period last year. In addition, several airlines,

including US Airways and United Airlines, reported increases in demand for international seats, while KLM and Icelandair added extra capacity on flights throughout September in response to strong demand from the North American market. With the tournament beamed to a global television audience in excess of 500 million each day of the competition, the Ryder cup truly has set Scotland as the perfect stage for major events.

To ensure that we capture those benefits fully, a full independent evaluation is under way. The evaluation will be far reaching and, among other things, will capture the impacts in terms of increased employment in Perth and Kinross and the rest of Scotland; the value of supplier contracts won by Scottish businesses involved with the event; increased tourism, including increased visitor numbers, duration of stay and occupancy levels and the additional revenue generated in relation to travel and transport; and golf and the positive impact that the event has had on visitors playing Scotland's fabulous golf courses. A report will be published in the spring of next year, and I will update colleagues in the chamber at that time.

It has been a long time since the Ryder cup was awarded to Scotland 13 years ago, and the legacy benefits have been part of the planning from the outset.

Scotland is not only the home of golf, but the future of golf, and this Government is committed to increasing golf participation and membership levels through our successful clubgolf programme.

To underline that commitment, the First Minister announced last week additional funding of up to £1 million over four years to help introduce yet more youngsters and families to the game. The clubgolf programme has encouraged more than 350,000 youngsters to pick up a club, and the new funding will not only build on that success, but look to expand the appeal to families. Through the new get into golf initiative, as part of clubgolf parents are being encouraged to participate with their children and play the game as a family.

The junior Ryder cup, which also took place last week in Blairgowrie, was the perfect illustration of clubgolf at its best. With 3,200 schoolchildren taking part in clubgolf activity and about 6,000 spectators over the course of the tournament, the profile of junior golf is stronger than it has ever been.

Another area that we have invested in from the beginning as part of our Ryder cup bid commitments is the development of domestic golf tournaments, with more than £10 million spent to date. That investment supports golf tourism—a key tourism market for Scotland—as well as providing a boost for businesses not just in Perthshire, but throughout Scotland.

We also helped deliver the best ever connected Ryder cup through investing in telecoms. This was the first ever Ryder cup where people were allowed to take mobile phones on the course, where we facilitated 4G connectivity. As well as the connectivity on the course, we also invested in enhancing the spectator experience, from wi-fi hotspots at park-and-ride sites to wi-fi en-route.

With any major event, transport planning is always a particular challenge. The Ryder cup was no different, with spectators travelling to Gleneagles from across the country. During the event the park-and-ride system and ScotRail together ensured that spectators arrived safely and on time. About 30,000 people directly experienced the upgraded Gleneagles railway station. I thank those who worked tirelessly to keep Perthshire and the rest of Scotland on the move.

The scale and size of the Ryder cup dictated that it had to be a non-car event. Officials at Transport Scotland worked with Ryder Cup Europe and key partners, including Perth and Kinross Council and Police Scotland, to develop a robust transport plan. The plan was designed to maximise the use of the available road and public transport networks and to minimise the negative impact of the event on local communities, businesses and the wider travelling public.

The plan also sought to deliver transport legacy benefits from the 2014 Ryder cup. As I mentioned, Gleneagles station has undergone significant refurbishment, providing a lasting legacy for Auchterarder and the wider Strathearn area. Works included structural refurbishment and wi-fi installation. In addition, Network Rail, through the access for all fund, installed two new lifts, providing step-free access to both platforms.

ScotRail also fitted wi-fi equipment on to the class 170 and class 158 rolling stock that served Gleneagles last week. That will provide a legacy for routes across Scotland.

Finally, the new link road connects the station safely to the nearby A9 and an expanded car park.

However, the event was not only about the teams and the fans. Indeed, it would not have been possible without the hardworking and dedicated 7,000 staff and 1,800 volunteers, and I pay particular tribute to them. As part of the wider volunteering programme, we supported 50 young people to volunteer through the Scotland's best programme, increasing their skills and experience as well as helping them gain a Scottish credit and qualifications framework level 4 employability qualification to increase their employment prospects. The young people whom I met from the Scotland's best programme certainly got a lot out of their experience.

In the coming weeks and months, we will be able to report on further outcomes and legacy benefits from the Ryder cup, not least when the economic benefits study reports next spring.

I look forward to hearing members' views. It is without doubt that the Ryder cup has put the icing on the cake on what has been a fantastic summer of sport. We should not underestimate Scotland's reach on the world stage, first through the Commonwealth games, politically through the referendum and, finally, through the Ryder cup. Scotland is better known to millions of people throughout the world, which can only be good for our country, our economy and our tourism industry. I hope that members across the whole chamber will welcome that.

It is with great pleasure that I move,

That the Parliament congratulates the European team on retaining the Ryder Cup at Gleneagles; commends both the European and US teams for providing a world-class tournament watched by sell-out audiences and showcasing Scotland to a global television audience in excess of half a billion each day of the competition; congratulates Ryder Cup Europe, EventScotland, Police Scotland, Transport Scotland, Perth and Kinross Council, Gleneagles Hotel, Scottish Government agencies and all the partner organisations for the excellent partnership working that went into delivering the event; supports the Scottish Government and all partners in taking advantage of the substantial business and inward investment opportunities presented by hosting both the Ryder Cup and Junior Ryder Cup, as well as building on Scotland's reputation as the home of golf and a perfect stage for holding world-class events, developing the range of sporting tournaments that it hosts; welcomes work to continue to promote and deliver a lasting legacy for the game through the successful ClubGolf initiative, which, with additional support of up to £1 million from the Scottish Government, will now develop a programme to encourage families to play golf, and leave lasting benefits to the transport infrastructure for local communities around Gleneagles, and agrees that the Scottish Government should continue to drive forward the benefits from hosting the Ryder Cup to build on these foundations, leaving a lasting legacy for Scotland from this remarkable sporting spectacle.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you for your brevity, cabinet secretary.

I call Patricia Ferguson. You have up to seven minutes.

14:50

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer.

As the cabinet secretary said, like the Commonwealth games, the Ryder cup at Gleneagles was a long time coming, but it was worth the wait. With good weather throughout and a fantastic setting, all was set fair for an excellent competition, and we were not disappointed.

It has to be said that, as captain, Paul McGinley made all the right calls in pairing his team and was

extremely effective in the role. The Europeans all played well. If it is not too invidious to single out individual players, I want to make special mention, on behalf of my household, of the excellent contributions that were made by Justin Rose and Rory McIlroy. As newcomers to the competition, the American Patrick Reid and the Frenchman Victor Dubuisson gave memorable performances. For Europe to win again and in such a conclusive way was just a joy to watch, but the Europeans did not have it all their own way, and praise must go to both sides for making it such an enthralling competition.

Since his team's Ryder cup victory, Paul McGinley has announced his retirement. Having played in the Ryder cup, been vice-captain and now captain, and having won on all three occasions, he can, in his own words, retire

"like a heavyweight champion, undefeated."

I am sure that we all wish him well and thank him for his efforts.

Of course, it was not just the players who excelled. The staff and the 2,000 volunteers did a great job and were exceptionally professional throughout, and the 45,000-plus spectators added to the feel of the event, as their passion, commitment and knowledge of their sport shone through in their enthusiastic reaction to and their good-hearted support for the players.

Gleneagles was a stunning venue for a great competition, and I can imagine just how hard the green-keepers and the staff will have worked to ensure that the course not only looked its very best but played well, too. In addition, as the cabinet secretary said, we owe a special debt of thanks to Mike Cantlay and Malcolm Roughhead of VisitScotland and Paul Bush of EventScotland for bringing the project through over many years.

As we have heard, it is likely that, once the figures have been analysed and the numbers are in, we will find that Scotland has benefited financially and in terms of return visits from our hosting of the Ryder cup. Those statistics will make interesting reading, but our country began to reap the benefits as far back as 2003, when the then First Minister Jack McConnell launched the clubgolf initiative as a legacy of the Ryder cup. Since 2003, more than 140,000 children have had the opportunity to experience golf. Many have continued with the sport after that initial experience, and I very much hope that some will go on to be the players and professionals of the future. In that regard, our congratulations must also go to those who competed in the junior Ryder cup at Blairgowrie.

We know that many of the parents and siblings of young people who have been involved in clubgolf have themselves been motivated to take

up the game, and I was pleased to read that that interest will now be harnessed in a more formal way. I think that that is a very good thing to do.

Despite holding such a great event, and in spite of the fact that Scotland is undoubtedly the home of golf and has a pre-eminent reputation in it, many of our local golf clubs are struggling to survive and need all the help that they can get. My colleague Neil Findlay will address that issue in more detail in his closing speech, but perhaps in the course of the debate the cabinet secretary could tell us whether sportscotland keeps track of clubs that are in difficulty and what measures it can bring to bear to assist them.

Colleagues will perhaps recall that I have not always been a fan of Diageo, particularly when it was closing a distillery in my constituency, which led to subsequent job losses. I still regret the company's decision very much and people in my constituency still miss the impact of those jobs in our local economy, but I have to give Diageo credit for the initiative that it launched earlier this year as part of its contribution to the legacy of the Ryder cup by establishing a five-year training programme for young unemployed people who might like to work in the catering and hospitality industry.

I understand that the programme is being led by Peter Lederer OBE, who is chairman of Gleneagles and a Diageo director and who has a lifetime of experience in the industry. I well remember how as chair of VisitScotland he championed on-going training and development for staff in the industry and how committed he was to making staff training and development the normal way of things in that industry, and I know that his successors have pursued the same aim with vigour since his departure. I am sure that, with Mr Lederer at the helm of the project, it will go from strength to strength and make a real difference to the lives of Scotland's young people and, just as important, an important contribution to tourism in this country.

I read with interest that the 10th World Hickory Open golf championship is being hosted in Scotland and, indeed, will shortly get under way in Forfar for those who espouse a more traditional feel to their game of golf. I wish the participants good luck in their endeavours.

We have demonstrated that as a country we can successfully host large-scale sporting events and that people in Scotland will get involved and take pride in delivering the best possible event. We also know that we can secure a meaningful legacy when we put our minds to it. I wonder, therefore, whether the cabinet secretary might like to say a little about any future sporting events her Government intends to bid for. At the weekend, I watched with some curiosity and great interest an interview with Mike Cantlay, in which I thought that

he was teasing us a little with the prospect of something that was seemed to be still only a glimmer in his eye. If the cabinet secretary is willing to share anything with us on that front, I am sure that we would all be very interested in hearing about it. We have a reputation for being able to host such events professionally and safely, and we must capitalise on that legacy.

In closing, I, too, want to congratulate everyone involved in making the 2014 Ryder cup such a success. I wish Minnesota good luck—it has a high standard to follow.

14:57

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

Anyone who goes into Perth's famous A K Bell library will be able to access copies of the *Perthshire Advertiser* and the *Strathern Herald* from June 1921, both of which report on international challenge golf matches between American and British players. Those matches were, in effect, the forerunner of what became the modern Ryder cup, and they were set against the backdrop of the skeleton building structures of what we now know as the famous Gleneagles hotel. The matches attracted widespread publicity and quite considerable prize money of 1,000 guineas, as well as some very sociable celebrations in Auchterarder and, quite bizarrely, a railway carriage somewhere in Auchtermuchty. The journalist did not seem quite sure of the details, which is perhaps just as well.

The newspapers also report on the presentations made by the Duchess of Atholl, who said that the match had proved that first-class golf courses were no longer dependent on a seaside location and that Perthshire people should be very proud of what had been achieved. I think that she would be even prouder today. Of course, times have changed, but I think that we can all agree that it was very fitting that Gleneagles played host to the 40th Ryder cup and kept up the reputation of what is undoubtedly one of the world's greatest sporting events—an event that was made even better by the fact that Europe won.

From day 1, when it was announced that Gleneagles was the chosen venue, the Ryder cup administration team, along with everyone involved in Gleneagles itself, Perth and Kinross Council, Police Scotland and VisitScotland—and many more—produced briefing material about the event that was of an exceptionally high standard. For that reason alone, there was a very high level of public trust in the event. There were some minor problems—local newspapers have mentioned, for example, some of the wi-fi connections, pedestrian and campsite access and a local information leaflet that I think was a little confused—but otherwise the running of the tournament was

exceptionally smooth. As one might have expected, given the glorious setting of Gleneagles, the event attracted very favourable comment from around the world, and it speaks volumes that the competitors, too, were delighted.

I have never seen a championship golf course in the world looking as good as Gleneagles was—and I include Augusta, Crans-Montana and Malmö in that—and we should be in absolutely no doubt about the extraordinary efforts that go into making such a tournament work. In that respect, I should mention the head professional, Andrew Jowett; the senior green-keeper, Scott Fenwick; the Ryder cup referee, Charles Dernie; and Peter Lederer and his team at Gleneagles. The Ryder cup is no ordinary sporting event, and it is no ordinary task to ensure that the estimated 250,000 spectators all have the best possible visitor experience.

The cabinet secretary has spoken about the media and sales promotion partnerships, whose spend was somewhere in the region of £500,000 and which reached in excess of 10 million people in the United Kingdom and Ireland. A record-breaking number of golf fans—in the region of 130,000—entered once-in-a-lifetime competitions to win trips to the 2014 Ryder cup. It is clear that there was absolutely no lack of enthusiasm.

In the international sphere, more than £250,000 has been spent on golf marketing in the key markets of North America, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland and so on, with the biggest spend in the last few months coinciding very much with the screening of the Ryder cup.

We all have to recognise such good news for Scotland.

The main part of the legacy will be judged by the development of the game for future generations, of course. It is very good to hear about the initiatives that the Scottish Government has undertaken on clubgolf and the inspiration that will undoubtedly come from the junior Ryder cup at Blairgowrie. I particularly welcome the initiative to involve families in that.

Given that Scotland is very much the home of golf and that we have some of the best golf courses in the world at Gleneagles, St Andrews, Muirfield, Royal Troon and so on, it is striking that the vast majority of our young golfers who want to make it big in the game feel the need to go abroad to get some of their training. In the future, we can try to help them to stay home based, because that would not only be very much to the benefit of the game of golf but greatly inspire our young people.

Likewise, we need to do more to support existing golf clubs to improve their environmental surroundings and business case, which I think Neil Findlay will speak about.

I will finish on a constituency note on behalf of the 3,000 Auchterarder residents who have in the past week signed a petition that asks for the hugely successful footbridge over the A9 at Gleneagles station to be made permanent. There could be no better lasting legacy for those people, who have had to cope with the aftermath of two recent fatal accidents on that stretch of the road, than knowing that the footbridge, whose dismantling this weekend we are all very concerned about, will be replaced with a permanent one.

In my closing speech, I will say a little bit more about some of the issues that have to go into the legacy, but I am happy to support the Government's motion.

15:02

Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): First, I congratulate the cabinet secretary on her summer of 2014. The Commonwealth games and the Ryder cup have provided not just a legacy for Scotland and Scottish sport but a huge opportunity for business and tourism. I add worthy congratulations to VisitScotland.

Last week, the Ryder cup tournament came home. As Liz Smith highlighted, a little over 90 years ago, 20 men assembled at Gleneagles for an international challenge match between Great Britain and the USA on the king's course. Among them were golfing giants such as Vardon, Hagen and JH Taylor. The 1921 match had no name, no crowd and no trophy, although there was prize money, but it gave rise to the phenomenon and experience that is now the Ryder cup. It was first played for officially in Massachusetts, at the Worcester Country Club in 1927. That course was, of course, designed by Donald Ross, who was a golf course architect from Dornoch.

Throughout the Ryder cup's history, Scots have played their part in Ryder cup course design on both sides of the Atlantic—I refer to Ross, Braid, MacKenzie and Campbell. They have also played their part as players—I refer to Fallon, Eric Brown, John Panton, Bannerman, Torrance, Bernard Gallacher, who was the youngest player ever at the age of 20, Montgomerie, Lawrie and so on. Therefore, the Ryder cup came home.

As I drove towards Perth early on Friday morning discounting a chest infection—one just had to on that day—the closer that I got to Gleneagles, the more palpable the atmosphere became. Entering the course, which is a theatre that is set at the foot of the Ochils—a modern-day Colosseum, but with golfing gladiators—one could only marvel at the ocean of people properly disciplined by their love of golf, but also by

outstanding organisation, location management and communication.

Some 45,000 spectators were marshalled by volunteers. As was mentioned, 1,800 of them were selected from 17,500 applications. Volunteers secured crowd safety, sold programmes and provided hospitality at the many adroitly placed guest pavilions. They managed the transport and the park-and-ride facilities, marshalled the buses and provided outstanding customer service at the hospitality village, where you could buy a Scottie hotdog covered in onions and haggis, which was yours for only £7.50. The volunteers played no little part in the tournament's success. I also applaud all the partnership organisations mentioned in the motion for creating such an event, which reached half a billion people in 180 countries.

Europe won the event, and commiserations go of course to the USA team. I would say to Phil Mickelson, however, that he should look in afore he looks oot and that he should not attack an adopted golfing son of Scotland, as he did with Tom Watson. However, the real winners were the game of golf and the Scotland experience, both offering significant opportunities and income in the years ahead for golf and for tourism.

The lasting legacy for golf is manifold. For example, the cabinet secretary has talked about the clubgolf initiative to put a golf club in every child's hands by the age of nine, and that is critical. However, golf tourism is a win-win for the Scottish economy. In the past year I have had several discussions with European golfing authorities, the University of West Scotland and an internationally renowned golf course to try to replicate or partner the golf degree course at the University of Birmingham, which is associated with a practical course at the Belfry. I am afraid that some young Scots golfers cannot afford to attend the course.

We should try to create a partnership with the University of Birmingham, which offers a comprehensive high-level degree course that embraces finance, marketing and retail aspects as well as course design and maintenance, club design and coaching. A Scottish golf academy could address the impending construction—

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

Chic Brodie: I am just closing.

It could address the impending construction of a golf city in China. Real opportunities exist to kindle inbound and outbound golf tourism.

I congratulate everybody associated with the Ryder cup event over its three days.

15:06

John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw)

(Lab): Pars, birdies and bogies is how golf is often described, and members should believe me that, as an ex-club member, I have experienced them all. I can well remember the endless series of tragedies—bogey after bogey after bogey—all obscured by the occasional miracle of that high-five moment of a birdie.

Looking back at the Ryder cup, like many others I experienced those jaw-dropping moments when the professionals made their miraculous shots seem par for the course. Who can forget game-changing moments such as Ian Poulter's chip in at the 15th, Rory McIlroy's tramline putt and Jamie Donaldson's putt that earned the point that retained the 40th Ryder cup for Europe? They were magic moments indeed.

It is great that Europe has now won six of the last seven events, with this year's team, captained by Paul McGinley and having seven UK players, a Swede, a Dane, a German, a Spaniard and a Frenchman, putting in a tremendous team effort to secure the cup. Best of all, though, was that the Ryder cup was in Scotland. It was only the second time that it has been here, with the first time being at Muirfield in 1973.

Of course, the Ryder cup is now a huge event and much bigger than it was when rescued by Raymond Miquel with Bell's sponsorship in 1983 and 1985. This year's competition attracted thousands of enthusiastic and sometimes strangely clad visitors from all over the world, who were given a very warm Scottish welcome. Even the golf wear of some prominent Scots grabbed media attention.

There were a few moments when the US challenge gave Europe cause for concern, but we were eventually rewarded with not the knife-edge finish that we have come to expect but a convincing win. Nevertheless, the competition had a great atmosphere to the very end, as I am sure most people who were there would agree.

There is no doubt that there are many economic benefits for Scotland as a result of the competition being staged at Gleneagles, with many millions spent at the event and on international media coverage. However, the real value of the Ryder cup will be in what happens down the line. Just as the efforts that were put into securing, planning and promoting the Ryder cup took years to bring to fruition, so the legacy needs to be secured and nurtured over the coming years.

In Wales, which was the 2010 host, golf tourism has grown by 40 per cent, with about 200,000 visitors last year. We must build on the location's romantic appeal and the spectacle of the occasion and ensure that the impact on visitors and the

media coverage have a long-lasting effect. The coverage should pay dividends for tourism and for food and drink exports as we look to expand our markets.

As with the Commonwealth games, hundreds of volunteers were hard at work. I reiterate what I said about the games and the importance of harnessing the spirit of volunteering that we have seen this summer.

There is no doubt that the Ryder cup will encourage more people to play golf. I urge them to be patient and not to be put off if progress is slow. At such times, I find the words of John F Kennedy comforting:

"Show me a man with a great golf game, and I'll show you a man who has been neglecting something."

15:10

Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(SNP): I am pleased to participate in the debate on the fantastic success that was the Ryder cup 2014 at Gleneagles and to add my congratulations to the European team captain, Paul McGinley, and his victorious players.

I was keen to speak today both as the SNP MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife and as a resident of Strathearn—my home is in Comrie, which is some 16 miles from Gleneagles. From all the conversations that I have had with local people in the past few days, I think that the feedback about the hosting of the Ryder cup at Gleneagles is positive.

The massive free advertising for our tourism industry that the Ryder cup afforded—as we have heard, there were some 500 million TV viewers per day around the globe—is well understood by local people. The redoubtable—if I may call him that—Mike Cantlay, the chairman of VisitScotland, said that hosting the Ryder cup was the equivalent of a £40 million advert for free, so I say well done to all concerned at VisitScotland. That can only bode very well for our tourism industry in Perthshire and across Scotland.

At a more local level, I am pleased to report that, as far as I have heard, hotels large and small did great business, as did local bed and breakfasts, chalets and lodges. Anywhere that people could stay, the beds were used. Local restaurants were busy and, although not all retailers had increased takings, there is nonetheless confidence that the visiting Americans and others from around the globe will come back to explore that most beautiful part of Scotland at a more leisurely pace.

As we have heard, any feared transport chaos did not materialise. I give a special thanks to Transport Scotland, whose meticulous planning

paved the way for a smooth-running operation. I believe that some 50,000 people were on site each day at Gleneagles, including thousands of visitors.

On transport infrastructure, I add my support to the local petition that calls for the A9 Ryder cup footbridge to become a permanent feature. I know that the temporary footbridge is to come down in the next few days, but I am aware from the *Perthshire Advertiser* of 30 September that the transport minister, Keith Brown, is willing at least to look into the establishment of a permanent structure. I see that the cabinet secretary wants to intervene; I do not know whether she wants to give me news.

Shona Robison: I have spoken to Keith Brown, who reiterates his commitment to looking at that. I understand that Transport Scotland is reviewing pedestrian access in the area in order to assess the further measures that could be put in place. It will engage with the community and the council on the matter.

Annabelle Ewing: I welcome the cabinet secretary's statement. I am sure that the gentleman in Auchterarder who started the petition and the community concerned will be pleased to hear that progress will be made. I will be in touch with the transport minister to ensure that that proceeds in a reasonable timeframe.

We have talked about the legacy. When I spoke in the debate in September last year, two local charities were to benefit—the Friends of St Margaret's hospital in Auchterarder and Perth & Kinross Disability Sport. We look forward to hearing in due course about the benefits that the Ryder cup has brought to those excellent local organisations.

We heard about the Scottish hospitality apprenticeship scheme, and I, too, praise Diageo and all the other players who are involved in that. We also heard about the fantastic clubgolf initiative, and I welcome the expansion to encourage families to play with their children.

I am very proud of the success that was the Ryder cup 2014. Scotland has shown the world that it is indeed the home of golf and that a very warm welcome to our shores awaits the world of golf.

15:15

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): Four Shetland friends will play the centenary course tomorrow. Of course, I wish them well. I hope that none of them ends up in the loch at the side of the 16th, in the bunker beside the first or in any other horrible hazard that will cause them to lose their favourite Titleist Pro.

By any standards, it has been one heck of a week for golf in Scotland. I very much agree with the general tone of the cabinet secretary's remarks.

Patricia Ferguson and I might both reflect that some of us who were part of the Government when the Ryder cup was awarded and when Jack McConnell rightly got clubgolf going might have hoped at some stage for an "access all areas" pass on the back of that, but life moves on.

Liz Smith made an interesting comparison between Augusta and Gleneagles. I suppose that one difference is that there is usually 80 degrees of heat at Augusta. Having walked round the course at the masters, I know that that makes a substantial difference.

The point that really struck me as I watched the golf on television was how powerful the images were, and the fact that they were beamed round the world does nothing but good for Scottish golf.

I am glad that the cabinet secretary also mentioned the junior Ryder cup at Blairgowrie. I think that the Blairgowrie courses are the best inland golf courses in Scotland, and the fact that the junior Ryder cup was such a success there has to bode well for the development of junior golf.

As for the event itself, Kaymer's chip-in at the 16th has to be my best moment. Having walked round the back of that green, I think that, for level of difficulty, that had to be the toughest imaginable shot, given the pressure. The other side to it was the look in Rory McIlroy's eyes as he beat Rickie Fowler. I could find any number of adjectives to describe what he did to him, but the intensity of his eyes were those of a sportsman on his game.

At 10-6 overnight on the Saturday, I personally thought that there was no way we were going to lose, given the line-up that we put out, with G-Mac leading them out.

I will make two or three other points. First, I agree with Chic Brodie that dissing Tom Watson was not the cleverest thing to do. The Americans just did not play very well. A two-times masters champion got zero points during the course of the weekend. Instead of dissing their captain, they might all have looked at themselves. I suspect that half of their team did look at themselves. They can go on about Zinger and his pods from some years past, but I think the Americans need to do that.

McGinley was clearly an inspirational and incredibly intelligent leader of his team and he deserves all the plaudits that will come to him.

There are some bigger issues for golf that need to be addressed. In some ways, they are not about governance but about the game and what it needs to do for the future. Let us be clear that golf is a money-making enterprise. I think that the cabinet

secretary mentioned this, but I understand that the European tour will make £70 million out of Gleneagles. How much of that will go back into junior golf, not just in Scotland, of course, but right across Europe? Let us be clear that these men are all multimillionaires—they are very well paid to do what they do. I am a passionate golfer, but I think that it is fair to look very hard at the game itself and at where the money is.

In our country, we have 230,000 people playing golf. France already has 430,000, and when the French host the next Ryder cup they hope to increase that, reaching 700,000 by 2018. Victor Dubuisson may not be the only Frenchman in the team by that time if they get that number playing golf.

That is why clubgolf is so important and why Shona Robison's Government is absolutely right to keep it going. I also support the other initiatives that she announced today. However, there are some hard questions that we need to ask. How many girls and women are in golf?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Will you draw to a close, please?

Tavish Scott: The R&A seems to have dragged itself into the 21st century, and about time too. However, there is much to do, because I certainly hope that Stephen Gallacher is not the last Scot to play. I hope that he plays next time too, but I rather hope that there are a few more Scots in the team with him.

15:19

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): Three words sprang into my mind as I listened to this afternoon's interesting debate: "Dalmuir golf course". I was 13 years old, I was given a half set of clubs and I was marched around Dalmuir golf course. It was a great bit of exercise, but there was no hint on how to play golf other than, "Hit it as hard as you can, son." It was a well-intentioned adult who had taken me and a friend around Dalmuir golf course. It was a terrible experience, although I got a king-size Mars bar halfway through, which was quite good.

The reason why I mention that is because young people's first experiences of a sport are really important. That is why the clubgolf initiative is also important. I eventually got involved with Gaelic football, and I had a really good-quality first experience of that.

I want to commend the legacy of the clubgolf initiative, which, as others have said, was started in 2003. My 14-year-old niece took part in the initiative and got a far better experience of golf than I did, although I do not know whether she got a king-size Mars bar.

I commend clubgolf to the Parliament. It would be interesting to know the social profile of the young people who are involved in the initiative. We must ensure that young people from our most deprived communities are just as likely to take part as others. I suspect that they are, but we should never be complacent about that kind of thing. I note that £1 million was announced for the get into golf initiative, which links clubgolf with schools and education and the motivation of the junior Ryder cup.

I think that the first three words that I thought of for this debate, "Dalmuir golf club", stand me in good stead and make a relevant contribution this afternoon. My second contribution is made up of two words: "Margo MacDonald."

I remember, during a debate in here that took place when we had a minority SNP Government, Margo arguing, as she always did, for mair money for Edinburgh. She talked about having to support the Edinburgh festival and I said to her, "Edinburgh may have the Edinburgh festival, but Glasgow is the city of festivals." She took exception to that, quite rightly.

The reason why I mention Margo MacDonald is that I think that her ambition for Edinburgh, the ambition of all elected representatives for Glasgow—with the Commonwealth games and everything that has flowed from that—and the Scottish Government's ambition for team Scotland, be it in sports, festivals or whatever else, demonstrate that the issue is not Glasgow versus Edinburgh versus Perthshire versus wherever. Scotland, on the world stage, should be expecting a series of massive and hugely successful sporting, cultural and entertainment events all year round every year.

There has to be a national strategy to achieve that. We cannot get the Ryder cup or the Commonwealth games every time, but we must be forward thinking and engage in forward planning. For example, I tried to get Glasgow City Council to bid for the world masters games for oldies. To be fair to the local authority, it had its hands full with the Commonwealth games and the bid for the youth Olympics. However, every four years there is an opportunity to bid for those games. The last ones were in Torino. The outcome report for that has still to be produced, but it is estimated that the games attracted 50,000 participants and visitors. Tick that off on the list of events that would be good for our sporting calendar.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Could you draw to a close?

Bob Doris: KPMG estimates that the annual benefit to the Scottish economy of golf tourism could be £1 billion. My goodness, we are a rich and resourceful country. We do not always

maximise our natural assets as best we can, but I have to say that Margo MacDonald knew something about maximising natural assets and I suspect that the Scottish Government and team Scotland do, too.

I commend the motion to Parliament.

15:23

Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): The 2014 Ryder cup has happened. After a two-year wait, team Europe completed its hat-trick of successive wins in the greatest tournament in match play golf. More than 45,000 spectators attended each day and the tournament was broadcast to over 180 countries, reaching more than half a billion homes each day of the competition.

Earlier this summer, Scotland hosted an extremely successful Commonwealth games in Glasgow, which delivered a lasting legacy for the whole country. Obviously, the aim was to continue with that success in relation to the Ryder cup, and I believe that that has been accomplished.

Every Scot should be proud of that. It means that people across the world have seen Scotland for what it is: a professional, hard-working, honest nation that delivers on its commitments. Our nation has also benefited from the events themselves. It is clear that those great events are creating a large and interesting aspect to sport in schools, workplaces and homes across the country.

The 2010 Ryder cup in Newport boosted the Welsh economy by £82.4 million, so we hope for a similar figure. It is expected that the economic impact of staging the Ryder cup at Gleneagles will be approximately £100 million, and I am confident that we will reach that figure and, indeed, I hope that we will surpass it.

One benefit from the Ryder cup is that Glasgow airport enjoyed a 5 per cent rise in its passenger numbers compared with the same period last year. Additionally, the Glasgow City Marketing Bureau estimates that nearly 7,000 hotel room nights were booked during the event, which tells us that more than £1 million has been put into Glasgow's economy. Glasgow must be really proud of the fact that it is achieving success after success.

It was great to see a boisterous, respectful and peaceful set of spectators at Gleneagles. I believe that that played a significant role in Europe's Ryder cup win over the United States.

The Commonwealth games and the Ryder cup have shown exactly what Scotland can do when it is asked to put together an event on the international stage and stand above all others. It has shown that we have the expertise in crowd control and security and, more importantly,

ensuring that all the spectators have an enjoyable event.

I not only congratulate everybody who was involved in the Ryder cup, the Commonwealth games and other such events in Scotland but look forward to the possibility of the European football championships coming to Scotland, considering our background. As a Glaswegian, I am proud of what we have achieved in the past year, and I hope that we continue to achieve in the future.

15:27

Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP): The Ryder cup was a fantastic event. I did not attend it but my colleague Chic Brodie did and I missed the fantastic atmosphere that he talked about. Like many of us, I watched it on television and talked about it a lot, before, during and after the event. Members will not be surprised to hear that I will choose to talk about its legacy and impact overseas.

First of all, I need to come clean: I have never played golf. Despite the number of golf courses in the north-east of Scotland, I have never found the time. That is my excuse. I should say that I have not played golf yet, because I hope to be able to do it in the future.

In Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, there are more than 50 courses. We are rich in them in the north-east. In Fraserburgh, we have the seventh oldest golf club in the world, which was founded back in 1777. Braemar golf course is the highest 18-hole course in the UK, but I have not got round to it yet.

Closer to home, we have Stonehaven golf course, which has a fantastic view of Dunnottar castle. In my home town of Westhill, just a few hundred yards from my home, there is Westhill golf course, which has a wonderful setting. I have supported it a lot over the years but have never yet experienced playing on it.

Aberdeen city has seven golf facilities. Many of them are, of course, municipal courses. One of them, Balnagask, has the best view of the harbour and the city. I was next to that golf course many times in the past few months, because of the spotlight that was on Scotland as a result of the referendum and the fact that many TV channels chose that location to interview me. The cabinet secretary should believe me that I used those interviews to promote the Ryder cup and ask people to come to Gleneagles.

That idea of promotion is very important, because we need to see the whole of Scotland as a place for tourism and the 2014 Ryder cup at Gleneagles has been a fantastic event in that regard. We also need to promote golf as a sport not for the few but for the many. A lot of the

journalists who came from abroad were surprised by the extent of our municipal golf courses; I am very proud of that. Bob Doris mentioned the importance of having the experience of golf available for everybody, not just for the few.

That is the legacy of the Ryder cup at Gleneagles that we all want to support: showing the world the very best that Scotland has to offer while promoting golf as a sport for all.

The eyes of the world have been on Scotland this year; they will be on France in 2018, as Tavish Scott mentioned. For the first time, France will play host, as France won the bid to host the 2018 Ryder cup. It is also the first time in 21 years that the Ryder cup will return to mainland Europe—everybody will remember that Valderrama was 17 years ago.

Before last month's tournament, most of us could name only one Frenchman who played golf at the highest level—Jean van de Velde, the man who threw it all away at the open championship at Carnoustie, giving the north-east a win and giving my neighbour Paul Lawrie the biggest win to date in his career.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Please draw to a close.

Christian Allard: However, if Graeme McDowell is to be believed, Victor Dubuisson will be a household name in the near future.

The event has been a fantastic showcase of Scotland's abilities in many sectors, from food and drink to sports tourism. In concluding, I have a message for the cabinet secretary. Let us take this know-how and this legacy and export it to France. We have four years to see what we can do here in the Parliament with cross-party support—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You really must close.

Christian Allard: —to help support the 2018 Ryder cup in France. It is a great opportunity for Scottish interests—let us renew the auld alliance between our two nations.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. We turn to closing speeches. I am afraid that we have gone over time so could closing speeches take slightly less time, if possible? I call Liz Smith—you have a maximum of four minutes.

15:31

Liz Smith: I remember that when we debated the Commonwealth games legacy, we agreed that it is not always terribly easy to define the word "legacy", particularly when it comes to its qualitative value. Therefore it is not particularly easy to measure. The cabinet secretary has quite rightly mentioned some statistical measures that

will be used to determine longer-term success and I am sure that those will be hugely significant.

However, I think that local people will want to know that that legacy is just as beneficial to them as it is to Perthshire and to Scotland generally. Annabelle Ewing mentioned that the general feeling from hotels and bed and breakfasts is that there is a good feeling out there, but local shops will want to know the same.

Local people have seen that there has been a marked improvement in many of the amenities around the local community, whether that involves road surfaces or cycle paths being improved or the excellent improvements to Gleneagles station. They definitely want that permanent footbridge and I was pleased to hear what the cabinet secretary said on that. I do not think that terribly much negotiation will have to take place with local people because it is very clear indeed, from just how quickly that petition has been drawn up, exactly what they think. I hope that the footbridge can be an immediate permanent feature and I hope that Transport Scotland will move on that extremely quickly.

Tavish Scott made an important point when he said that when it comes to legacy, it is not really about legislating but about creating the right circumstances to develop the sport. As Stewart Harris of sportscotland said after the Commonwealth games on legacy, it is about building the capacity—I think that that is absolutely correct. We have work to do when it comes to participation; it is all very well getting more and more youngsters into a taste of golf but we really have to develop a strategy that means that they will stay with the game.

I return to the particular point that I raised earlier about those who want to play the game at an elite level: we have to avoid a situation in which they feel that it is better to train and study abroad than in Scotland. We have some of the best facilities anywhere in the world and I hope that we can make better use of them.

There is an issue about the business side of golf. Far too many of our local golf clubs are finding it very difficult to survive these days. That is partly due to a decline in membership but it is also to do with an aspect of business help. Some clubs are too small to take up the small business benefits that have been part of Scottish Government legislation. We have to do more to encourage those clubs.

Some people find subscription levels very expensive, so we must take care, if we want to encourage families, to consider the difficulties involved and confront the expense of taking up full-time golf club membership. I agree entirely with Tavish Scott's point about the need for more

women in golf. The R&A sent out exactly the right message, after perhaps too long a time, that women have as much of a role to play in golf as their male counterparts; I was delighted to see that the club has changed its membership rules.

The debate has been very good. The Ryder cup was an excellent competition and it has certainly done Scotland proud. I hope that I have allowed the Presiding Officer to catch up on time by about 20 seconds.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much.

15:35

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): As a spectator I have witnessed some great and not-so-great sporting occasions, going from the depths of despair in Genoa, watching Scotland lose to Costa Rica at the 1990 world cup, to jubilation only a few days later when we beat Sweden, raising again the cyclical hopes that we would qualify. I do not need to tell members that the inevitable happened a few days later, as we got beat off Brazil, but it was a great sporting occasion nonetheless.

I have been to the Ashes at Lord's, and experienced gubbings and victories at Murrayfield. This summer I saw the fantastic Josh Taylor and the force of nature that is Charlie Flynn get their boxing golds in the finals at the Hydro. Those are sporting experiences that I will never forget, although I have tried desperately to forget some of them.

Standing next to the first tee at Gleneagles on Friday for the first day of the Ryder cup was up there with the best of those experiences. It is difficult to come up with superlatives to describe the experience of the spectators, never mind that of the players. The Ryder cup had everything: the noise of an old firm game, humour, song, sportsmanship and dreadful clothing, and even a deer running up the first fairway in front of 20,000 spectators, wondering what the hell we were all doing in its front room.

We saw golfing legends Tom Watson, Jack Nicklaus, Montgomerie, Olazábal, Torrance and others looking on as the players had somehow to bring themselves to swing the club, which they did in a display of golf that I think was the finest that has ever been seen in Scotland. That is saying something, because we have experienced some magic over the years.

From my perspective as a spectator, everything went smoothly, from the first point of contact with the transport arrangements on the way to the event all through the day to the final colourful—shall we say—crowd participation at the presentation. Everything was first class. The

course was immaculately presented, and—as Liz Smith said—the setting in and around Gleneagles was truly spectacular. As the minister mentioned, we had four days of dry sunny weather in Scotland in September—who would have thought it? The golfing god—or Seve, as he is known—must surely have been looking down on us.

Undoubtedly there will be a tourism legacy from the event. We heard comments from people of all nationalities who were thrilled to be in such spectacular surroundings. As for the play itself, we experienced three days with enough drama to sweep the board at the Oscars.

In the first two days there was very close competition, which set up the event for the final day. We saw McIlroy prove to be the best player in the world, and McDowell prove to be the street fighter that people knew he was. We saw Patrick Reed, pumping up himself and the crowd, Bubba Watson revelling in the atmosphere, Poulter just being Poulter and Justin Rose coming back from four down to secure a fantastic half at the last.

I am glad that Tavish Scott mentioned Stephen Gallacher, who played exceptionally well and was four under but was unable to beat the class act that was Mickelson. Of course, new stars were born such as Spieth, Dubuisson and Jamie Donaldson, whose winning shot must already be classified as the shot of his life.

We saw sport played to a high standard at the highest level, with the highest level of sporting integrity. Annabelle Ewing, the minister and other members were right to list the contribution of the volunteers and all the people who made the event happen. John Pentland mentioned a jaw-dropping moment—well, I too had a jaw-dropping moment when he bought me a pint in the pavilion, but we will not dwell on that.

My main hope for the Ryder cup is that it encourages more people to play the game, especially women. I make an appeal on behalf of the parliamentary golf team for more women to join the team. We do not have any at the moment so, if anybody wants to come forward, they would be most welcome.

Golf in Scotland is in a bit of a difficult situation. Many of the 500 or so clubs are struggling to retain, never mind increase, their membership. That is certainly true of the clubs in my area. The legacy of the financial crash, changes in working and family lives, cultural change and access to new forms of entertainment and relaxation are putting immense pressure on clubs. Committees are doing everything that they can to keep their clubs alive. They are making cuts while trying to increase revenue without compromising on quality. I hope that the Government, sportscotland and other agencies will do all that they can to assist

with that. Clubs get support from the Scottish Golf Union, but they need assistance to ensure that they are on a firm and sustainable business footing. They need to avoid competing each other out of business on fees. Fees are a difficulty, but the solution is not simply for clubs to lower their fees, because that will end up in clubs competing each other out of business. That is a difficulty that all the clubs face.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Could you draw to a close, please?

Neil Findlay: Clubs need to work co-operatively to use their purchasing power collectively to cut energy bills, insurance costs and the cost of food, equipment, plant and all that stuff. We can learn lessons from sports such as cricket, where the Twenty20 format has brought a new dimension.

The Ryder cup was one of the greatest sporting events ever to have taken place in Scotland. It was a pleasure to be there, and a pleasure to watch on the final day on TV.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You really must finish.

Neil Findlay: Finally, I hope that the Ryder cup is back on the BBC very soon, because more people should be able to see it.

15:41

Shona Robison: I thank all members who have taken part in the debate, which has been short but full of excellent speeches. I will try to respond to as many of the points that have been raised as possible.

Patricia Ferguson asked about future sporting events. We have a number coming up. We have already secured three world championships, in gymnastics, orienteering and IPC—International Paralympic Committee—swimming, as well as two European Championships, in judo and eventing. Those will take place next year, to keep everybody's interest in sport on the boil. Plus, as Hanzala Malik mentioned, we have Euro 2020, for which Glasgow is one of the host cities. I am sure that the city will want to make the most of that. There are other irons in the fire, which we hope to bring to fruition in due course.

Several members, not least Neil Findlay in his closing remarks, mentioned some of the pressures that golf clubs are under. We recognise that. The Scottish Golf Union has an important role alongside sportscotland in helping clubs to identify business plans, consider ways of raising income and be innovative. Neil Findlay touched on some of the innovations that other sporting clubs have considered. We will of course continue to consider what else we can do to support them.

Let us not underestimate the importance of clubgolf. If clubs are smart, they can attract some of the 15 per cent of clubgolf participants who go on to join a club. If the clubs look after those junior members, they could have them for life. However, clubs need to be welcoming to those junior members and ensure that they structure their clubs accordingly. We allocated 2,000 Ryder cup tickets to the Scottish Golf Union to be used for golf development purposes and for golf clubs to engage new golfers and re-engage old golfers with the game and all of the benefits that it offers.

Bob Doris asked about the future of the national strategy for sporting events, which is called "Scotland, The Perfect Stage—A Strategy for the Events Industry in Scotland 2009-2020". A review of the strategy is taking place, because we always need to consider what more we can do. It is fair to say that EventScotland has a really strong track record given what it has done to date, but of course it always wants to maintain a freshness. The review, which will conclude later this year, will reflect on the lessons that can be learned from the delivery of the recent major events. VisitScotland is leading the work on the review and has been consulting widely on it.

Liz Smith mentioned a bit of history and went back to 1921 and the 1,000 guineas prize money. Of course, the interesting thing about the modern Ryder cup is that there is no prize money. That is not to say that there are not benefits in being part of the Ryder cup teams, but nonetheless the focus is very much on doing it for the team and for the continent that people represent.

It was good to hear Liz Smith say that there is a high level of public trust in the event. That is another good lesson for future events. Liaison with the local community is important, because when it does not happen well it can go badly wrong. There were some really good lessons learned about that extensive engagement.

Liz Smith and Tavish Scott both mentioned the R&A position on the admission of women. As I have said a number of times, in 21st century Scotland admitting women is the right thing to do. Some of us would perhaps argue that it should have been done a long time ago, but progress is progress, so we will take that and move on.

Liz Smith asked about players being supported to train here. Elite athletes in golf or any other sport will go where the coaches whose support they want are, and sometimes weather can be a factor. However, it is fair to say that where possible we want to keep our elite sportsmen and women training here in Scotland.

We should always look to what more we can do. I was very impressed by Chic Brodie's knowledge of golfing history and he mentioned a Scottish golf

academy. We will always look to see what more can be done to keep the best training here in Scotland.

John Pentland talked about harnessing the spirit of volunteers, which has been a theme throughout the summer. We have gone the extra mile to ensure not only that volunteers get a good experience and enjoy the event at which they are volunteering but that they get something back. That is why the Scottish Qualifications Authority has a qualification that recognises volunteers' skills, which is Scotland's best opportunity for young people who are furthest from the labour market. They have never had that opportunity and, as I said in my opening remarks, the growth in confidence of the people whom I met at Gleneagles was quite something and they are all planning, in one way or another, to move forward with that learning experience.

Annabelle Ewing mentioned some of the wider benefits, not least of which was that some local charities have benefited. When we host events, we should ensure that we take forward every possible legacy opportunity.

When I mentioned the R&A and Tavish Scott's comments, I should have said that it is heartening not only that the numbers of boys and girls who are going through clubgolf are 50:50, but that girls are well represented in those who take up the sport and join a club. However, we must not be complacent, and there are opportunities to showcase for girls role models at the top of their sport through, for example, the Solheim cup, if we get that here again. We will do all that we can to secure that event again.

Patricia Ferguson: Will the minister take an intervention?

Shona Robison: Yes, of course.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Very briefly, because the minister is closing.

Patricia Ferguson: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

On girls and young women participating, I fully take the minister's point that young women will come through in the same numbers as young men through clubgolf. However, girls' experience of a club might be that they can be only an associate member or play only at particular times. Does the minister agree that that is not necessarily a way to encourage them to continue?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Minister, I really need you to close, please.

Shona Robison: Yes, indeed. That is why I talked about how clubs welcome new members. We are in different times. Neil Findlay talked about differences in family life and working life and what

our expectations are. Clubs should make sure that when junior members, particularly girls, turn up they get a welcome. It is in a club's best interests to keep those members for a lifetime and, if they play it right, that is exactly what will happen.

I thank members for their contributions and I am happy to close the debate.

United Nations Climate Summit 2014

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-011029, in the name of Paul Wheelhouse, on the United Nations climate summit 2014. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons now, although I have to advise members that the debate is oversubscribed, so it is unlikely that I will be able to call all members who wish to speak.

I call Paul Wheelhouse to speak to and move the motion. Minister, you have a maximum of 10 minutes, but if you use less time that might allow me to call more members.

15:50

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse): The Scottish Government welcomes this opportunity for Parliament to reflect on the climate summit that was hosted by UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon in New York on Tuesday last week.

The summit signalled that we are now in a crucial period leading to the UN climate conferences in Lima in December this year and in Paris in December 2015. In Lima, the first draft of the text of a new international climate agreement will be considered. Parties will then submit their intended national contributions to the new agreement during the first quarter of 2015. The international community has committed to finalising in Paris a new treaty to limit global temperature rise to no more than 2°C from pre-industrial levels.

Scotland strongly supports the goal of an ambitious global climate change agreement. I therefore thank members for attending this important debate. Scotland's commitment to strong action on climate change has been built on the cross-party support that has been demonstrated in Parliament over many years. We also have strong support from businesses, trade unions, non-governmental organisations, civic society and academia. Climate marches that took place throughout Scotland two weekends ago demonstrate how seriously the people of Scotland take climate change. As a nation, we should all be very proud of that cross-party support and support from all sectors of society in Scotland. It is one of the key features of our distinctive approach to climate change.

Since 2009, when we first passed our ambitious climate change legislation, Scotland has been working to a plan that delivers what the science tells us we must do as our contribution to an

international climate treaty to avoid dangerous levels of global warming. So, Scotland is in a unique position internationally. We have unilaterally and unconditionally set high ambitions for pre-2020 and post-2020. Our targets to reduce emissions by at least 42 per cent by 2020, by 58 per cent by 2027 and by at least 80 per cent by 2050 mean that Scotland already has the commitment and readiness to deliver our part in the Paris agreement next year.

Our comprehensive approach to climate change has many positive features that are valuable examples to other countries that help them to commit to and to build their own ambitious climate action programmes. I therefore wrote to key international figures to ensure that they were fully informed of Scotland's commitments in advance of the summit. They included Christiana Figueres, who is the executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and who was in Scotland recently; Peruvian environment minister Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, who was president of this year's conference of the parties 20 in Lima; and the outgoing European climate action commissioner, Connie Hedegaard, who has complimented Scottish ambition on climate change in *Holyrood* magazine recently and who issued a warm reply to my letter.

Following Ban Ki-moon's invitation to Scotland to participate in the UN sustainable energy for all initiative, we were privileged to host the European launch of the UN decade of sustainable energy for all by Kandeh Yumkella, who was the UN's special representative in Glasgow during the Commonwealth games. That was praised by Mary Robinson and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. We were also very pleased to welcome Mary Robinson's recent appointment by Ban Ki-moon as UN special representative on climate change, and of course Mary Robinson is very closely in touch with Scotland's high ambition on tackling climate change and our championing of climate justice, having given the keynote address at our international climate justice conference last autumn.

Although we have been able to raise awareness of Scotland's ambition and commitment on climate change at the most senior levels in the UN, it is infinitely preferable that Scotland have its own voice in international fora so that we can better promote Scotland's example to the wider world.

During the UN summit on 23 September, the climate group, which is an international network of Governments and businesses, hosted on its website a video address by me on Scotland's ambitious climate change programme. It also hosted a link to an excellent video by Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, including messages of cross-party support and messages from business, for an

international audience for Scotland's climate action.

I will say something about the proposed amendments to the motion. Alison Johnstone has raised the issue of the decarbonisation of public sector pension fund investments. Given that there is a growing trend among investors to reconsider their investments in fossil fuels—the point was made at our international climate justice conference last year—we are happy to talk to public sector pensions funds about that and to encourage low-carbon investment.

I am, unfortunately, rejecting the amendments in the names of Jamie McGrigor and Claudia Beamish. Of course we face challenges in delivering our climate change ambitions, but international figures, including Mary Robinson, Kandeh Yumkella and Connie Hedegaard, and expert bodies such as the climate group are clear about the value of Scotland's commitment to act on climate change and climate justice. We can be confident that international figures know the challenges and know that Scotland is on the right track. Scotland made the commitments that are needed for Paris many years ago, and we have followed up with strong delivery. I shall set out some of that later

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Minister, you have avoided the fact that you have missed the target for three years running. Surely you should not be triumphant about that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can members remember to speak through the chair, please?

Jamie McGrigor: I beg your pardon, Presiding Officer.

Paul Wheelhouse: I will come to the targets. I briefly make the point to Mr McGrigor that serious global figures are looking at what we are doing. They recognise the challenges and understand the technicalities of what we are trying to do, and they welcome that and praise Scotland for doing the right thing. I hope that members will be magnanimous today in talking about Scotland's role on the international stage, and that they will recognise that fact. I acknowledge that we face a challenge, and I will come to the technical point about the targets.

Our aim, through our world-leading targets that are set in legislation, has been to provide certainty for business and the public about Scotland's low-carbon future. Our high-level political commitment is to the creation of low-carbon jobs, investment, trade and growth and to the delivery of strong counter-cyclical investment flow during the recent global downturn. Since 1990, we have cut our adjusted emissions by 26.4 per cent. We achieved a 15 per cent cut between 2007 and 2012,

compared to a 12 per cent cut across the United Kingdom, and we are on track to deliver our world-leading 42 per cent target for 2020 despite the European Union not having raised its 2020 targets.

In 2013, we generated the equivalent of 46.6 per cent of our electricity demand from renewables, and there were record levels of investment in the sector. There has been a massive scaling up. We have pursued a cross-Government approach with a new Cabinet sub-committee on climate change to drive progress across portfolios, which supplements the climate change delivery board, which is for senior managers. It is important that public bodies in Scotland have a legal duty to support action on climate change, and we have made climate adaptation an integral part of our climate response.

The landscape of the low-carbon economy in Scotland provides ready examples of successful approaches: the Green Investment Bank, the 2020 group of progressive leaders, onshore and offshore wind, marine energy and the saltire prize, carbon capture and storage, the climate challenge fund—the funding for which we increased this year—and the junior climate challenge fund. We are on track towards our targets for reducing energy consumption, we have increased our forestry planting rate and we are acting to ban the sending to landfill of biodegradable municipal waste.

As well as domestic achievements, Scotland is championing climate justice, which is a powerful set of humanitarian messages that are of international importance. Climate change is already impacting on vulnerable communities around the world. The poor and vulnerable at home and overseas are often the first to be affected by climate change and are suffering the worst, yet they have done comparatively little—if anything—to cause the problem. Climate justice can bring developed and developing countries together around a people-centred human rights approach in order to deliver equitable global development. It demonstrates that we care. Our innovative £6 million climate justice fund demonstrates Scotland's commitment to the promotion of climate justice, and is providing assistance to projects in Malawi and Zambia. We will announce the second round of awards in the near future.

The fifth progress report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change shows that the evidence is unequivocal: climate change is real and is caused by human activity. Extreme weather events are increasing in scale and frequency, and the increasing body of evidence shows that we cannot afford to delay

action to tackle climate change. It will only get more expensive and more difficult to do so, and we are running out of time to limit global temperature increases to 2°C.

Climate change is a threat to all countries, and all countries have a responsibility to help to tackle it. All countries face challenges in reducing emissions; Scotland is no different, but the Scottish Government is committed to meeting the targets that we have set ourselves, and to leading by example. We can be encouraged by the many pledges and commitments that were made at the summit, but there remains much to do. We need to hear more detail from many countries and see what further pledges need to be made to limit global warming to 2°C.

Countries have agreed that a new globally binding agreement will be reached at the conference of the parties in Paris at the end of 2015. That new agreement must be ambitious enough to limit global temperature increases and avoid catastrophic climate change that will affect all countries, but hit the poorest hardest.

Scotland has made a strong commitment. Our targets are in line with scientific evidence and with what an ambitious treaty will demand of us. Of that, we can all be proud. All countries must work towards the agreed timetable. Those that have not done so must bring forward their pledges as soon as possible.

We will continue to work to influence our partners around the world. Specifically, we will support the EU in playing a leading role. We want the EU to commit to an emissions reduction target of 50 per cent by 2030, in the context of a global agreement.

At last week's UN summit, world leaders were left in no doubt about the scale of the challenge that is posed by climate change. This Parliament has a proud record of supporting action on climate change.

I look forward to hearing members' contributions.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the successful climate summit hosted by the UN Secretary General in New York on 23 September 2014 and is encouraged by the range of commitments made by countries, business and civil society; notes the latest scientific evidence on rising atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations and the costs of delaying action; welcomes the announcement of the Compact of States and Regions; notes that the UK Government made no new pledges; agrees that new devolved powers to give Scotland a stronger and more clearly articulated voice on the international stage would allow Scotland to play a leading role in encouraging countries to match Scotland's high ambition on climate change and to follow Scotland's example in making the transition to a low-carbon economy and championing

climate justice, and calls on all countries, including all EU member states, to use the opportunity presented at the forthcoming United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties in Lima, Peru, to make further progress and demonstrate their commitment toward an ambitious, global and legally binding climate change agreement in Paris in 2015.

16:00

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I open the debate for Scottish Labour with mixed feelings. I have a clear sense that the debate is timely and significant, as it comes after the New York climate summit, which drew together world leaders to address climate change, which is the most urgent issue facing our planet, to find a collective response to the challenges that are posed. I am also pleased to hear that the minister wrote to key players before the summit. However, I am deeply disappointed that the Scottish Government should use precious time on a world-threatening issue such as climate change to try to continue a constitutional debate, as stated in the motion—

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Will Claudia Beamish take an intervention?

Claudia Beamish: I will finish my point first.

The Government is trying to continue a constitutional debate that was decided through the democratic process of the referendum two weeks ago. Nowhere in the pre-referendum promises was there any commitment to the devolution of international powers. That could be interpreted by many as an SNP drip-drip strategy for more powers towards independence, which is not what the people voted for. That also pre-empts the Smith commission's work, of which the Scottish Government is a part. Therefore, we cannot accept the motion.

I had hoped that the Scottish Government would accept the people of Scotland's decision on the referendum, thereby enabling a more consensual tone, as has been the case with recent chamber debates on global climate change. That would have built on the consensus that drove forward the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, on which there was cross-party support, as the minister has acknowledged.

Stewart Stevenson: Is Claudia Beamish aware that the premiers of states in Canada and Australia can as of right be part of their countries' delegations? On one occasion, Mike Rann, the premier of South Australia, invited Scotland to be part of a body, but we could not accept the invitation because we had no constitutional right to be present. That is all that Labour wants to delete from the Government motion. I very much regret the Labour Party's denial of Scotland's situation,

which is that it is in a similar position to other countries and other states.

Claudia Beamish: The issue in the motion is about further powers, not who is represented in delegations. That is a different issue about personnel.

As has been proved in previous debates, there is no need for additional power to be devolved in order for the Scottish Government and wider civic society to tell the global community our very good story, and to tell it to

“play a leading role ... to match ... Scotland’s example in making the transition to a low-carbon economy.”

If anything is getting in the way of that, it is the complex issue of challenging targets that have not been met in the first three years, as well as the high ambition that needs to be turned into action with more proposals and policies. I acknowledge that that is difficult—it would be difficult for any party—but we must focus on that.

Although the Scottish Government insists that we are on track, concern is being voiced about the cumulative effect of the Scottish Government’s having missed the first three annual targets. That is a significant problem because it is eating into the small room for error in the overall goal of hitting the two milestone targets in 2020 and 2050.

As I understand it, the CO₂ that is already in the atmosphere is a major environmental concern and needs to be compensated for. It should be recognised that all political parties supported the five Stop Climate Chaos asks, which the Scottish Government has implemented in response to the missing of the third annual target. Although those are small steps, they are certainly in the right direction.

However, the annual targets become much larger year on year, which will make them more difficult to achieve, especially taking into account the shortfall from the three previous years. There is no doubt that the step change that is needed in order to make the shift to a low-carbon economy sufficiently quickly is challenging for the Scottish Government and the UK Government, and it should be acknowledged that it would be challenging for any political party in power.

Earlier today, the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee took evidence on the second report on proposals and policies. An example of an area in which ambition needs to become action and proposals need to become policies is that of our peatlands, which the committee discussed this morning. Evidence shows the complexities involved in shifting from proposals to policies and how hard that is to do. In “Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027. The Second Report

on Proposals and Policies”—RPP2—the Scottish Government has committed to restoring peatlands, which is significant, but no tangible plan has yet materialised. The minister has pointed to the difficulties that are associated with the fact that the science is developing, which gives us real problems in moving forward, but it is important that a plan to address peatland restoration, to which a significant amount—£15 million—has been allocated for the next three budgets, can be put into action.

Paul Wheelhouse: We have been developing the Scotland rural development programme in the light of the common agricultural policy package. As Claudia Beamish knows, that tranche of money will go through the SRDP. We have developed a peatlands plan. We are doing work on the issue, and we hope that land managers will be provided with what is necessary to allow them to take up the opportunity.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are now in your final minute, Ms Beamish.

Claudia Beamish: I turn to marine issues. I was hugely disappointed that the impact of climate change on marine ecosystems was not on the agenda at the UN summit last week. I believe that that is an area in which Scotland can lead progress, through marine protected areas and the marine plan. The possibility exists for the work in Scotland to be shared at global level. I hope that that will be possible, given that an incredible 90 per cent of the additional heat that has been created since the industrial revolution has been absorbed by our waters. It is very important to say that it is possible that that could continue. I hope that we can all work together with the Scottish Government and civic society to highlight the extent to which we are progressing marine issues and that, even at the 11th hour, some attempt can be made to get the matter put on the agenda at the summit in Lima in December.

I move amendment S4M-11029.4, to leave out from second “notes” to “global and” and insert:

“recognises the significance of the study carried out by the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate, the central tenet of which is that an economic transformation leading to a low-carbon economy could take place through coordinated international action, which would not only avoid crippling economic consequences, but would also result in a higher quality of life for the world’s population; agrees that Scotland has an important role to play in international efforts but that the Scottish Government must match ambition with action if it is to have credibility; regrets that the Scottish Government has failed to meet its annual emissions target for three years in a row and calls on it to achieve future annual targets and to commit to turning more proposals into policies, especially in the areas of transport, energy efficiency and agriculture, if Scotland is to have any prospect of meeting the 2020 and 2050 targets; calls on all countries, in the period leading up to future summits, to agree that the world’s oceans should be

included in the climate change agreements between countries, and urges all countries to use the opportunity offered by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties in Lima, Peru to work toward the delivery of a”.

16:08

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am pleased to open today’s short debate for the Scottish Conservatives. As a farmer, I am sure that climate change is one of the most important issues that we face. It is a serious threat to our environment, to the economy, to global security and to the eradication of poverty.

Although it is welcome that the UN summit made some progress, international leaders need to turn rhetoric into action, and there are significant challenges ahead before the Paris summit late next year. China’s vice-premier Zhang Gaoli surprised many people when he said that the country’s emissions would peak as soon as possible, and we must all hope that that is the case, not least because China has just surpassed the EU in annual greenhouse gas emissions per capita.

The agreement that was reached on deforestation, which included a pledge to halve it by 2020 and to stamp it out by 2030, is welcome, although Brazil’s refusal to sign up is a disappointment, and many people will want the agreement to be made legally binding.

I welcome David Cameron’s positive role at the summit, and the speech that he gave. He was able to speak with real authority because our UK Government’s record is strong. We have honoured our commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of gross national income on international development, and we are investing £4 billion in climate finance and more than £200 million in tackling deforestation in poor countries. The Prime Minister’s pledge that he would push his fellow EU leaders to come to Paris with ambitious emissions reduction targets is also to be welcomed.

The UK Government is also making significant progress at home with multibillion-pound investments in the development of new nuclear power and advanced carbon storage. The Prime Minister was absolutely right to say that if the international community gets things right, there need not be a trade-off between economic growth and reducing carbon emissions.

We can also be very proud of the UK’s cutting-edge research. Last year, I hosted a parliamentary reception on nuclear fusion research and the excellent job that is being done at Culham. Nuclear fusion has the capacity to solve the energy problems of the future, but we need to ensure that we are prepared to take the necessary long-term decisions. After all, one inherent

problem over past decades has been the use of short-term solutions to deal with long-term problems.

We acknowledge the Scottish Government’s efforts to tackle the causes of climate change here, and the good work of so many Scottish organisations, businesses and individuals, including the minister himself. Of course, the Scottish Government would have had more credibility on the issue had it met its greenhouse gas emissions targets in 2010, 2011 and 2012 instead of missing them, so we look forward to progress being made in that area.

Practical user-friendly measures that individuals and businesses can adopt must be a priority. On that point, this very morning, I met individuals from the Horticultural Trades Association. The sector is a significant employer in Scotland, and the association highlighted examples of green walls of climbing plants that are used in other countries as a form of air-conditioning and heat preserver. Given what we know of the benefit of green spaces to our urban communities and the general contribution that plants make to a cleaner future, why are we not doing more to help Scotland’s horticultural industry—which is in some ways disadvantaged by regulatory bodies that in some cases are no longer fit for purpose—to employ more people and at the same time give greater environmental benefit?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Final minute.

Jamie McGrigor: Have I a moment to finish, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are in your final minute.

Jamie McGrigor: Most of us will probably not have to deal with the worst consequences of the effects of climate change; that will be for our children, their children and the generations to come. It is a question of the legacy that we want to pass on to them. Will we be the generation that could have done something, but sat idly by and watched, or will we be remembered for our decisive action that ensured that we evaded the worst effects of climate change?

I move amendment S4M-11029.1, to leave out from second “notes” to “climate justice” and insert:

“welcomes the Prime Minister’s speech at the summit in which he highlighted that the UK has cut greenhouse gas emissions by one quarter and was on track to cut emissions by 80% by 2050; further welcomes the Prime Minister’s summit pledge to push European Union leaders to come to Paris with an offer to cut emissions by at least 40% by 2030; is of the opinion that the Scottish Government would have more credibility on climate change issues if it had not repeatedly failed to meet its own greenhouse gas emission reduction targets”.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Many thanks. We come to the open debate, and I must ask for speeches of a maximum of four minutes. We have already lost a member from the debate, and we are still tight for time.

16:12

Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): I very much welcome this debate. Scotland is seen on the international stage as a country that is in the lead. Indeed, as a witness at this morning's meeting of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee said, it is the leader of the posse of those who are in the lead. The video address by our minister, Paul Wheelhouse, on Scotland's climate change actions and the world-leading greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, which was hosted on the climate group's website during the summit, is no vanity production, and I hope that there will be cross-party support for ensuring that Scotland plays a full part in that organisation and that there is no more carping or misinformation about it.

Some of the specific short-term things that I want to talk about have been covered by the actions that have been taken in Scotland. For a start, I want to mention the aviation and shipping emissions targets that, unlike most other countries—including the UK—Scotland has put in place. The use of cleaner diesel has been agreed by the International Maritime Organization, but certain cruise liner ports such as Invergordon that receive many such ships are concerned that the agreement will make things more expensive for cruise liners. My great concern is that cruise liners will use dirty diesel in those parts of the world where they can still do so and where people are not meeting the terms of the IMO agreement, which the EU, too, has agreed to. I want our voice to be heard on the international stage to ensure that ships use cleaner diesel wherever they are, not just in our waters.

With regard to the peat plan, I believe that the IPCC has default values that allow us to measure the effect on our climate output and, indeed, to give it a retrospective value. In that case, I hope that we can use the money in the budget for this year to the full before it is used up, and I hope that we will get clarity on that from the minister before we finish today.

A second pan-European point is one that I raised at the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee this morning. Charging points for electric cars have different nozzles in each country. It is unbelievable that manufacturers cannot get that together. I will look for our Government and the European Parliament's environment committee to get together and ensure that that does not happen. It means that people

who travel from one country to another cannot easily use the electricity charging points.

I have to say some things about the amendments. We talk about the Scottish Government's position being a leading one. That is made more difficult by the House of Lords amendment to the Energy Bill that removed the Scottish Parliament's powers in respect of renewables obligations. That amendment was not debated on the floor of the House of Commons, and there was no consultation with the Scottish Government or the Scottish Parliament prior to its being tabled. When challenged in the House of Commons, the minister and the Labour front bench did not have any reasonable explanation as to why that happened in such an underhand manner. That undermines Scotland's ability to deliver on our climate targets.

Finally, I suggest, as the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee has, that we need to have all the committees of the Parliament and all the ministers taking responsibility. I realise that, when we share that, we also have to look at the budgets of other departments, such as health and transport, to help us to deliver. I hope that, in the budget that is coming up, we will see that happening.

Meanwhile, I very much welcome this debate.

16:16

Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab): I am pleased to speak in this debate in support of Claudia Beamish's amendment.

Obviously, no more important challenge faces us than climate change. I know that, across the chamber, we all strongly welcome the UN climate change summit and welcome climate change being at the top of the political agenda, where it belongs.

Two days before the UN summit, people across the world marched in their hundreds of thousands in more than 150 cities, including Edinburgh. Men, women and children marched to demand that Governments, businesses and citizens get serious about fighting climate change. They demanded urgent and decisive action to save our planet, safeguard our future and protect the things that we love and value.

During the summit in New York, we certainly heard many bold and positive statements from world leaders about the actions that they would take to reduce emissions and build up the resilience of the most vulnerable populations to climate change. We even heard from Leonardo DiCaprio, who told the UN summit:

"Our economy itself will die if our ecosystems collapse."

It is significant that China sent out positive signals for the first time that it, too, would make greater efforts to effectively address climate change.

We have also seen a welcome move away from the idea that there is a conflict between reducing emissions and delivering economic results, with the recognition that a more sustainable economy will result in a higher quality of life for the world's population.

Those are positive developments. The challenge now is to maintain the political momentum and ensure that the bold statements are backed up by action.

In its briefing for today's debate, Stop Climate Chaos stated that global greenhouse gas emissions are now 61 per cent higher than they were in 1990. Global temperatures are also on the rise, and the often devastating impact of climate change is affecting more people across the world, so the need for action has never been greater. It is therefore disappointing that, in a debate that should be consensual, the constitutional angle has been brought into the Government's motion, when we already have the powers to deliver the change that we need.

Although I know that the Scottish Government is keen to showcase Scotland's climate change ambitions, we all share those ambitions. It is a fact that the Scottish Government has failed to achieve its emissions targets in each of the past three years. I was at the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee meeting this morning, and the consensus among the stakeholders was that it is very difficult to see how we can now meet the 2020 target. That is a big concern to all of us in the chamber.

Climate change is one of the most important and challenging issues that we face. We have a duty to our children, their children and their children's children to get this right. The bottom line is that we must not only promise radical action but commit the time, money and resources that are needed to achieve change and deliver results.

I recognise that this is not just about the Scottish Government or Westminster, or the policies that we debate in Parliament or agree at international summits. Each and every one of us has the power to change the future of our planet and to make the day-to-day decisions that will secure a better future for the generations to come.

We know that taking ambitious action on climate change will deliver rewards: a stronger economy, more jobs, healthier lives, cleaner air and a better quality of life both now and in the future. Let us work together now to ensure that we can achieve our climate change targets. We need to lead by example, using the powers that we already have, and take bold action. I would like to hear more

about how the SNP Government will compensate for missing the climate change targets. More important, I hope that we can move forward and build a consensus about how we tackle climate change and take every opportunity to achieve a cleaner, greener and more sustainable Scotland and climate justice across the world.

16:20

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I do not want to dwell on this at great length, but it would be helpful if the Labour Party read the Government's motion, which merely refers to

"devolved powers to give Scotland a ... voice on the international stage".

We are almost unique, because the Catalans have a constitutional right to be part of the Spanish delegation, the Flemings have a constitutional right to be part of the Belgian delegation, the Italian provinces have a constitutional right to be part of the Italian delegation—and I can keep going. However, when the Labour Government was in power at Westminster, Gordon Brown expressly forbade the Scottish ministers and their delegation from being inside the conference hall. Thanks to the Maldives, we were able to get a temporary seat in the hall and network with the appropriate people. All we ask for is parity with other substates around the world, and that is all the motion says.

However, let us talk about the substantive issue before us, because I hope and believe that there is continuing consensus on the need to tackle climate change. I want to rely on a definition of the environment that does not limit it to the natural world but includes the surroundings and conditions in which a person lives or operates. The ethics of the effect on individuals around the world is a very important part of the debate on climate change. Developing countries in particular pay the price for our climate profligacy. When I say our climate profligacy, I encompass all the developed world in that description, including Scotland, but it is by no means limited to Scotland.

We have heard reference to Mary Robinson, a good friend to action on climate change and a good friend to Scotland. She has said that there is substantial agreement among Governments that climate change is undermining human rights. I look in particular at what happens in Africa in that regard, particularly the gender effect of climate change. In Africa, 70 to 80 per cent of the farmers are females. Mary Robinson has said:

"Women on the whole don't get agriculture training. And they're having to learn now to diversify their crops, to have seeds that can survive in drought or survive in waterlogged [conditions], and so there's a disconnect between even the

donor community for this agricultural training, mainly focusing on men, and who's [actually doing the farming]."

That is the price that is being paid by people in poverty in many countries in Africa. I hope that in our international engagement, whatever its character and whatever opportunities exist for it, we will be able to pursue that gender inequality in particular, because the effects of that gap between men and women are very substantial.

I wish the minister extremely well in Lima. I have not been there since 1980, when conditions in Lima were far from ideal for an international conference. There were burning barricades round the outside of the city, and the taxi that we were travelling in at one point actually picked up a bullet—I survived by 2 feet. I hope that the minister has a more satisfactory visit to Lima and that we can continue to tell the message of building on the 29.9 per cent reduction in our emissions over the past 14 years and that we continue to lead by example and articulate the reality of the economic opportunities from tackling what is a moral problem.

16:24

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I was concerned to hear about the assassination attempt on Mr Stevenson, and that he survived. In a more serious vein, I remind him that, when he was more recently an environment minister, the then environment secretary in the UK Government took him to international conferences as very much part of the delegation. Chris Huhne was mindful of taking the Scottish minister, who happened at that time to be Mr Stevenson. That is the right approach.

It is disappointing that the Government lodged a motion that was always going to divide the chamber. As a number of members have said, surely most of us can reach broad agreement on the issue. In fairness to Mr Wheelhouse, his remarks did not follow his motion. They were entirely reasonable, as one would expect but, sadly, that was not the case for the motion.

I will gently pick Mr Wheelhouse up on one point. If I noted him correctly, he said that the Scottish Parliament has a proud record of supporting action. We have a proud record of supporting targets, but we surely know from environmental organisations—and not least Stop Climate Chaos Scotland's briefing—that we are some way from dealing in concrete actions. Members on all sides have made that point in relation to the targets, which have yet to be achieved. I hope that we can achieve the targets. When we do so, perhaps Scotland can be a little more assertive about its position, and it will not be just rhetoric.

My real difficulty with the motion relates not to all the political stuff but to the suggestion that the New York summit was a success. My reading of New York is that, as usual, we got a huge amount of rhetoric from Obama and everyone else, but not much action. It worries me most that the Chinese made it abundantly clear that they have no plans whatever to comply with international emission standards reductions, because they consider China to be a developing country and not a developed country. In China's view, its arguments about the number of its people who fall within the UN definition of being in poverty completely outweigh the emissions from its coal industry and other such challenges.

The New York summit might have done some things, but it was long on rhetoric and short on action. We have a long way to go globally before differences are made. In New York, the French gave poor countries a \$1 billion guarantee, which was definitely progress, as was the commitment from pension funds and the bank and insurance industry to low-carbon ventures, which is meant to be worth about \$200 billion. Those aspects are concrete. However, the main commitment of the US, which is still the world's biggest economy, was to take climate change into account in overseas aid spending. That can hardly be construed as an enormous step forward.

What chance Paris 2015? The minister was right to highlight the importance of that conference. We are a considerable way from extolling the virtues of a guaranteed agreement in Paris next December—that is a long way from happening—but I hope that the minister will support Ed Davey's work in the European Union. On his initiative as the UK environment secretary, he created the green growth group, which is being driven forward by 15 EU nations. I hope that the minister will find time to support that and the measures that are being taken to put in place at the October European Council meeting, which will happen shortly, an agreed European climate change policy towards 2030. Poland opposes the proposal, because of its coal industry, so this is not yet a done deal even in Europe. Until such a policy is in place, we will be a considerable way from having the solution that we want in Europe and around the globe.

16:29

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): There was encouragement to be drawn from the climate summit that was held in New York. We sense that the world—or at least most of it—has finally woken up to the impact of climate change and the need to transition to a low-carbon economy. That is little wonder, given that the evidence of how climate change is affecting our daily lives is all around us.

Even parts of the planet that were previously in denial are feeling the impact.

California is in the grip of a drought that the state has declared an emergency, and the federal Government has designated all 58 counties of California as natural disaster areas. People there are contending with wildfires and increased air pollution. Direct and indirect agricultural losses of at least \$22 billion are forecast, as is the loss of 17,000 seasonal and part-time jobs. A research paper on the drought that Stanford scientists published just yesterday asserts that unusually warm temperatures, stagnant air conditions and lack of precipitation are “very likely” down to human-caused climate change, which has created a blocking ridge over the north-eastern Pacific, preventing storms from reaching the state during the rainy season.

Earlier this week, a report drawn from the work of five groups of researchers named greenhouse gas emissions as the direct cause of the heatwave that baked Australia for much of 2013 and the early part of 2014, which led to the Australian open tennis having to be suspended as temperatures climbed to 111° Fahrenheit. How ironic that the Australians have repealed a law that was intended to reduce emissions and appointed a climate change sceptic to review the country’s renewable energy targets.

What of here at home? David Cameron’s comments at the summit were to some degree welcome. After he rid himself of Owen Paterson—an environment secretary who seemed not to do science—it was good to hear the Prime Minister state that

“climate change is one of the most serious threats facing our world”

and that a global deal in Paris next year “must” be agreed. His commitment to push the EU for a 40 per cent cut in emissions by 2030 was a step in the right direction, even if we would go further. Much less welcome was his warm embrace of nuclear power and shale gas extraction. Surely it would be far better for the UK Government to show commitment to genuinely green forms of energy and not those that carry such environmental risk.

There are clear differences in approach to the subject between Scotland and the rest of the UK. Here in Scotland, last week’s figures for renewable electricity generation provided welcome encouragement as we journey towards meeting 100 per cent of our needs from clean, green energy sources. According to figures released by the Department of Energy and Climate Change, Scotland’s renewable electricity generation was 30 per cent higher during the first half of 2014 compared with the same period last year, due to a

50 per cent rise in hydro generation and a 20 per cent rise in wind output.

The figures also showed increases in the non-electrical heat demand that Scotland meets from renewable sources, and it is estimated that renewables contributed 46.5 per cent of gross electricity consumption in 2013, up from 39.9 per cent in 2012, which suggests that Scotland is on track to meet its interim 2015 target.

While we cannot ignore missing the climate change targets, let us recognise that the resetting of the baseline figures has been largely responsible for that, acknowledge that the direction of travel is positive and celebrate progress on the renewables front.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Final minute.

Graeme Dey: Globally and here in Scotland, we will make the necessary progress only if we pull together. It is exactly the same in the wider environmental responsibility context. We must, for example, continue to increase recycling rates and drive down the tonnage that goes to landfill. I think that we will continue to do that. It is important that we improve on the recycling figures that came out last week.

I mention that in passing because I genuinely believe that, among the general populace, there is an appetite for acting in an environmentally responsible manner, and it is improving. The public do get that they must do their bit on an individual level and, although they might have reservations about onshore wind, they recognise that it forms part of a balanced green energy generation programme and they would certainly rather be clean and green than dice with the risks that come with fracking—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that you must close.

Graeme Dey: —and the toxic legacy of nuclear power.

16:33

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): Last week’s UN climate change summit was a momentous event. It started with hundreds of thousands of people across the world taking part in marches and calling for greater action to tackle climate change. Although much of the media focus was on celebrity attendance, I remain hopeful that great steps were taken in the challenges that the global community faces. I am positive that the admissions by the Chinese vice-premier Zhang Gaoli will start a new era in global dialogue over the action that is required.

However, as colleagues across the chamber have said, the Scottish Government has missed its

ambitious targets for the third year in a row, despite having full control over the three main contributors to carbon emissions in Scotland: housing, transport and agriculture. In my speech, I will focus on housing and transport.

Paul Wheelhouse: Will the member take a brief intervention?

Mary Fee: I will if it is very brief.

Paul Wheelhouse: Mary Fee made the point that there are three areas where the primary impact of climate change is found. Some of the tools by which we can influence energy efficiency in homes are still reserved to Westminster, the green deal being the most prominent of them.

Mary Fee: I thank the minister for that clarification.

WWF has warned that missing our targets only makes the overall target harder to achieve, with room for only the smallest margin of error, so further action is required on both policy and implementation.

Tackling energy efficiency in housing can play a key part in reducing our carbon footprint, as can further investment in technologies that make homes more eco-friendly and, to reduce fuel poverty, cost effective. In the housing supply debate yesterday, I gave a perfect example of that when I mentioned passive houses, which are extremely fuel efficient and low cost to run. They are expensive to manufacture and build, but their benefits are far reaching. The connection between poverty, fuel poverty and poor housing is unavoidable. I am sure that all members across the chamber today will agree that tackling fuel poverty must be a priority of the whole chamber.

In its written submission to the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee, Sustrans emphasised the role that getting more people on to public transport can play. The announcements that were made by the Minister for Transport and Veterans earlier this year were ambitious, even if the timescales were long term. The planned move to electric vehicles is also ambitious and requires substantial investment from Government as well as business.

More use of our canals and ports would help to reduce our carbon footprint but, again, that would require substantial infrastructure investment.

The number of cycling accidents has increased in recent years, and Sustrans warns that that is in part down to the inadequate provision of safe cycling routes. I know of cycling routes in my area that run for only 10m before they disappear. If we want people to get out of cars in order to reduce carbon emissions and encourage healthy lifestyles, we must work together to make cycling more appealing and safe.

16:36

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): A week past Sunday, more than 300,000 people marched in New York. That was as many as took part in the great march in 1963, when Martin Luther King delivered his "I have a dream" speech to galvanise the civil rights movement, and as many as took part in the largest Vietnam war protests in the city. It was as large as the most iconic social movement gatherings that the US has seen. In London, 40,000 people marched.

In Edinburgh, 3,000 miles away from the UN summit, I had the privilege of marching with and speaking to thousands of people—people who demand to be taken seriously. I shared a platform not with celebrities but with ordinary people from all ages and backgrounds. We were all particularly struck by the eloquence of an 11-year-old girl who took to the platform and spoke passionately of the need for change. It was a really participative event. It was not about politicians talking to people but about people demanding change from their Governments, asking for leadership and committing to playing their part as individuals.

People know that we are on the cusp of an opportunity. The stated aim of the Paris meeting next year is to agree a binding universal deal. That needs practical action at Lima in December and strong commitments for post-2020 targets from all nations at the start of 2015. However, it also needs action and politicians who are willing to take action before a deal is struck. We must retain the agreement in Scotland on strong action.

The Government has made part of its motion today about more powers. I agree that more powers are vital to Scotland's ability to deliver its climate targets. However, it is also a question of commitment, of political will and of funding.

The Labour amendment contains lots that I like. It is true to say that the Government needs to turn more proposals on transport demand, energy efficiency and agriculture into on-the-ground action if future domestic targets are to be met. However, the amendment cuts out some important text from the motion. New powers should not shape this debate, but they undeniably have a bearing on the Government's ability to run a sustainable economy. For example, Scotland does not need or want fracking. Further, climate is also an ethical issue, and the Labour and Conservative amendments remove references to climate justice.

I welcome the minister's comments regarding our proposals on pension funds. The Green amendment was not selected for debate today, but I would be grateful for any opportunity to discuss the issue with the minister. Last week, the Swedish national pension fund announced plans to decarbonise its entire equity portfolio, as its

chief executive officer launched the UN's portfolio decarbonisation coalition. Pensions have long-term investment horizons and are exactly the funds that should be most keenly aware of the risk that climate change will leave fossil-fuel companies with billions of pounds of stranded assets.

We have also heard that the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and others are to divest \$50 billion from fossil fuels as part of the divest-invest coalition. I am sure that it has not passed people's ken that the Rockefellers built their fortune on oil. Only their philanthropic fund is divesting. That is small compared with the actual business, but the announcement is still significant.

Greens are keen to work with the Government to add Scottish pensions to the list of those decarbonising their portfolios. Climate action means making choices about where we invest and where we do not. We must meet the next target, and all parties that supported those targets should have policies that are not contradictory. We have extremely significant opportunities to ensure that we deliver Scotland's commitment to climate justice, and I will work with all those who have that commitment at heart.

16:40

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I am at a bit of a loss as to know where to start in summing up the debate because, had the motion mirrored the minister's opening speech, I would have had no difficulty in supporting it. However, Tavish Scott was right that the motion could only divide the chamber.

Claudia Beamish was also right that, in past debates, we have always managed to come to a broadly consensual decision—cross-party agreement on the way forward and pride in the role that Scotland plays in addressing this internationally vital issue. I am truly sorry that the Government motion does not allow us to maintain that broad consensus.

Indeed, following the weeks of division and impassioned debate on both sides of the referendum campaign into which all of us put our hearts and souls, the debate offered us a fantastic opportunity to come together again—at least on one subject—and show the world that, although we can have huge differences on our constitutional future, we can still speak as one when it comes to our environmental future.

Rob Gibson: Will Alex Fergusson take an intervention?

Alex Fergusson: I am sorry, but I have only four minutes.

That surely would have been the right message to have sent out from the Parliament as our reaction and response to the UN's climate summit. Instead, the Government has chosen to have its habitual dig at the UK Government while falling into the trap that Johann Lamont pleaded with it not to fall into in her speech to Parliament last Tuesday. It does so by asking us to agree

“that new devolved powers to give Scotland a stronger and more clearly articulated voice on the international stage would allow Scotland to play a leading role in encouraging countries to match Scotland's high ambition on climate change”.

I am not against further powers being devolved to the Parliament but, if the Government needs further powers

“to play a leading role in encouraging countries to match Scotland's high ambition”,

why has it been shouting from every available rooftop since the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 was first introduced that we have world-leading climate change legislation in place already and that we are leading the world in setting challenging targets? It did not need extra powers to make those lofty claims. Indeed, the minister repeated them in his opening speech.

Could it be that the Government seeks to deflect attention away from the fact that, as many members mentioned, it has failed to achieve any of the first three annual targets that it has set? I have said before and say again that I back the Government in setting challenging targets even if it does not achieve them because that must be preferable to setting targets that can be easily achieved. However, I could not help but notice an emerging trend in our Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee meeting this morning to highlight bureaucratic issues such as baseline changes, changing identifiers and other measures that, apparently, now begin to call the validity of our targets into question.

I make this plea: do not let us dilute the debate; let the Government stick to the targets, take the flak if it does not achieve them and then secure the agreement of a chamber that is essentially and broadly sympathetic to its cause on the issue when it tries to identify the best way forward.

I will be a little more optimistic than Tavish Scott on the UN summit because I hope that it was the success that it was claimed to be, although, to be frank, I despair that some notable world leaders chose to be elsewhere. I applaud the fact that our Prime Minister was there and committed himself to driving forward an EU agreement to a 40 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030.

I will not criticise the UK Government for not making any new pledges as the motion asks us to do. The summit was called to pave the way for

Paris 2015. That is where the big pledges and commitments are to be made and, if there is criticism of any country after that, so be it.

I repeat my request to the Government that, in the next debate on this vitally important subject, it returns to the atmosphere and language of consensus that normally typify climate change debates so that we can speak with a unified voice. That is the right way to generate the physical and behavioural changes that are needed to deliver the targets. Sadly, the pre-referendum rhetoric and the tone of the motion can only achieve the opposite.

16:45

Claudia Beamish: As we have heard, the global climate challenges are indeed great. I would like to sound a note of optimism at this stage. Global action is already having an effect and it should inspire us all that having legally binding agreements, which we are all determined will come out of the summit process leading to Paris, can have a profound effect.

In last week's *Economist*, there was a bar chart showing that the annual emissions savings of certain policies or practices are already working globally. I was struck by the impact of the Montreal protocol, which members will probably remember was agreed in 1987 and has resulted in the phasing out of substances such as chlorofluorocarbons.

According to *The Economist*, the policy is responsible for an annual 5.6 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent savings in greenhouse gas emissions, which shows that there are measures that can dramatically reduce global emissions as long as the international will is there.

Barack Obama and Zhang Gaoli, China's vice-premier, suggested that—as is highlighted in our amendment—economic transformation could take place that would not only avoid the crippling economic consequences of inaction but would result in a higher quality of life for the world's population.

The video that accompanied the "Better Growth, Better Climate" report could not state it any more simply:

"The investments needed to shift to a low carbon economy are almost the same as those investments we'll make anyway."

Business in Scotland has a good story to tell in that regard, which we can share globally. From Scotland's 2020 climate group that the minister mentioned to the whisky industry's initiatives and the climate monitor farms, there are many wins to recount.

The public sector also has much to share with other countries on the development process, whereby change is happening through the climate leaders forum and engagement to effect change throughout the sector.

As a member of the cross-party group on China, I have been interested that many members have mentioned China this afternoon. I have been following developments there to some degree. Although I recognise Tavish Scott's remarks, China is now the biggest investor in renewables technology in the world, and I believe that it is possible to avoid some of the dirty industry phase for countries such as China. China is also giving support to other countries; it has committed the equivalent of \$6 million to south-south development.

Here, the Scottish climate justice fund has targeted support to Malawi, where we have strong historical ties. That complements the more strategic global support by the UK Government.

How we measure progress is crucial at a country and global level in mapping the way forward. Let us measure what matters. The national performance framework includes a carbon indicator and one of the purpose targets is "Sustainability—Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions."

Scotland is leading in this area. Encouragingly, there is a parallel interest in other countries. In China, 70 small cities and counties will no longer use gross domestic product as an equivalent performance indicator for local officials. Evaluation will instead be based on raising living standards for poor residents and reducing the number of people living in poverty. Such initiatives need to be developed and given status through the summit process at a global level, and the challenge of compatible data must be addressed.

If the necessary political leadership is to be effective at all levels, support for action on behaviour change is essential, as Graeme Dey highlighted earlier. Awareness raising of climate change issues and how communities can get involved here in Scotland is another good story we could share.

Social media has played a part. The for the love of campaign and the recent Stop Climate Chaos action film show how people in Scotland are working together, and they can be shared the world over through the internet. As others have said, 2,000 people marched in Edinburgh, adding to the vast numbers marching across the world to highlight concern before the New York summit.

Collective understanding of the need for change is positive and important, but support is essential. Communities in Scotland are acting for change, and support from the climate challenge fund is

becoming effective and more inclusive. My own local burgh of Lanark tells the story well, and its example should, along with many others, be shared in towns throughout Scotland and beyond. The Lanark Community Development Trust says:

“We hope our project is beginning to change attitudes to growing your own produce and cutting down on food miles, certainly the school children seem to understand that.”

Climate justice is the way forward not only for developing countries but here in Scotland and in the UK if households and communities on low incomes are to be included on everything from sustainable living to flood prevention. The global dangers and opportunities for change that the climate change challenge presents are immense, but the Scottish Government and Scotland have a good story to tell. As Cara Hilton said, we must all contribute to the action, and I wish the minister well in Lima.

16:50

Paul Wheelhouse: I thank members for their contributions to this important debate. As I said earlier, the scientific evidence is overwhelming: climate change is happening. Extreme weather events are increasing in strength and frequency, as Graeme Dey outlined.

The road to a binding international agreement has reached a critical stage. We know that the cost of inaction will be far greater than the cost of taking strong action now. With that in mind, the UN secretary general’s New York summit was convened during this crucial period to galvanise commitments from the international community at the all-important head-of-Government level.

I spoke in my opening remarks about the cross-party, business and civic society support for strong action in Scotland on climate change. Another key lesson that we have for other countries is the level of senior and cross-Government political support for our climate programme in Scotland. I know that many Governments envy the cross-party nature of the support in the chamber for our action.

From the First Minister down, through Cabinet colleagues and across portfolios, our own cross-Government approach has been a key feature of our response. The First Minister’s commitment to renewable energy and championing of climate justice has, I am sure, been noted by many members. The Deputy First Minister’s support, through the hydro nation initiative, for the climate justice fund to which Claudia Beamish and other members referred, is to be noted.

The finance secretary’s prioritising of low carbon in our Government economic strategy and his personal commitment to our climate justice agenda, having spoken at last year’s conference, are very welcome. There is strong support too

from international development colleagues for our international climate change and climate justice agenda. That is not to mention, of course, the huge cross-portfolio efforts—to pick up Mary Fee’s point—on domestic delivery in housing, business, the public sector, transport and rural affairs.

Our success has come partly from having absolute buy-in on the need for action on climate change, from the head-of-Government level down and on all sides of the chamber. The UN is now looking for that buy-in from other countries.

Scotland has a hugely important track record of high ambition. To pick up Tavish Scott’s point, we are delivering on the climate change agenda, and I will outline some examples. As Stewart Stevenson pointed out, the motion very fairly does not mention independence; it just refers to having, in a devolved Government set-up, that which other countries take for granted in their own nation states. However, with our own voice on the international stage we could better promote Scotland’s example in tackling climate change to a global audience.

Claudia Beamish: Will the minister give way?

Paul Wheelhouse: I am really pushed for time—I ask the member to keep her intervention brief.

Claudia Beamish: Does the minister agree that the motion mentions “new devolved powers”, which—as I highlighted—breaks to some degree the consensus on climate change?

Paul Wheelhouse: The point has been made—we are deliberately pushing in the motion not for independence but for the same rights that other national Governments take for granted. At present there is no power for the Scottish Government to have an automatic right to attend these conferences, so we are looking for some support in that respect.

I appreciate that Claudia Beamish is not willing to give that support today, but international bodies such as the climate action network, the International Trade Union Confederation, Friends of the Earth and other stakeholders with whom members will be familiar want Scotland to have a voice in those audiences and to be able to influence other countries to allow them to take forward examples such as our legislative framework and approach to statutory targets. Why Opposition parties, with the exception of the Green Party and the independent members, will not acknowledge that obvious point is a mystery to me, but I will leave that point there for now.

I would be happy to meet Alison Johnstone to discuss the points that she raised about the decarbonisation of pension fund investments. I will be in touch about that.

We remain on track to achieve our 42 per cent emissions reduction by 2020. Notwithstanding the points that have been made, the reality is that our target in absolute tonnage terms is now considerably more than 42 per cent, but we remain on target to achieve the 42 per cent, and to achieve our targets of generating the equivalent of 50 per cent of electricity demand from renewables by 2015 and reducing energy consumption by 12 per cent by 2020. We have increased forestry planting rates to about 16 million trees per year, and we aim to achieve 20 million trees per year from 2015 onwards. By 2020, we will phase out biodegradable municipal waste going to landfill, the first such ban in the UK.

As we have heard, the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee today took evidence from stakeholders on the climate change programme, and I look forward to giving evidence to the committee next week. I will lay our annual report on climate emissions at the end of the month and will make a statement to Parliament as soon as possible thereafter. The independent Committee on Climate Change says that we are making good progress, particularly on renewables and domestic energy efficiency, although we recognise that keeping up progress on tackling climate change will require new commitments and policies to be brought to bear year on year.

We have committed about £1.3 billion over the three-year spending review period to additional climate action relating to energy, homes and communities, businesses and the public sector, transport, waste and rural land use. We recently made commitments to keep us on track for our 2020 objectives. Those include a new Cabinet sub-committee on climate change, £15 million more for electric vehicles, new cycling infrastructure, the greening of the common agricultural policy, including proposals for nutrient management on permanent grassland, and the roll-out of the smarter choices, smarter places initiative throughout Scotland over the next two years as part of our commitment to achieve almost total decarbonisation of road transport by 2050.

We have doubled our funding for the climate justice fund to £6 million. Next week, I will announce the successful round 2 projects for sub-Saharan Africa. We are supporting the 2020 climate group, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Glasgow Caledonian University and SolarAid with £200,000 for their Scotland lights up Malawi project, which involves rolling out household solar lamps. As part of my web address during the UN summit, I committed to supporting the compact of states and regions. That platform for reporting progress on climate action will help to give the confidence in delivery from all levels of Government that national Governments need to encourage them to make ambitious pledges to the international treaty.

Scotland can play a key role in demonstrating the economic benefits of making the transition to a low-carbon economy and can encourage other countries to follow our lead. We can also help to make the humanitarian case for action.

I will continue to work with the UK Government. We have always worked constructively with the UK Government in international affairs on the issue, as well as with our partners in the EU and around the world to make the case for higher ambition, to promote Scotland's low-carbon economy and to champion climate justice. I gently point out to Jamie McGrigor—if he is listening—that the UK target of 34 per cent and the five-year carbon budgets are far easier to implement and achieve than the measures that are required under our legislative framework. I hope that he recognises that fact, given the points that he made about our performance.

We believe that the EU is an important party to the UNFCCC and has shown strong leadership on climate change over the years. We want to ensure that that continues and that the EU can respond with an appropriate commitment to an ambitious treaty. The EU will need to go beyond the 40 per cent pledge for 2030 as part of a treaty that will stand a good chance of limiting global warming to 2°C. UK Government modelling shows that a 40 per cent EU 2030 target will cost the equivalent of only 0.01 per cent of annual growth and that a 50 per cent target will cost the equivalent of only 0.03 per cent of annual growth. We should compare that to the cost of the damage that will be done to our ecosystems and way of life if climate change is not controlled. We will also continue to support a high renewables ambition within the EU for the 2030 package.

At the UNFCCC conference in Lima in December, I will promote Scotland's story on high ambition to the widest possible audience. As I previously mentioned, we have important contacts within the UN. Being active members of the climate group gives us access to its Government and business networks and events. Non-governmental organisations, the media and new members of the European Parliament are potentially important target audiences for us, as are international finance institutions. We will take a keen interest in the overall level of global ambition, which has to match up to the aim of limiting global warming to 2°C.

All those things are important, yet we cannot participate in key negotiation tracks, even on areas in which we lead, such as peatlands. We are somewhat encouraged by the emerging commitment this year of the big players—the US, China and of course the EU—to delivering a climate treaty in Paris in 2015 but, in Scotland, we have already made our commitments, unilaterally

and without conditions. In fact, we did so many years ago and have since followed through with delivery.

Once again, I thank members for participating in the debate. I appreciate the comments that have been made.

Business Motions

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-11036, 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 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 Labour Party 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 Ministerial Statement: Budget 2015-16

followed by Public Petitions Committee Debate: PE1458 Register of Interests for Members of Scotland's Judiciary

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 28 October 2014

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Wednesday 29 October 2014
 2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
 Commonwealth Games, Sport,
 Equalities and Pensioners' Rights;
 Training, Youth and Women's
 Employment
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Thursday 30 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 Times—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-11037, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a stage 1 timetable for the Mental Health (Scotland) Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Mental Health (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 27 February 2015.—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): We come to decision time, and there are four questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that motion S4M-11030, in the name of Shona Robison, on the Ryder cup 2014, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament congratulates the European team on retaining the Ryder Cup at Gleneagles; commends both the European and US teams for providing a world-class tournament watched by sell-out audiences and showcasing Scotland to a global television audience in excess of half a billion each day of the competition; congratulates Ryder Cup Europe, EventScotland, Police Scotland, Transport Scotland, Perth and Kinross Council, Gleneagles Hotel, Scottish Government agencies and all the partner organisations for the excellent partnership working that went into delivering the event; supports the Scottish Government and all partners in taking advantage of the substantial business and inward investment opportunities presented by hosting both the Ryder Cup and Junior Ryder Cup, as well as building on Scotland's reputation as the home of golf and a perfect stage for holding world-class events, developing the range of sporting tournaments that it hosts; welcomes work to continue to promote and deliver a lasting legacy for the game through the successful ClubGolf initiative, which, with additional support of up to £1 million from the Scottish Government, will now develop a programme to encourage families to play golf, and leave lasting benefits to the transport infrastructure for local communities around Gleneagles, and agrees that the Scottish Government should continue to drive forward the benefits from hosting the Ryder Cup to build on these foundations, leaving a lasting legacy for Scotland from this remarkable sporting spectacle.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that in relation to the debate on the United Nations climate summit 2014, if the amendment in the name of Claudia Beamish is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Jamie McGrigor falls.

The next question is, that amendment S4M-11029.4, in the name of Claudia Beamish, which seeks to amend motion S4M-11029, in the name of Paul Wheelhouse, on the UN climate summit, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)

Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Against

Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)

MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 38, Against 75, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-11029.1, in the name of Jamie McGrigor, which seeks to amend motion S4M-11029, in the name of Paul Wheelhouse, on the UN climate summit, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Against

Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)

McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 16, Against 97, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-11029, in the name of Paul Wheelhouse, on the UN climate summit, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that, if they are going to say no, they should say it a wee bit louder.

There will be a division.

For

Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)

FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)

Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 63, Against 50, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the successful climate summit hosted by the UN Secretary General in New York on 23 September 2014 and is encouraged by the range of commitments made by countries, business and civil society; notes the latest scientific evidence on rising atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations and the costs of delaying action; welcomes the announcement of the Compact of States and Regions; notes that the UK Government made no new pledges; agrees that new devolved powers to give Scotland a stronger and more clearly articulated voice on the international stage would allow Scotland to play a leading role in encouraging countries to match Scotland's high ambition on climate change and to follow Scotland's example in making the transition to a low-carbon economy and championing climate justice, and calls on all countries, including all EU member states, to use the opportunity presented at the forthcoming United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties in Lima, Peru, to make further progress and demonstrate their commitment toward an ambitious, global and legally binding climate change agreement in Paris in 2015.

Online Benefit Claimants

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

Moving swiftly on, the final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S4M-010757, in the name of Graeme Dey, on Angus Citizens Advice Bureau publishes paper highlighting challenges faced by online benefit claimants. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

I call Graeme Dey, who is already on his feet, to open the debate. Mr Dey, you have seven minutes.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes the launch of *Digitally enhanced or Digitally Disadvantaged?*, a discussion paper produced by Angus Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB); notes the paper's concern regarding the Department of Work and Pensions' "digital by default" strategy, which expects 80% of benefits applications to be made online, despite the UK Government recognising that only 30% of claimants for universal credit would have no difficulty in moving to online benefit claiming; understands that the paper states that often those who are applying for benefits are those who are least likely to have access to the internet; notes with concern the wider issue of an IT skills deficit in Angus, including Angus South, with only 54% of Angus CAB clients having access to the internet at home, compared to 68% across Scotland, and commends the work done by Angus CAB on the paper, which it considers provides an understanding of the challenges faced by those claiming benefits online and the future pressures that this may place on local services.

17:05

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): I begin by thanking Scottish National Party colleagues and Labour members whose support for the motion has given us this opportunity to consider the paper that has been produced by the social policy team of Angus Citizens Advice Bureau, and the important issues that are highlighted in it. I also thank the members who have remained to participate in the debate.

I say at the outset that I am seeking to highlight the content of the report not as a means of attacking the general actions of the Department for Work and Pensions or Westminster, but to draw attention to the serious practical impact that the digital by default strategy will have on some of the people who are most reliant on accessing benefits.

Angus CAB's paper "Digitally enhanced or digitally disadvantaged?" lays out clearly the challenges that are presented by the United Kingdom Government's digital strategy and its expectation that by 2017 80 per cent of benefit applications will be being completed online. It highlights the fact that the DWP itself does not believe that that is achievable, given that it has acknowledged that only 30 per cent of benefit

claimants would have no difficulty moving to an online application process. In other words, more than two thirds of claimants will encounter varying degrees of difficulty and yet the aim is to have 80 per cent of claimants embracing the approach within three years.

I think that I am reasonably computer savvy, although my kids and constituency office staff might disagree, but even I find myself checking, double-checking and sometimes triple-checking bookings or forms that I have completed online. Imagine what it would be like for someone who is not computer literate or tech-confident, when their lifeline benefits are at stake.

The DWP has admitted that the people who are most likely to claim benefits—those who are on low incomes, who are disabled or who are over 65—are the very people who are least likely to have access to the internet or the ability to use it. However, that seems to have been disregarded in drawing up the new strategy. Of course, that highlights the wider issue of the digital skills deficit that is spread throughout Scotland. Only one third of those who are on low incomes in our country have broadband access, compared to 56 per cent of comparable households in the rest of the UK.

The digital deficit needs to be addressed and the disparity between Scotland and the rest of the UK and between different areas of Scotland has to be dealt with, but let us focus for now on the issue that is under discussion, and the UK Government's anticipation that such a large majority of benefit applications will be made online, while offering no new support to facilitate that. Understandably, it is that lack of support that concerns Angus CAB. Just 35 per cent of Angus CAB's clients believe that they would be able to apply online for benefit, which will leave a large group of people relying on services such as the CAB provides, or on their friends or family to help with applications.

During 2011-12, CABx across Scotland helped clients to complete an average of 75 old-style paper benefit forms every day. That help might have been required because of technical and confusing language on the forms, or because of claimants who struggle with reading or writing. Those problems will still exist with online applications. For anyone who experiences trouble with reading or writing or, for example, people in the deaf community who often do not use the written English language, moving the application process online will not fix those problems; it will simply exacerbate them. Those who are already struggling to fill in long and complex forms require help to do so, as will those who do not have readily available internet access or do not know how to use a computer. The digital by default strategy fails to make the application process

easier for users. For the majority of claimants, it just makes it harder.

I referenced the deaf community, and I have also been told that to reduce costs, the DWP is to telephone clients where possible in order to secure additional information or to process applications. That might be a good intention, but where does that leave hearing-impaired people? The actions of the DWP will undoubtedly pile pressure on local services such as CABx or libraries that offer internet access, because no further support or funding has been offered to help such services to provide for claimants, even though the UK Government recognises that they will need extra support.

There is a move across society to have form filling done online, but the question is how, in pursuing that approach, we cater for the people who fall through the cracks. Angus Council's preferred method of applying for housing benefit or council tax reductions is online, but it also offers a telephone service and a paper-based service. Revenue and benefits staff are available at four locations to assist with completion of applications, and the service can be extended, by appointment, to three other locations. Additionally, officers will, on request, visit people's homes, and access is given to digital skills programmes from the most basic level upwards. That is a commonsense approach involving compromise and flexibility.

Angus CAB believes itself to be underresourced to meet the demand that will undoubtedly arise by virtue of the strategy that is being pursued. Throughout its report, the CAB highlights previous cases that support that assertion. It appears that benefits claimants are being punished repeatedly for not having online access. For instance, two Angus CAB clients were sanctioned for not being able to access the jobseekers allowance services, which have already moved online, even though both clients were vulnerable and had no knowledge of how to use a computer, let alone how to apply for jobs online.

It is not only the change to the application process that will cause upheaval for people who are in receipt of benefits; the fact that it is being paralleled with the rolling out of universal credit will also cause upheaval. As universal credit spreads across the country, increasing emphasis is being placed on job searching and applications by people who currently receive jobseekers allowance. Not only will they have to apply for benefits online, they will also have to search and apply for jobs online. That approach signposts everyone to apply online and treats digital applications as the rule rather than the exception. Needless to say, Angus CAB has examples of clients who have no access to the internet and very limited access to the telephone. As I

highlighted earlier, how are hearing-impaired people supposed to cope with applications being discussed or progressed by means of the telephone? I am not saying that the phone approach will not be helpful to some, but the practice does not entirely reflect the flexibility or resourcing that is required.

Although I accept that moving to an online benefits application process may have benefits for some people and should speed up the process for those who successfully manage to apply, the UK Government's digital by default strategy, with its 80 per cent target, is a non-runner for many. The strategy offers insufficient flexibility for those who struggle with the online application, and the DWP offers no support to the local services that are bound to experience an influx of people who are struggling with the new application process. For me, the strategy is badly thought out. The UK Government has recognised the difficulties that it will cause but has not provided adequate means of alleviating those. That needs to change, otherwise cynics might wonder whether adopting the approach is just another method of reducing the benefits bill regardless of the human cost.

17:12

Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I, too, congratulate my colleague Graeme Dey on securing this important debate. Although the debate makes specific reference to a report that was published by Angus CAB on the challenges that are being faced there by those who are required to make online benefits applications, I know from my work on the Parliament's Welfare Reform Committee that similar challenges are being faced by many benefits claimants throughout Scotland.

What is the key issue? I submit that the magnitude of the challenges that are being faced stems from the UK Government's determination to force people to make online applications and to maintain online activity with respect to their benefit entitlement even when the citizens concerned have no or low computer skills or have no access to the internet at all. As we have heard, that flows from the UK Government's so-called digital strategy, which includes an expectation that 80 per cent of benefits applications will be completed online by 2017. Angus CAB and many other CABx throughout Scotland have expressed or experienced concern about this digital by default approach to the welfare system. On page 2 of its report, Angus CAB states that it is concerned that the approach could

"exclude some of the most vulnerable and marginalised members of society from accessing the very services they rely upon."

Indeed, without at the same time taking or promoting measures to ensure that such citizens are not left offline and behind, what is the efficacy of the UK Government's current approach? How will it, in and of itself, do anything to improve online skills and access?

The fact of digital exclusion and the implications that it has for the receipt of benefits to which people are entitled have been the subject of discussion at the Welfare Reform Committee. An area of particular concern, and a point highlighted in the Angus CAB report, is the impact on those who are required to maintain jobs search online activity. As the Welfare Reform Committee highlighted at paragraph 6 on page 2 of its fourth report of 2014, "Interim Report on the New Benefits Sanctions Regime: Tough Love or Tough Luck?", which was published on 11 June 2014, an identified weakness in the sanctions system is

"A failure to appreciate that many people on benefits do not have the necessary IT skills at day one to utilise the DWP's Universal Jobmatch facility or other IT technology."

That point was raised during the committee's inquiry by, for example, One Parent Families Scotland, which said:

"Issues of digital access are being ignored so that sanctions are being applied to lone parents who: don't have access to a PC; don't have broadband; or don't have the on-line skills required by"

Jobcentre Plus

"to meet job search requirements."

Cost issues have also been identified. Paragraph 95, on page 19 of the committee's report, notes that

"Some clients are unable to meet jobseeking requirements because they cannot afford the costs of their jobsearch. Often this is the result of a previous sanction."

The question arises of what support is to be made available in order to move claimants online. Page 5 of the Angus CAB report says:

"the DWP advises that claimants should contact their local council or local Job Centre to get help with claiming online or getting access to the internet."

I have no confidence that that is happening in any significant way. Therefore, that begs the question of where the safety net is for those vulnerable people as far as the welfare system is concerned. Surely it is time that the UK Government had a rethink, not least in light of its lamentable track record on setting up computer systems.

17:17

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I congratulate Graeme Dey on securing the debate and on the content of his speech. Although he may consider himself "computer savvy" and "tech-confident"—I am learning new phrases all the

time—I merely note that, by his own admission, the people closest to him might disagree. I also congratulate Angus CAB on producing its report and highlighting the challenges that are faced by online benefit claimants.

We live in an increasingly online world. We pay our bills online, we can get our shopping online and we can make travel arrangements online. However, that is not for everyone and we should not lose talking to people face to face. Graeme Dey is right to point to the need for alternatives to doing things online.

It is correct to say that the DWP expects people increasingly to make their claims online. Indeed, the UK Government's digital strategy expects that 80 per cent of all benefit claims will be made online by 2017, yet the rate of progress is extremely slow. For jobseekers allowance applications alone, the Government fell woefully short of the target that it said it would reach of 80 per cent of claims being made online by September 2013, just last year—it was 10 per cent in March 2011 and 19 per cent in March 2012. That is a long way off the target set.

There are a number of reasons for that. First, even the DWP admits that claimants are less likely to use the internet; 72 per cent of disabled people are online compared with 85 per cent of non-disabled people; 59 per cent of people over the age of 65 are online, which leaves a huge number that are not; and access to online services can often be limited by income—the Office of Communications found that one in three households earning less than £17,500 had broadband. Therefore, people who are older or in poor health or who have a lower income or less education are more likely to be offline, yet those are the very people who make the most use of Government services and who will need assistance.

An approach that expects all those who claim benefits and are in search of employment to have the necessary IT skills will not only put them at risk of being sanctioned but marginalise them further in their own communities. The UK Government is doing nothing to help to improve IT skills; rather, it is just closing down alternative means of claiming. That will put extraordinary pressure on public and voluntary services to help people with claim forms. Citizens advice bureaux dealt with 19,463—I had to make sure that I got that right—benefit form completions in 2011-12. That figure is likely to increase and CABx are not funded to meet that level of demand. The issue is equally a problem for local authority advice services. Access to computers in libraries may be helpful, but there are challenges, such as a lack of privacy, a lack of support staff and short time limits on the use of computers.

The three local authority universal credit pilots in West Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire and Dumfries and Galloway have already led to the expressing of significant misgivings. Councillors in those areas are already warning that

“online applications must not become the preferred method for accessing the benefits system and alternative methods must not be made more difficult to force people to go digital.”

Another comment that has been made is that

“it takes around 90 minutes to complete an online JSA application form. People cannot fill out a 36 page form on a mobile phone and many people don't want to upload very personal information on a public computer in a library.”

There is even a question about whether the pilots will have had time to be properly evaluated by the time universal credit is introduced.

The UK Government cannot assume that people have the skills to access the internet or, indeed, the opportunity to do so. Simply asserting that benefit applications will have to be made online is just not good enough and fails to address the practical barriers that many benefit claimants face.

It is a wrong-headed policy to push people to apply for benefits online. It fails to reflect the reality of people's lives and the impact that that will have on public and voluntary services. I again thank Angus CAB for drawing the issue to our attention and Graeme Dey for bringing the debate to the chamber. Ultimately, the UK Government needs to change its approach to some of the most vulnerable in our society and help them to make claims rather than put artificial barriers in their way.

17:22

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I add my congratulations to Graeme Dey on securing this debate on a very important topic and to Angus CAB.

I agree with Jackie Baillie that the UK Government's policy is wrong-headed. At a time when we are seeing an assault on benefit claimants and what, to me, amounts to a persecution of those who put themselves back on the voting roll for the referendum, who are now being hunted for historical poll tax debts, who would want to be a benefit claimant? Everything is made tough for them. The complex forms often have to be completed, as others have said, by those who are least capable of completing them. Frankly, without the CABx and other advice centres, where would those claimants be?

Recently, I confirmed that nearly 250,000 Scottish pensioners were claiming pension credit and that one third of those who were entitled to do

so were not. Goodness knows how they were making ends meet. Together with the guidance notes, the pension credit form runs to 41 pages—I checked that today. You would need a PhD in form filling to complete it. I speak as a woman who found that she was going to get taxed for a van that she did not own after she had completed her own tax form for the Inland Revenue. I did not even get that right, and it was pretty straightforward. How often have members tried to fill in an online form, only to be told to go back and complete a line that had not been completed properly? I can understand why the process sometimes takes 90 minutes. If we add to that complexity the UK Government's strategy that 80 per cent of benefit applications should be completed online by 2017, we realise that people will be in an even more difficult position.

I will keep to the demographics that Jackie Baillie touched on. It is clear from Citizens Advice Scotland's report “Offline and left behind” that 59 per cent of people in the 60 to 74 age range never use a computer. Among those in the 75-plus group, the figure rises to 75 per cent. We should think about the pension credit that is not being claimed at the moment and the impact of that.

In the Scottish Borders, part of which I represent, the 60 to 74 age group represents nearly 20 per cent of the population, whereas the figure for Scotland as a whole is just over 15 per cent. In Midlothian, the figure for that age group is also higher than the Scottish average. At 9.9 per cent, the percentage of people in the 75-plus group is higher in the Borders than in Scotland as a whole, for which the figure is 8 per cent. In my patch, some 30 per cent of people are over 60, and a good when of them will be entitled to pension credit, which they are now supposed to apply for online.

The problem is compounded for all claimant groups by their home internet connection. Only 50 per cent in the Borders have such a connection—the figure for Midlothian is similar—which means that those people are expected to travel somewhere somehow to access the internet publicly.

My question—and indeed that of the CAS—is this: how is 50 per cent to become 80 per cent, and how is that to be achieved with an ageing population? As I have said, I can foresee that third of pensioners not claiming their pension credit rising, and I can foresee injustices for those who, for various reasons, find using the internet overwhelming.

Although I support the cutting of bureaucracy, it cannot happen at the expense of the vulnerable and the elderly, and I believe that the UK Government should embark on an assessment of the current difficulties of accessing the benefits

system before it imposes another hurdle. In the meantime, it should simplify pension credit forms. If it is felt that the sorts of working examples that exist for that particular form are required, it is an admission that the form is too complex for a start.

17:25

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

I thank Graeme Dey for bringing this paper to Parliament through his motion, and I pay tribute to the work of Angus CAB.

On its front cover, the paper is described as

“A discussion paper produced by Angus Social Policy Team (part of Angus Citizens Advice Bureau ...)”.

Such a discussion paper is vital at this time and is valuable in promoting the debate. As far as digital exclusion is concerned, we must remember that those of us who have access to the internet and use it regularly have a tremendous advantage over others. Many of the things we buy, some of the things we sell and many of the services we access are cheaper on the internet, and those of us who have such digital connectivity have a natural advantage while those who do not have a natural and converse disadvantage.

There are a number of reasons why digital connectivity might be a problem. As has been highlighted, access to broadband in many of our rural areas is not all that it could be, and many who live in our geographically most marginal communities struggle to access the internet because they have either no broadband connection or, as is the case in many areas, no mobile connection that they could use as a substitute.

The people whom we are talking about not only have been excluded from the advantages of internet access but will now be expected to make applications for support by that means. Some of us from the Welfare Reform Committee have had the advantage of visiting the Glasgow pilot and talking to some of the people involved, and what we heard there was reassuring to some extent. I can reassure the chamber that the 80 per cent target that has to be met by 2017 will not be met simply by dropping people off; if it cannot be met, other ways will have to be found to reach those who cannot get online.

We also spoke to those responsible for running individual accounts in the pilot, who look at the online applications that have been made and contact those who have failed to complete the form adequately or have made some other error that requires such further contact. In fact, it became clear during that visit that many of those who are responsible for running the pilot on a day-to-day basis understand only too well the disadvantages that are coming along.

The truth is that universal credit, once fully implemented, will have tremendous advantages for claimants and give huge flexibility. However, people must be able to access their accounts, which is why I am supportive of those who have expressed grave concern about those who would have an advantage if they could connect online but who are unable to do so.

Angus CAB has highlighted a key problem that we must begin to deal with at every level. That means finding adequate support for those who can give the training and assistance locally; providing the equipment that is necessary—if that is in our libraries, that should be done in a much more secure manner; providing support through local government where it can be effectively funded by some other means; and, above all, finding the resource within DWP budgets to ensure that a little spent in the right place results in the savings that it would like to achieve in the long term.

There is a great deal to be achieved by pursuing the target, but it must be implemented in an effective and understanding way that produces those results for the benefit of not only the DWP but the claimants.

17:30

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): I thank Graeme Dey for lodging the motion for debate and emphasise the importance of the issue that he has raised.

The paper that was produced by Angus Citizens Advice Bureau highlights major problems with the UK Government's digital strategy and its aim of having 80 per cent of benefit applications made online by 2017. Those issues will affect benefit claimants across Scotland, as the universal credit continues to be rolled out throughout the regions, and I am certain that claimants in my constituency will face many of the same difficulties as those that have been encountered by CAB clients in Angus.

One of the most pressing problems that face claimants who must make their benefit application online is lack of access to the internet. Citizens Advice Scotland found in a 2013 survey of its CAB clients who had a benefits issue that just 54 per cent of respondents had an internet connection at home. That suggests that almost half of the clients who were surveyed would have to seek alternative access to the internet in order to make their benefit claim online. Although some people may be able to rely on friends or family who have a computer, those who are unable to do so must turn to publicly available facilities. Most local authorities provide such facilities in libraries or community centres, but many facilities are limited in number as well as in the venue's opening hours.

In my constituency, internet facilities are available in local libraries, but other than these options are limited. That is one of the reasons behind the newly launched olive branch cafe, which is located in Bennoch parish church in Kirkcaldy. An internet cafe is provided that allows free internet access for people in the local community. Although the service is invaluable to benefit claimants, it is limited to the current opening hours of the cafe.

Even if such facilities are more readily available, some claimants may have difficulties in getting to them. That could be for mobility reasons or because of the cost or availability of transport. Internet access therefore remains a major obstacle for many benefit claimants.

Practical access aside, many claimants lack the skills and/or confidence to use the internet. One of my constituents, who was made redundant last year after 35 years of working in a manual job, struggles to use the internet due to a lack of IT skills. When he found himself unable to perform job searches online, his jobseekers allowance was sanctioned.

That is surely a sign of things to come, particularly for the older generation, who are inevitably less likely to possess the IT skills of our young people, who have grown up in the digital age. CAS's 2013 survey found that 47 per cent of respondents who cited skills and confidence as a barrier to applying for jobs or benefits online were aged between 45 and 59 and that 22 per cent were aged between 60 and 74. Those factors can make applying for benefits online a very daunting task.

Under the current UK Government's digital strategy, benefit claimants may be sanctioned should they fail to perform tasks online. I have witnessed at first hand how some of my constituents have been affected by unreasonable and disproportionate sanctions. One of my constituents was recently sanctioned for failing to attend an appointment at his local job centre, despite his having notified it in advance that he would be attending his father's funeral that day. Although that sanction was reconsidered and later reversed, my constituent had to face weeks in the interim awaiting the outcome of his appeal with no income whatsoever. He came to me with no money for food or electricity.

We should bear in mind that the majority of people who are in receipt of benefits are some of the poorest in our society and that they already face the impact of billions of pounds of Westminster-imposed cuts to the welfare budget. The DWP's digital by default strategy is likely to lead to a growing number of sanctions and consequently a higher prevalence of such incidents whereby claimants end up in dire straits

with nowhere to turn for alternative sources of income.

It is abundantly clear that the UK Government's target of having 80 per cent of benefit claims made online is completely unworkable and that it unfairly penalises those who face challenges in using the internet whether for reasons of lack of access or skills, or health. That is likely to have a knock-on effect on other local services, which will find themselves under increasing pressure to deal with those who are struggling to meet the digital demands that are placed on them by the DWP.

I wholeheartedly support Graeme Dey's motion and call for a review of the UK Government's 80 per cent target at the earliest opportunity.

17:34

The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess): Like others, I congratulate Graeme Dey on bringing this issue forward for a members' business debate. I commend Angus Citizens Advice Bureau for its excellent discussion paper, which highlights particular issues faced by claimants as a result of the UK Government's digital strategy.

Everyone who has spoken in the debate is concerned about the digital delivery of benefits. There is an absolute recognition of the difficulties that that is causing for many vulnerable people. However, we need to be specific about the problem. What I find concerning is the way in which the DWP chooses to deliver benefits through the digital channel, which in itself is not the problem.

When the digital delivery was announced by the UK Government, I raised with Lord Freud in one of my meetings with him the fact that I saw digital delivery as an issue that would impact on vulnerable people. I also said that I expected that the DWP would in some way provide support and financing to help people get over the hurdle of getting access to computers and the digital channel.

I have said before in the chamber that we are not a Parliament of Luddites. There is no doubt that digital is the way of the future. Now and in the future, most of us in society will expect and demand efficient and responsive public services to be delivered online. My colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs recently published a digital participation strategy that commits us to building a national movement for change that works tirelessly to build a world-class digital nation in which everybody, regardless of where they live or the circumstances in which they find themselves, can embrace digital technology with confidence.

The strategy sets out the work that we are doing in partnership with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and signatories to our digital participation charter to provide courses that will help improve digital skills, mentors who will give people confidence, and financial support to organisations and community groups that people trust to support them on their digital journey. The comprehensive nature of the strategy and the cross-ministerial support that it enjoys give me the confidence that people in Scotland will be better placed than most to acquire the skills and confidence that the modern world increasingly demands.

There is a problem, however, when the DWP is railroading people down a digital route simply so that it can say that 80 per cent of people will make “digital by default” applications and when it is obvious that in many cases that is not the best option for people. Some of the stories in the Angus CAB discussion paper and from other sources that I have heard across Scotland are quite shocking, and we have also heard some in the debate. I hope that they are not an indication of how universal credit is intended to be delivered.

We heard, among other examples, Christine Grahame talking about the effect on pensioners and David Torrance talking about somebody who had worked for 35 years and never needed to use a digital strategy but was made redundant. For someone to lose their job in that way is a big enough trauma, but for them to be unable to apply online for or claim the benefits that they are entitled to because they do not have the skills to use the internet is a double whammy. It is absolutely disgraceful that people have to go through that.

Jackie Baillie referred to face-to-face advice. There are always going to be people, no matter how clever or advanced we are digitally, who will need face-to-face advice, including people with technophobia. Filling in a form is not always just about ticking boxes; people must also understand the questions in the form. From spending many years in the advice sector, I can certainly say that some people would have filled in the form wrongly if they had tried to do it themselves and that they must be asked the right questions in a face-to-face situation. People do not always know what benefit they are on, for example, or what income they get. Filling in a form with incorrect information about those matters could put them out of getting benefits for some time, and they would have to get all that sorted out. In the meantime, they would have no means to live on.

Graeme Dey and all the members who have spoken have highlighted that the people who will be most affected are those who are on low incomes, those who live in deprived areas, those

who have a disability, those with long-term health conditions, those with numeracy or literacy difficulties and those who have never had to use a computer. They are the very people whom we expect the welfare state to be there for.

I say to the DWP that those people deserve a benefits system that meets their needs, rather than one that meets only an arbitrary target of 80 per cent of claims being made online. That figure has caused some concern. Because of such challenges, the Scottish Government is funding a variety of projects that are aimed at enhancing digital skills and improving access.

Our welfare reform resilience fund supports several digital projects, such as the local support project in Fife, which is recruiting local people to build IT capacity and delivering a bespoke community bus to take online services to outlying communities. The Shetland rural IT project aims to develop individuals’ information and communication technology skills and to improve access to the internet throughout rural Shetland.

Rural areas have barriers, some of which have been mentioned, but there are also issues in urban areas—particularly Glasgow, Clyde and Lanarkshire—where we know that broadband uptake is much lower than the Scottish and UK average. We must remember that many people cannot afford to have broadband in their home. Some of us see broadband as almost a necessity, but it is more than a luxury for others—they cannot even contemplate having the money to spend on it. As Jackie Baillie said, many people’s only internet access is through a mobile phone, and we all know that nobody could apply for a benefit or fill in a form on a mobile phone. That is why we are funding the Glasgow libraries project with £200,000 over two years to promote community-based access to computers, fit new IT kit, make wi-fi available and provide relevant skills and development training.

Many members have mentioned that there are signs that the DWP has recognised that many claimants will face challenges and will require assistance to make the transition to the new system. We do not question the fact that digital delivery of public services, including benefits, is a development for the 21st century, but we question and continue to raise with the DWP the implementation of that approach and the intent of the welfare reforms that are behind it.

Meeting closed at 17:42.

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