



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 26 November 2014

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# Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 26 November 2014

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

## Portfolio Question Time

### Culture and External Affairs

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** Good afternoon, everyone. The first item of business this afternoon is portfolio questions. In order to get in as many members as possible, I would be grateful for short and succinct questions and answers, please.

#### Creative Scotland (Regional Funding Allocation)

##### 1. Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland)

**(Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the regional allocation of funding by Creative Scotland to support cultural events. (S4O-03731)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** Creative Scotland's funding decisions are a matter for the Creative Scotland board. The recent decisions that were made on regular funding followed a robust assessment process and the Scottish Government accepts them. Difficult decisions had to be made as there were applications worth £212 million for an available budget of £100 million. More organisations than ever before have received funding for three years. It is that stable funding that allows organisations to plan and deliver with a greater deal of security. Some 20 organisations are new to three-year funding, 26 move from two-year funding to three-year funding and 31 move from annual funding to three-year funding.

I am pleased that Aberdeen Performing Arts, Citymoves dance agency, Deveron Arts, Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee Repertory Theatre, Hospitalfield arts, North East Arts Touring, Peacock Visual Arts, Scottish dance theatre, the Scottish Sculpture Workshop and Woodend Arts in the member's parliamentary region have been funded. As part of the assessment process, Creative Scotland looked to achieve the best possible geographical coverage.

**Alex Johnstone:** It has been revealed that Creative Scotland has removed all permanent sources of funding for the Sound festival, which is based in Banchory. That means that it would appear that there is now no on-going Scottish Government support for any music festival taking place between Edinburgh and Lerwick. Does the

cabinet secretary understand my concerns about the regional allocation, which seems in this case to support a central belt bias at the expense of the north-east?

**Fiona Hyslop:** I point out that Woodend Arts, one of the organisations behind the Sound festival, became regularly funded for the first time to the tune of £400,000. The Sound festival is funded to March 2015 and has £52,000 of transitional funding, and it is eligible for the £150,000 per project funding that is available.

On the member's point about music festivals between Edinburgh and Lerwick, I point out that there is a wide range of music festivals between those places, from large-scale commercial events such as T in the Park to free events such as the Dundee blues bonanza. Creative Scotland funds the Orkney festival, the St Magnus international festival, the Niel Gow fiddle festival, Mendelssohn on Mull, the Stonehaven folk festival, which the member will be familiar with—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** A selection would do, cabinet secretary.

**Fiona Hyslop:** —along with the Belladrum tartan heart festival and the Hebridean celtic festival. The member might want to reflect not only on his cultural experience but on his geography.

#### Arts and Culture Events (West Scotland)

**2. Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what arts and culture events it has planned for the West Scotland parliamentary region. (S4O-03732)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** The Scottish Government is not directly planning arts and culture events in the West Scotland parliamentary region. Indirect support for arts and culture events, however, is provided through public bodies such as Creative Scotland and VisitScotland's event directorate, EventScotland, which are supporting arts organisations and venues that hold events in the region.

**Stuart McMillan:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that locations such as Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire, with their rich cultural and music scene, would be excellent locations to host more events? Will the Scottish Government assist in promoting both Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire as locations to help to showcase Scotland's wider cultural offering?

**Fiona Hyslop:** Indeed. As part of the homecoming celebrations throughout the year, events are taking place all over Scotland. That is also the case in relation to the St Andrew's weekend and the winter festivals.

The member makes a good point about showcasing particular music in different areas. I hope that the regular funding that has been announced of £600,000 for three years for the Beacon arts centre in Greenock—from 2015 to 2018—will also provide opportunities for music, theatre and arts in the member's region.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 3, in the name of Jackie Baillie, has been withdrawn. A satisfactory explanation has been provided.

### Film Studio

**4. Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress is being made on establishing a film studio complex. (S4O-03734)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** We are committed, together with our partners Scottish Enterprise and Creative Scotland, to securing a permanent film studio for Scotland, and we will make an announcement as soon as possible.

**Elaine Murray:** The cabinet secretary will know that a film studio has been an aspiration in Scotland for many years and it has been suggested that the film studio complex could be opened as early as 2017. In that favourable circumstance, how can the Government and its partners ensure that the benefits will be realised at locations throughout Scotland, including the many fine locations in Dumfries and Galloway?

**Fiona Hyslop:** The member is right to identify that this is not just about the availability of a film studio. We have the development in Culternauld where "Outlander" is being filmed, but we are also talking about production, development and the promotion of our fantastic scenery. A number of productions have been made in the south of Scotland, but we have to promote all Scotland. The wonderful light in the member's constituency is attractive not only to artists and has been used in a number of productions, such as "Two Thousand Acres of Sky", which was filmed in the member's area. I am conscious of that and of the wonderful scenery that is available in Scotland, and I reflect on the wonderful talent and skills that we want to be able to deploy in Scotland. When we have the opportunity to develop our proposals further, I will announce them to Parliament.

### United Kingdom Government (Meetings)

**5. Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government following the recent G20 meeting. (S4O-03735)

**The Minister for Europe and International Development (Humza Yousaf):** Scottish

ministers have not had any discussions with United Kingdom Government ministers following the recent G20 meeting. Unfortunately, the UK Government has not consulted the Scottish Government on any area of devolved competency before or after attending that important international conference. We continue to urge the UK Government to regularly consult Scottish ministers on issues that affect the Scottish people.

**Roderick Campbell:** The minister will be aware that the G20 belatedly included a statement on climate change in its communiqué. He will also be aware that the Prime Minister suggested that everyone has to bring plans to reduce emissions ahead of next year's international conference on climate change. What involvement will the Scottish Government have in contributing plans for that conference?

**Humza Yousaf:** We welcome any additional pressure being exerted by the Prime Minister and the UK Government on other G20 countries to reduce and mitigate the effects of climate change. The Scottish Government has an excellent record on climate change. We are halfway to our 2020 target of 42 per cent emission cuts, having achieved a 26.4 per cent cut in 2012. In the run-up to Paris, we will continue to work with the UK Government and the climate group, which is the international body that brings Government and business together, to push for an ambitious global deal on climate change. We expect Scottish ministers to have a place on the UK delegation in Paris.

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** One of the key areas on the G20 agenda for 2014 has been infrastructure and investments. Does the minister agree that adequate infrastructure is paramount for sustainable growth and investment in small and medium-sized companies, and that an integrated infrastructure plan for the Highlands and Islands would be appropriate in the spirit of the recent G20 meeting?

**Humza Yousaf:** I salute the member on managing to get the Highlands and Islands and other regions of Scotland into a question about the G20. Sustainable infrastructure is an important feature and the Government wishes to promote it. I am sure that the appropriate minister will be delighted to meet the member to discuss that. He is, however, absolutely correct that, when it comes to the climate change agenda that the world has to abide by, infrastructure and transport and all similar issues are incredibly important. Scottish Government ministers work closely across their portfolios and I am certain that the member will find an ear that is willing to listen to what he has to say in that regard.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 6, in the name of Jim Eadie, has been withdrawn and a satisfactory explanation has been provided.

### Fair Trade Footballs

**7. Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to promote the use of fair trade footballs. (S4O-03737)

**The Minister for Europe and International Development (Humza Yousaf):** I note the member's on-going interest in fair trade and fair trade footballs, and I wish to put that on the record.

The Scottish Government recognises the value that fair trade footballs have in ensuring that we highlight the need for workers in developing countries to be paid a fair price for their goods and labour. As a demonstration of our on-going commitment to fair trade, following our achievement of fair trade nation status in 2013, which the member welcomed at the time, we are providing core funding to the Scottish Fair Trade Forum, which is working with Bala Sport to raise the profile of fair trade footballs across Scotland.

**Neil Bibby:** I know that the minister, like me, is a keen fan of both football and fair trade.

Earlier this week I spoke with Bala Sport, a new co-operative in Scotland that has already sold 1,000 fair trade footballs this year. We spoke about how procurement could be used to encourage the purchase of fair trade footballs and how they could be promoted through our schools.

The minister may be aware that in the past I organised a local fair trade football tournament in Paisley. Recently I have discussed with fair trade supporters the possibility of organising a national fair trade football tournament, given that Scotland is now a fair trade nation.

Will the minister meet me and Bala Sport to discuss those issues and other suggestions for how we take forward the campaign for fair trade football?

**Humza Yousaf:** I would be more than willing to meet. Neil Bibby is correct: he and I played on the same team—that might be the only time that we are on the same team—and we beat the MPs 4-3. I will not mention that I scored at Celtic park.

Putting all that to the side, I will deal with the substance of the question. It is very important that schools are involved. Every school that I have visited has a fair trade programme. More and more schools are having fair trade programmes, and it is imperative that we involve our young people in Scotland in fair trade.

A national football tournament is an excellent idea, and I would be happy to see how we could support it. I commit to meet Neil Bibby and Bala Sport to see what we can do to progress this important agenda.

### Fair Trade Goods

**8. Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what percentage of goods sold in Scotland can be considered fair trade and what it is doing to increase the sale of fair trade goods. (S4O-03738)

**The Minister for Europe and International Development (Humza Yousaf):** The Scottish Government remains committed to ensuring that producers in the developing world achieve a fair price for their goods, as I said in my answer to the previous question. Earlier this year I announced a further £440,000 to enable the Scottish Fair Trade Forum to strengthen support for fair trade across all sections of Scottish society: from sport all the way through to fair trade produce.

United Kingdom figures show that retail fair trade sales were £1.7 billion in 2014, which is roughly 1 per cent of the UK groceries market overall. As major retailers and manufacturers trade on a UK basis, no disaggregated sales figures exist for Scotland. However, the latest survey indicates that fair trade continues to enjoy strong support, with 63 per cent of the Scottish population regularly purchasing Fairtrade products.

**Alex Rowley:** Scotland is only the second nation in the world to have been declared a fair trade nation. Does the minister agree that the Scottish Government can do more to promote fair trade in public procurement contracts in light of the European Union public procurement directive, which was voted for on 15 January and makes it easier for public sector bodies to buy fair trade goods?

**Humza Yousaf:** The Scottish Government has always believed that it is imperative to promote the fair trade agenda. I am thankful that we have had a cross-party consensus on that. We will continue to do what we can. Of course, Governments can always do more, and we will look to do that.

Awareness of fair trade has improved substantially over the past years. More communities and colleges have been designated fair trade communities and colleges, and a bigger proportion of the population has been buying fair trade products. Of course, there is more to do.

I am aware of the new procurement directive, and I will certainly talk to the appropriate Government minister to see what we can do. There are other avenues: legislation can be an important tool, and we have seen how working with businesses—even before they get to the

procurement stage—on fair trade is very important. In the Commonwealth games we saw gold that was sourced in a fair trade manner, and many of the products used in the athletes' village were sourced ethically. That was achieved by working with companies before they even got into the procurement process.

I would be more than happy to take up with the appropriate Government minister elements of what Alex Rowley says. I extend the same offer that I extended to Neil Bibby: I am more than happy to meet on these issues, if Alex Rowley so wishes.

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Can the Scottish Government do anything to ensure that fair trade benefits the very poorest in developing countries, in light of recent accusations that fair trade certifications are a path too narrow for the least-developed countries to tread?

**Humza Yousaf:** That is an excellent question, which has dogged the fair trade debate since the fair trade movement began, but I have every confidence in fair trade certification. I know that those who are involved in Fairtrade certification are very aware of the issues that Jamie McGrigor raises. It is important that we do not disadvantage the poorest in the world through all the noble intentions that everybody who buys fair trade has. The Scottish Government can certainly aid those discussions, and we can be an exemplar.

I am more than happy to meet the member to discuss the matter—and even, if he wishes, to arrange and facilitate a meeting with the Scottish Fair Trade Forum, so that it can provide him with assurances additional to those that I have given. I can tell the member, however, that the forum is very much aware of the important issue that he raises.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 9, in the name of Ken Macintosh, has not been lodged, and no explanation has been provided. The Presiding Officers would be grateful for an explanation by the end of the day.

### Historic Sites

**10. David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it protects and supports sites of historic importance. (S4O-03740)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** The Scottish Government protects and supports the historic environment in many ways. We have worked collaboratively to develop “Our Place in Time”, the first ever historic environment strategy for Scotland, which sets out a common vision and ambition for how we will protect and support our historic environment over the next 10 years. I have

convened a strategic forum to oversee and drive the delivery of the strategy and its aims.

Through Historic Scotland, the Scottish ministers work closely with local authorities, landowners and communities to protect and enhance our country's historic environment. Historic Scotland also administers grants for historic environment projects on behalf of the Scottish ministers. That amounts to about £14.5 million a year, which is available to help enhance and promote the historic environment for the benefit of our communities.

**David Torrance:** Wemyss caves, in my constituency, are a site of great historic importance. The Save Wemyss Ancient Caves Society has worked tirelessly to preserve the unique Pictish artwork that is found on the cave walls. The caves remain at risk from coastal erosion. Can the cabinet secretary advise me on what progress has been made in offering support for Wemyss caves so as to help provide security and stability for the future of the site?

**Fiona Hyslop:** The Wemyss caves are quite remarkable. After the member led a members' business debate on the subject, he invited me to visit them. I saw at first hand the remarkable artwork in the caves, and I got a real sense of the caves' vulnerability.

The management group that was brought together included local partners such as the Save Wemyss Ancient Caves Society, Fife Council, the Fife Coast and Countryside Trust and the Wemyss estate, which is the owner of the site, and is advised and supported by Historic Scotland and by Scottish Coastal Archaeology and the Problem of Erosion—SCAPE.

The group is taking forward the five recommendations of a report that was put together last year: jointly to resource a management plan, to provide support for a feasibility study for a cultural centre, to develop better integration between local and national bodies for long-term coastal management between East Wemyss and Buckhaven, to complete the scanning project for the caves, and for the main government partners to work together to empower local groups to deliver key management aims.

I know that David Torrance is passionate about the Wemyss caves. I share his anxiety about the immediate threats from some of the coastal work that is taking place around Fife and about the potential implications of that over the next few months and into spring next year, so I have asked Government agencies to identify some immediate issues as well as driving forward the management plan.



I think that more people should be aware of the Wemyss caves, and I thank the member for drawing the matter to the Parliament's attention.

## Infrastructure, Investment and Cities

### Living Wage

**1. Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how it is promoting the living wage as part of its anti-poverty strategy. (S4O-03741)

**The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):** The Scottish Government fully supports the living wage campaign and recognises the difference that the living wage can make to the people of Scotland. That is why we have funded a pilot by the Poverty Alliance with the aim of increasing the number of employers across all sectors in Scotland that pay the living wage. I am pleased to note that, since the pilot was launched in April, the number of living wage-accredited employers has tripled.

In addition, we are leading by example by ensuring that the living wage is a key part of the Scottish Government's public sector pay policy. Although the Scottish Government cannot set pay levels in the third sector—or in the private sector and the wider public sector, where employees are not covered by our pay policy—we actively encourage all organisations to ensure that all staff on lower incomes receive a fair level of pay. Through that, we seek to maximise household resources to tackle poverty and reduce inequality across Scotland.

**Margaret McCulloch:** Bluebird Care in South Lanarkshire has recently become one of the first care providers in my region to be recognised as a living wage employer. It expects the benefits to its business to include improved staff morale and better levels of worker retention.

Regardless of whether power over the minimum wage is devolved to Scotland, does the Scottish Government agree that nothing prevents it from promoting the benefits of the living wage to employers in sectors in which work might be low paid or insecure? If so, does it agree that it could promote the living wage by establishing a living wage unit and introducing a living wage strategy?

**Margaret Burgess:** I am pleased to hear of the organisation in Margaret McCulloch's region that has adopted the living wage and I absolutely concur with what she said about the benefits of any employer paying their staff the living wage. It creates better productivity and values the workforce.

I say to Margaret McCulloch that the fact that we now have a cabinet secretary one of whose main

responsibilities is the living wage clearly indicates the Government's position. We funded the Poverty Alliance to initiate the campaign to promote the living wage and continue to do so. As I said, the Scottish Government pays all its employees at least the living wage and has now managed to negotiate a contract with those who provide it with catering and other services also to pay the living wage. We are and will continue to be absolutely committed to the living wage and to working towards it.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** I accept the positive things that have been said about the living wage, but does the minister accept that it is always second best, because it is voluntary, and that it would be better if we had control of the statutory minimum wage?

**Margaret Burgess:** I agree with John Mason. The issue featured in the Scottish Government's submission to the Smith commission. We believe strongly that having power over the minimum wage is the way forward. We also said in the white paper that we could increase the minimum wage in line with inflation, which United Kingdom Governments have failed to do. Had they done so, our low-paid workers would already be £600 a year better off. We certainly want the power to set the minimum wage to be given to Scotland.

**James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab):** It is important to focus on the areas for which the Government has responsibility now. Labour recently highlighted the case of Mitie cleaners at Atlantic Quay—a Scottish Government location. I welcome the fact that the Government has moved on that and will seek to ensure that those cleaners are paid the living wage. Will that policy be extended to other cleaners in the public sector—for example, Serco cleaners in the national health service?

**Margaret Burgess:** I said clearly that the Government is committed to the living wage, to ensuring that it is paid to all public sector employees for whom the Government is responsible and to working towards our programme to promote good working conditions throughout the Scottish Government and its subcontractors.

I make it clear to the Parliament and the country that we are absolutely committed to the living wage, which is why we want to have statutory powers over the minimum wage in Scotland. That would enable us to increase the minimum wage in line with inflation until we did not require to have the living wage.

### Rents (Private Sector)

**2. Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to

tackle high rents in the private sector. (S4O-03742)

**The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):** Rents in the private sector reflect conditions in local housing markets, and rent levels vary widely across Scotland. Where rents are high, the answer is to build more houses, and we have taken decisive action on that. We have boosted housing supply budgets by investing £1.7 billion in affordable housing over this parliamentary session and, only this month, we announced a £200 million increase in funding to stimulate Scotland's housing industry. We are also working with Homes for Scotland to attract new sources of investment to build more homes for private rent.

**Drew Smith:** Nearly half of lets in the private sector are occupied by families and one in four of the poorest people have to rent privately. At the same time, we have seen rent rises in some areas of 40 per cent in just four years, meaning that many Scots are paying half their monthly pay packet in rent alone.

What reassurance can private renters in my area have that the Government understands their predicament, particularly if there are no substantial proposals for action in this afternoon's legislative programme and given that the minister previously failed to back rent reform when Scottish Labour proposed it?

**Margaret Burgess:** As I said in my original answer, rent levels differ across Scotland, but the average rent increases over the past four years—including those in the member's Glasgow region—have been less than the inflation increase. That applies across most of Scotland. We are aware that rent levels in some hot spots, such as those in Aberdeen and in parts of Edinburgh, are rising at a higher rate than inflation, and we are looking at that. We committed to looking at that issue and we are consulting on it. We are exploring rent levels as part of our consultation on reviewing the private sector tenancy.

I remind the member that Labour proposed rent reform at a very late stage of the Housing (Scotland) Bill. Labour did not introduce the idea early in the bill process. Rent reform was not mentioned until, lo and behold, Labour was allowed to mention it because Ed Miliband mentioned it in London. Not until then was it mentioned by Labour. [*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Margaret Burgess:** We had already made a commitment to review the private sector tenancy regime and rent levels and we stuck to that commitment.

## Ferries (Orkney)

**3. Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government when it expects to reach agreement with Orkney Islands Council on the replacement of the islands' internal ferry fleet. (S4O-03743)

**The Minister for Transport and Islands (Derek Mackay):** In the "Empowering Scotland's Island Communities" prospectus, which was published on 16 June, we recognised that the provision of transport services should not place a disproportionate financial burden on any council, particularly with reference to revenue support for ferry services and ferry replacement costs for internal ferry services.

We have since agreed to a programme of work with the local authorities involved—Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council—and with the regional transport partnerships in order to consider the issue further. We are taking forward that work in partnership with those local authorities.

**Liam McArthur:** I thank the minister for that helpful response and I congratulate him on his appointment. I welcome in particular his role as minister for the islands. The focus on new powers is clearly welcome but, as he indicated, it is vital to focus on the powers that we have, particularly in relation to transport. This is a long-standing issue, as the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities will testify. Will the minister agree to meet me and the local council to discuss how the issue can be progressed in the interests of supporting some of the most vulnerable communities in Orkney, for which the ferry services are a genuine lifeline?

**Derek Mackay:** Yes, I will of course be happy to meet the member, the local authority and others to take forward the issue. I look forward to the on-going work of the partnership. I particularly thank Liam McArthur for his constructive approach, including welcoming my appointment as the logical choice. That is praise indeed and I look forward to the meeting that we will conduct.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 4, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, has been withdrawn because of his ministerial appointment.

## Public Transport (Vulnerable Groups)

**5. Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it seeks to promote affordable public transport for vulnerable groups. (S4O-03745)

**The Minister for Transport and Islands (Derek Mackay):** Traveline Scotland provides support for disabled people who are planning public transport journeys; more than 1.25 million

people have older and disabled persons passes, which provide free bus travel; and the new ScotRail franchisee will provide a wide range of rail fare promotions, including those for jobseekers.

**Bob Doris:** I thank the minister for that answer and I welcome him to his new transport brief. Last month, I hosted an awareness-raising event in Parliament by Breast Cancer Care Scotland, which mentioned the difficulties that people living with cancer often have in accessing services. Will the minister look at reviewing transport costs with specific reference to the concessionary travel scheme or perhaps even another mechanism by which the Scottish Government could support, transport cost-wise, vulnerable groups such as people who are living with cancer and seeking treatment?

**Derek Mackay:** A number of people with long-term conditions already qualify for the national concessionary bus travel scheme. Those who are awarded the middle or higher rate of the care component or the higher rate of the mobility component of disability living allowance, those who receive attendance allowance and those who have a progressive degenerative condition in so far as the illness or condition severely impedes their mobility and ability to carry out day-to-day activities may also receive support.

In addition, we amended regulations last year to allow those who will receive personal independence payments at both the standard rate and the enhanced rate to be eligible for the scheme. We take care to keep options for eligibility for the scheme under review. We have no immediate plans for further changes, but I am happy to consider the detail further.

**Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab):** Bob Doris points out that hospital out-patients—in particular those without a car—form one of the vulnerable groups. According to Transport Scotland research that was carried out in August, only 54 per cent of those people think that access to bus services is very or fairly convenient. How does the minister plan to improve bus services between hospital and communities for out-patients?

**Derek Mackay:** I am happy to look into that in further detail. Some services are provided by local authorities, and some by transport partnerships and dedicated schemes, including partnership schemes, which I am very aware of. I am happy to consider the issue further to ensure that the transport solutions are fit for those who rely on them, including the most vulnerable in our communities.

## Housing (Households in Temporary Accommodation)

**6. Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what actions it is taking to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation. (S4O-03746)

**The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):** The Scottish Government is reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation by increasing housing supply and by preventing homelessness wherever possible through the development of housing options.

The latest statistics indicate that, in the first quarter of 2014-15, there was a 2 per cent decrease in the number of households in temporary accommodation from the previous year and—crucially—a 10 per cent decrease in the number of households with children in temporary accommodation. Those falls sit alongside wider falls in homelessness more generally in Scotland in recent years.

**Hanzala Malik:** I thank the minister for her response, but those households are looking for results and not figures. There are still approximately 10,000 households living in temporary accommodation. What is the Government doing to build more social rented housing stock to match the needs of households by providing permanent accommodation so that households are not stuck in temporary accommodation for long periods?

The budget for affordable housing has been cut and is now 25 per cent lower than it was in 2008-09. Will that reduction be realigned, or is the Government satisfied with allowing people to continue to suffer in the way that they are suffering?

**Margaret Burgess:** First, although I accept that there are many families in temporary accommodation, the vast majority of temporary accommodation is good quality, well managed local authority accommodation. We have to look at the issue in the round.

With regard to the housing supply, we have not increased the budget throughout the year, but we recently announced a further £200 million to increase the affordable housing budget for the coming year. We are still building more houses for social rent than any other Administration since devolution built. We will continue to meet our targets on both social housing and affordable housing.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 7, in the name of Annabelle Ewing, has been withdrawn due to her ministerial appointment.

### Veterans (Housing)

**8. George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what help and support are available to help veterans to access housing. (S4O-03748)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Keith Brown):** There is a wide range of help and support available to help veterans to access housing.

The Scottish Government has provided funding and support to a variety of new projects and housing developments for veterans, such as the veterans' housing facility at Cranhill in Glasgow, which was opened last month.

We have produced a tailored housing guide for veterans and have supported organisations that provide advice and support to veterans to help them to understand their housing options.

Other sources of help include the Scottish Government's LIFT—low-cost initiative for first-time buyers—scheme, which helps people on low to moderate incomes to access home ownership, and is available to veterans. In addition, serving members of the armed forces and veterans who have left the armed forces in the past two years are provided with priority access to the LIFT schemes.

**George Adam:** I have been approached by many constituents in Paisley who live in veterans' housing and who feel that it is not fit for purpose. That housing is often provided by charities that are not bound by the Scottish housing quality standard. In those cases, what can be done to ensure good-quality housing for our veterans?

**Keith Brown:** The Scottish housing quality standard is a target that ministers have set for all social landlords, including registered social landlords that are also charities. If a landlord is not a social landlord, it will probably be subject to the repairing standard that applies to most private landlords. Private landlords who are subject to the repairing standard are required by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 to meet the standard throughout the life of a tenancy. Tenants of such landlords can apply to the Private Rented Housing Panel for assistance if their landlord fails to carry out repairs that are needed in order to meet the repairing standard. The panel can enforce repairs by issuing a repairing standard enforcement notice. If the properties that are causing concern are not subject to the SHQS, I encourage George Adam and his constituents to consider raising their concerns with the panel.

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** During the passage of the recent Housing (Scotland) Bill, I discussed with the then Minister for Housing and Welfare allocation policies on

social rented housing for people who are leaving the armed forces. At the time, I was assured that provision was in place that made any additional moves unnecessary. Is there continuing assessment of the performance of the current Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 in relation to allocations policy for veterans? Is there any prospect of changes being made to the process, should they be proved necessary?

**Keith Brown:** In our discussions with veterans organisations, they have concentrated on ensuring that disadvantage to veterans is eliminated, rather than on creating advantages for veterans. Alex Johnstone knows well enough that some local authorities—including Aberdeen City Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council, to mention but two—have been proactive in the matter. We keep the issue under review.

Perhaps the biggest issue, however, is to do with the armed forces. The Ministry of Defence can, on the day on which a person joins the armed forces, tell them that they are entitled to put their name down for a house when they leave the service, but that still does not happen. People still come out of the armed forces and have to start from scratch on a waiting list. More could be done by the MOD. Of course, we continually review what we can do with our partners in local authorities in order to ensure that we get suitable housing for all our veterans.

### Dundee Port Railhead

**9. Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress is being made on the Dundee port railhead as recommended in the Tayside and central Scotland transport partnership's strategy. (S4O-03749)

**The Minister for Transport and Islands (Derek Mackay):** Discussions on the feasibility of the Dundee port railhead are on-going between tactran, the freight industry and relevant stakeholders. We understand that, at this stage, a suitable business case has still to be developed. We are committed to encouraging growth in rail freight, as is evidenced by our £30 million strategic rail freight investment fund, which will be available over the next five years, and the separate freight facilities grant scheme, which supports the transfer of freight from road to more sustainable modes. We will keep the issue under review.

**Jenny Marra:** Discussions on the issue have been on-going for years now with the Scottish Executive and Scottish Government. The railhead has been costed at £3 million to £4 million. I have been leading a project to try to bring hundreds of decommissioning jobs to Dundee and have held weekly meetings with Scottish Enterprise, Forth Ports and Dundee City Council on how we could do that. The railhead is a key part of the

infrastructure to allow materials to be brought to the port. Will the Scottish Government consider funding the Dundee railhead as a key part of the infrastructure that is required to bring hundreds of jobs to our city?

**Derek Mackay:** I am more than happy to offer a meeting with Jenny Marra to explore the matter. The key issue is private sector investment, and developers will have a keen interest. It is a complex issue, and we have to look at actual demand for the railhead. If the member wants to look at the issue constructively, I am more than happy to offer a meeting.

### **Superfast Broadband (Kirkliston and South Queensferry)**

**10. Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether there have been discussions regarding bringing forward work on the roll-out of superfast broadband for Kirkliston and South Queensferry scheduled for late 2015. (S4O-03750)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Keith Brown):** The Scottish Government is working with its local authority investment partners and BT to bring fibre broadband to more than 600,000 homes across Scotland over the next three years. Given the scale of the engineering challenge and the major infrastructure works that are required, not all areas can benefit at the same time. There are no changes to report on the dates for the works that are scheduled for Kirkliston and South Queensferry. However, the programme is focused on maximising the efficiency of the roll-out to optimise fibre coverage and improve deployment timescales across all areas of Scotland.

**Colin Keir:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that areas such as Kirkliston have suffered as a result of the failure of the United Kingdom Government's urban broadband fund to comply with European state aid rules?

**Keith Brown:** I am aware of the range of issues that are experienced by households and businesses with poor internet connectivity, and I am sympathetic in that regard. We are working to address the issue and to provide improved connectivity to as many premises in Scotland as possible in the shortest possible time, including in the most rural areas.

The Government's digital Scotland superfast broadband programme complies with European state-aid rules, under which an intervention can be made only in areas where commercial market failure is demonstrated. The scheme is designed to optimise coverage and efficiency while ensuring that there is equity across Scotland and that no areas are left behind. When the programme is

complete in 2017, more than 95 per cent of Scotland will have access to fibre broadband.

## Programme for Government 2014-15

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is a statement by the First Minister on the Scottish Government's programme for government 2014-15. The First Minister's statement will be followed by a debate. There should therefore be no interventions or interruptions.

14:40

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** It is an honour for me to present, for the first time as First Minister, the Government's programme for the year ahead.

I pledged last week that I would be First Minister for all of Scotland. It follows that this programme is for all of Scotland.

Of course, it is no secret that I support independence passionately and want to see substantial new powers transferred to this Parliament. We will find out tomorrow whether the Smith commission will recommend proposals that meet the pre-referendum vow of the Westminster parties to deliver a powerhouse Scottish Parliament.

One thing is certain: this Parliament and this Government will use any new powers wisely, to improve the lives of the people whom we serve. Indeed, one early commitment that I want to make today is this: if the necessary powers are transferred in good time to this Parliament, the Government will bring forward legislation to extend the franchise and allow all 16 and 17-year-olds to vote in the 2016 Scottish election.

The debate about more powers will continue, and rightly so. However, that debate is not the focus of my statement today. Instead, the clear focus of this programme for government is on how we use our existing powers fully, creatively and constructively, in the interests of all those whom we serve.

This is a legislative and policy programme for one year. It proposes 12 new bills and a range of policy interventions. It builds on the strong foundations of this Government and sets out a number of longer-term priorities. It aims to build a sense of shared endeavour about how we create a wealthier and more equal society, and it is founded on three key priorities: participation, prosperity and fairness.

Let me start with participation. In the past year, we have seen engagement in politics in this country on a scale that is unprecedented in the recent history of these islands. That did not

happen because the referendum created something new; it happened because the referendum spoke to something enduring—that is, the shared desire to build a better country. We need to find new ways of harnessing that democratic energy, not just in the great constitutional questions of our time but in the day-to-day decisions that are made by and for our communities.

I intend that my Government will lead by example. The Cabinet will hold more public discussions, meeting outside Edinburgh more often, and, in the first of what will be regular Facebook sessions, I will be taking questions from the public online later this evening. I intend that we will be an open and accessible Government.

We all know that fostering a sense of participation is about much more than consulting. It is also about handing decision-making powers back to communities. I want to ensure that more of the money that we spend is directed by communities themselves—by the individuals and organisations who know best how to harness the energy of local people. I therefore announce that we will establish a new empowering communities fund. Encompassing our existing people and communities fund, the new fund will have an additional £10 million to allocate next year—more than doubling the existing resource—and will be available directly to communities.

We will also take forward our manifesto commitment to establish an independent commission to examine fairer alternatives to the current system of council tax. We will establish the commission in partnership with local authorities, through the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and we invite all political parties to be involved in it. I hope that all political parties will accept that invitation. It is my intention that the commission will start its work in early 2015 and report by the autumn. The council tax freeze will, as promised by the Government, remain in place for the duration of this Parliament.

Our commitment to empowerment must reach every part of Scotland. Last week, I appointed a minister with specific responsibility for the islands. Today, I can announce that we will reconvene the island areas working group to draw up an implementation plan for devolution of powers to our islands, taking account of the powers that we hold now and any that are forthcoming as a result of the Smith process. We will then consult on the contents of an islands bill to give effect to our commitments.

The Government also intends to embark on a radical programme of land reform. Scotland's land must be an asset that benefits the many, not the few. Next week, we will publish a policy statement on land rights and responsibilities and will begin

consultation on a range of proposals to be included in our proposed land reform bill. The bill will be part of a wider programme of reform and, before its introduction, we will set out our response to all 62 of the land reform review group's recommendations.

It is intended that the following key proposals will be among those to be included in the bill. First, we propose powers for ministers to intervene where the scale of land ownership or the conduct of a landlord is acting as a barrier to sustainable development. Secondly, we propose the establishment of a Scottish land reform commission. Thirdly, we propose measures to improve the transparency and accountability of land ownership and make information on land, its value and its ownership more readily available in one place. Fourthly, we propose action to ensure that charities that hold large areas of land are under an obligation to engage with local communities. Finally, we propose the removal of business rates exemptions for shooting and deerstalking estates. Those exemptions were put in place by the Tories in 1994 to protect the interests of major landowners, and ending the exemptions will help the Government to more than treble the Scottish land fund from £3 million this year to £10 million a year from 2016. That will help us to ensure that we meet our target of having 1 million acres of land in community ownership by 2020.

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 was undoubtedly one of the landmark pieces of legislation of our first parliamentary session. However, land reform remains unfinished business. The proposals that I am announcing today will take us on the next stage of that journey and be of benefit to communities across Scotland.

I will mention one further piece of legislation that will support democratic participation—the proposed community charge debt bill. The bill will finally end collection of debts from non-payment of the poll tax 21 years after the abolition of that tax. The referendum inspired tens of thousands of people to register to vote. Many of them had not voted for decades; some had never voted before. Significant numbers had left the electoral register to avoid the poll tax and had rejoined this year to vote for the powers that would have allowed us to end the bedroom tax. I do not want people to fear being on the electoral register because of decades-old debts from discredited legislation. The bill will help to avoid that and ensure that everyone's voice continues to be heard.

This Government will foster a sense of democratic renewal and community empowerment. We want everyone to feel that they have a part to play in creating a fairer and more prosperous country. We know that a strong

economy is essential to our success, and we have much to be positive about. The value of our international exports has grown by nearly a third and inward investment is at a 16-year high. Our employment rate is higher than that in the United Kingdom, unemployment and inactivity rates are lower, and female employment is at near-record levels. Those things have not happened by chance. The Government has worked with businesses, trade unions, colleges, universities and others to promote innovation and skills. With our enterprise agencies, we have led more than 60 overseas visits with a strong trade focus, and in a tough economic climate we have created the most competitive business tax regime in the UK. This year, our package of rates reliefs will help companies to the tune of £600 million, and the small business bonus alone will help two out of every five business properties.

I can confirm today that the small business bonus will continue for the rest of this Parliament and, if we are re-elected in 2016, it will continue for the entire duration of the next Parliament as well.

I also announce an additional initiative to help small and medium-sized businesses in the house construction sector. In the next financial year, we will add £30 million to the £100 million allocated to the help to buy scheme. The additional funding will specifically support house building and purchases in smaller developments.

We will also take action to support innovation. In particular, we will establish a Scottish business development bank. The bank will work directly with small and medium-sized enterprises and the financial markets to support the high-growth businesses that Scotland needs.

Of course, the biggest investment that we can ever make in Scotland's future is in our people. It is well understood that a strong economy is essential to a fair society. We need to recognise that the reverse is true, too: a fair society also supports a strong economy.

Businesses are more likely to succeed if their customers and employees are happy, healthy, well educated and well paid. We are one of the richest countries in the developed world, but tens of thousands are dependent on food banks and a fifth of our population lives in poverty. What is even more shocking is that, as a result of United Kingdom welfare cuts, poverty levels in Scotland are rising again for the first time in a decade. We need significant new powers over welfare and wealth creation. However, even under existing powers, we will do all that we can to reverse the rise in poverty.

We will allocate more than £100 million in the coming year to mitigate the consequences of

welfare cuts, including £35 million to ensure that no one faces eviction as a result of the bedroom tax. I also intend to appoint an independent adviser on poverty and inequality. The adviser will have the power to make recommendations to the Government and, crucially, to hold us to account—for example, by reporting publicly on any instances where Government actions risk increasing rather than reducing poverty.

A key priority of my Government in the coming year will be to continue to tackle in-work poverty. Almost 60 per cent of children in poverty live in a working household. That is a scandal. We need to ensure that work lifts people out of poverty rather than locking them into it.

My Government will continue to lead by example. We already pay everyone who works for us or the national health service at least the living wage and, although we cannot mandate it in law, each and every relevant Government contract that is let from now on will have payment of the living wage as a central priority.

In the next year, we will also step up our actions to promote the living wage across the private sector and the wider public sector. I will convene a living wage summit with business leaders to encourage them to sign up to the living wage and to consider what further support Government can reasonably offer. We will also publish statutory guidance for the wider public sector on how the living wage and other workforce matters should be taken into account in public contracts.

Furthermore, I announce that we will increase funding for the Poverty Alliance from £80,000 to £280,000, to allow it to scale up its work on the living wage accreditation scheme. To date, 70 companies are signed up to the scheme. With the additional funding, I am setting a target for that to increase to at least 150 companies by the end of 2015.

We will also establish a fair work convention. The convention will prioritise the promotion of the living wage, but it will have a wider role, too. It will champion a partnership approach between Government, business, the trade unions, the third sector and local government. Such an approach recognises that sustainable growth has a social dimension and that fairness supports and underpins long-term prosperity.

In support of that approach, we will develop a Scottish business pledge, which will invite companies to commit to extend payment of the living wage, involve their local communities and invest in youth training and employment, for example. In return, they will be offered a package of tailored support on skills, innovation and exports, to help them grow and prosper.

Part of the Scottish business pledge will also involve a commitment to advance further gender equality. On that front, this Government leads by example. Our Cabinet is one of only three in the industrialised world to have a 50:50 gender balance—a move that was hailed on Friday by the United Nations as an example for others to emulate.

However, across the wider public sector, 36 per cent of board members and 19 per cent of board chairs are women, so there is much more to do. This Parliament does not yet have the power to legislate for gender quotas. I hope that that will change in the near future, but in the meantime I intend to launch—early next year—a partnership for change pledge that will be called “50:50 by 2020”. It will challenge all private, public and third sector bodies to achieve gender balance on their boards by 2020, and it will do so by demonstrating that, as well as being a matter of basic equality and social justice, a fair gender balance leads to better decision making and stronger businesses.

Leadership on boards is just one way to address the pay gap and to shatter the glass ceiling. We now have a record number of women in work, but a pay gap still exists, underemployment is higher in women, and women are still underrepresented in senior positions and in some careers—for example, engineering.

That is one reason why we will continue our major expansion of childcare. Our focus in the coming year will be on delivery and take-up of our pledge that, from August next year, 27 per cent of two-year-olds, as well as all three and four-year-olds, will receive 16 hours a week of childcare. In the coming year we will also start planning to ensure that, if we are re-elected, this Government can deliver our commitment to almost double the number of hours of free childcare that will be provided from 16 hours to 30 hours per week by the end of the next session of Parliament.

A greater level of good-quality and affordable childcare is one of the best investments that we can make in Scotland's future. It will provide parents—especially mothers—with greater opportunities for work, and it will ensure that we provide all of Scotland's children with the best possible start in life. Support for young people has to continue from infancy right through to adulthood.

Against every main measurement, Scottish school education is getting better. We are well advanced in implementing curriculum for excellence; we have record exam results; we have a record number of school leavers in work, education or training; and we have in the past seven years halted our decline in the PISA—programme for international student assessment—international league tables.



However, we need to do more—much more—to ensure that all pupils, regardless of their background, have an equal opportunity to succeed. In the next year, our forthcoming education bill will give new rights to children who have additional support needs. We will make it a priority to improve the educational outcomes of pupils in the most disadvantaged areas of Scotland through initiatives such as the raising attainment for all programme, which already covers more than 150 schools.

In the next year, Education Scotland will appoint in every local authority an attainment adviser who will support local action to improve attainment. I can also confirm that we will introduce a new literacy and numeracy campaign—read, write, count—that will benefit all children in primary 1 to 3, but which will have a specific focus on schools and parents in our most deprived communities.

Taken together, those measures represent a targeted approach to attainment that will help children across Scotland—especially those in our disadvantaged areas.

One of this Government's proudest achievements is the restoration of free higher education. For students from the poorest households, free tuition is backed by a minimum income guarantee of £7,500. The proportion of entrants to higher education from our most deprived areas is now at its highest-ever level, but I do not think that we are yet doing well enough. We still have a situation in which the most deprived fifth of our communities supply only one seventh of our university undergraduates. Therefore, we will in the coming year double funding for the impact for access fund, which encourages more people from disadvantaged backgrounds to go to university.

However, I want us to be bolder in our aspirations. I am setting the Government and our universities the challenging long-term target of eradicating inequality in access to higher education. I want us to determine now that by the time a child who is born today in one of our most deprived communities leaves school, he or she will have the same chance of going to university as a child who is born in one of our least deprived communities. That means that we would expect at least 20 per cent of university entrants to come from the most deprived 20 per cent of the population.

That target will be challenging and will require concerted action over a number of years, but it is an essential part of the long-term challenge of addressing inequality. I will establish in the early part of next year a commission on widening access to advise on the clear milestones that we should set along the way, and the practical steps that we will take to meet that ambition.

We will also, in the next year, introduce a higher education governance bill, which will ensure that the governing bodies of our universities are transparent, democratic and accountable.

Of course, our work in higher education is matched by a broader commitment to lifelong learning. We have made a major investment in our college estate, and we have significantly increased modern apprenticeships provision. In 2007, 16,000 modern apprenticeships were available a year; this year, there will be more than 25,000, and I can confirm that from now on we will be working towards a target of 30,000 modern apprenticeships a year by 2020. We will also implement the recommendations of the commission on developing Scotland's young workforce to create better opportunities for young people and a stronger talent pool for our businesses.

Without access to high-quality free education, I would never have had a chance to pursue my chosen career. It is therefore a personal mission of mine that other people will have the same chance. However, it is more than a personal mission—it is a national imperative. Our people are our greatest resource, and we must ensure that everyone, regardless of gender, race or background, has the opportunity to flourish and the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Over the next year, we will also work hard to protect and improve the public services that are the bedrock of any fair and prosperous society. As a former health secretary—but also as a citizen of this country—I know how much the national health service means to everyone across our country. In the draft budget, we increased funding for the NHS by £80 million more than had been planned. I confirm today that we will increase the NHS's revenue budget by more than the rate of inflation for the remainder of this session of Parliament, and that if we are re-elected in 2016 we will ensure real-terms rises in the revenue budget for every year of the next session of Parliament, too. I challenge all parties today to match that commitment so that, regardless of who wins the next Scottish election, our NHS knows that it can plan ahead with a degree of certainty about its budget. That is the least it can expect from all of us, from all across the Parliament chamber.

Our NHS does a wonderful job. However, we know that it also faces challenges. The Government will not shy away from acknowledging and addressing them. One of the biggest challenges right now is the problem of delayed discharges. Delayed discharges today are significantly lower than they were in 2006, but as we saw from figures that were published yesterday, they are rising again. Every patient who

is delayed in hospital is being let down by the system.

However, delayed discharges fail other patients, too. Every bed that is occupied by someone who could be better cared for elsewhere is a bed that is not available for someone who has acute care needs. That affects the time that people spend in accident and emergency departments and the length of time they wait for operations. I therefore announce that we will invest an additional £5 million to tackle the issue, which will be matched by our partners in NHS boards and local government to make a total of £15 million extra investment. I also confirm that addressing delayed discharges will be a top priority for this Government in the months ahead, and that the Cabinet will monitor performance weekly throughout the winter.

Over the next year, we will also focus on delivery of the long-term sustainable solution to delayed discharge: health and social care integration. This latest step in our ambitious programme of public service reform is arguably the biggest change to delivery of health and social care services since the establishment of the NHS in 1948, so ensuring a successful transition will be a key objective for the Government over the next 12 months.

We will also take steps to improve care provision and public health. Our public health bill will strengthen our ability to reduce the attractiveness and availability of tobacco products and e-cigarettes, it will place a duty of candour on health professionals, and it will ensure that courts have the power to deal with the small number of cases in which people who rely on health or social care services have suffered from ill treatment and neglect.

In the light of “The Vale of Leven Hospital Inquiry Report”, which was published on Monday, I can also announce that we will legislate in the coming year to give the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate the power to order closure of hospital wards on the ground of patient safety. *[Applause.]* That will ensure delivery of one of Lord MacLean’s key recommendations. I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government and the NHS, to say today to all those who have been affected how sorry I am for the failures that occurred at the Vale of Leven hospital and the appalling loss of life that they caused.

Alongside formal care provision, Scotland also has an unsung army of unpaid carers—many of them are older people who are caring for adult children or spouses. Carers save our health and social services an estimated £10 billion every year. To be quite frank, without them and the contribution that they make, our formal care services could not function. We have invested

almost £114 million a year on support for carers since we came into office, thereby providing much-needed short breaks and offering advice and assistance to those who need it.

In the coming year, we will extend that support through a carers bill. The bill will not just give carers support; it will also give them a say. It will ensure that they are involved in planning and delivery of the services that affect them. We will also progress our Mental Health (Scotland) Bill, which has already been introduced to Parliament.

Last, on health, yesterday I met Gordon Aikman, who is so bravely campaigning for better care for people with motor neurone disease. One of the issues that Gordon and I discussed yesterday was social care charging. I want to make very clear today my expectation that no terminally ill person who is in the last six months of their life should be charged for care. I also advise Parliament that if new local government guidance to that effect is not adhered to, my Government will not hesitate to legislate to ensure that it is.

We, as a Government, will also support safer communities. Figures that were published yesterday show that crime is now at a 40-year low. We will maintain an extra 1,000 police officers in our communities and we will legislate to end automatic early release for serious and sexual offenders.

We will also introduce a community justice bill to transfer responsibility for community justice services to the 32 community planning partnerships and will, in so doing, help our efforts to further reduce reoffending.

I can also signal today that we intend to step up our action against domestic abuse. Approximately one adult in seven reports having been a victim of domestic abuse at some point in their life, and 80 per cent of cases that are reported to the police involve a male perpetrator and a female victim. We will not have true gender equality in our country as long as so many women suffer abuse.

Last week, Police Scotland launched pilot programmes in Ayrshire and Aberdeen to strengthen women’s right to request information about previous abusive behaviour of a partner. They will take a decision as soon as is feasible about roll-out of that approach—known as Clare’s law—to the rest of the country. In the coming year, we will also consult on the introduction of a new specific criminal offence of committing domestic abuse, and on new legislation to tackle the issue of revenge porn.

We will also bring together leading experts to discuss how best to prevent abuse. We are determined to take concerted action on an issue that affects far too many lives in our country, and we aim by doing so to change the attitudes and

behaviours that cause abuse, and to provide much better support for victims.

A budget bill, a fatal accident inquiries bill, a succession bill and a harbours bill will complete our legislative programme for the year ahead.

However, the final bill that I want to talk about this afternoon is one that I know will command cross-party support. Current figures show that at least 55 individuals in Scotland in the past year could have been victims of human trafficking—people who have been captured for forced labour, domestic servitude or prostitution. Our intention to introduce a human trafficking and exploitation bill has commanded wide support from organisations including Amnesty International and Migrant Help, and from many MSPs, in particular Jenny Marra. The bill will be introduced shortly and will clarify the rights of the victims of trafficking and strengthen our ability to help victims and bring offenders to justice.

I decided to close with that example partly because it will be an extremely important piece of legislation, but also because I think that it demonstrates that much of this programme for government can and should command cross-party support. We differ across the chamber in how we seek to improve Scotland; sometimes we will disagree fiercely, but we all share the same fundamental desire for a fairer and more prosperous country. Donald Dewar said at this Parliament's opening:

"This is about more than our politics and our laws. This is about who we are, how we carry ourselves."

I hope that I have given an indication today of how the Government that I lead will carry itself: in a way that is open, listening, accessible and decentralising, and with the strongest focus on growing our economy, protecting public services, tackling inequality and empowering communities. I am proud to commend this programme for government to Parliament today. *[Applause.]*

## Programme for Government 2014-15

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is a debate on the Scottish Government's programme for government 2014-15.

15:11

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I welcome the opportunity to respond on behalf of the Scottish Labour Party to the First Minister's statement. I congratulate the new First Minister on bringing forward her first programme for government.

This is of course the first post-referendum legislative agenda that the Government has presented and it is being presented in a Scotland that is, as others have said, changed and "changed utterly". The passion and energy of the referendum, which came from the ground up on both sides rather than being directed by politicians, means that business as usual is no longer good enough. When 85 per cent of the electorate take part in a vote in Scotland, the old way of doing things just will not work any more.

We must all change, and that includes the Scottish Government. Voters will rightly judge the First Minister and the Government on results, not rhetoric. Indeed, they might even hold their feet to the fire on promises of greater social justice. However, Scottish Labour wants to see a programme for government that puts cutting inequality at the heart of absolutely everything that we do. We believe that social justice should not just be an empty slogan but should be the central strategy that makes our country and our communities healthier, wealthier and happier. Simply talking about social justice does not pay the bills or lift a single person out of poverty.

I see lots of summits, commissions and conventions in the First Minister's statement. Perhaps they are the new vehicles for the new consensus, and I welcome that. However, that is not a substitute for taking action. It is welcome that the Scottish National Party Government has decided to prioritise social justice, which is something that it has had the power to deliver from the beginning. For me, there is no greater ambition for government. If the Government brings forward legislation or takes action to tackle inequality, the Scottish Labour Party will support it.

Although it remains to be seen whether the new First Minister will turn out to be different from her predecessor on social justice, in one crucial aspect there can be no debating that there has been a major change: the First Minister is a

woman, and that indeed is cause for celebration. It sends a signal, as she said herself, to every young woman and girl in Scotland that they can reach the top of their chosen profession without gender acting as a barrier. We on the Labour benches have long advocated equality for women in politics. We were the first to have a 50:50 gender balance in our parliamentary party and the first to introduce all-women shortlists. The new 50:50 Scottish Cabinet is to be welcomed and it is a great start but, as the First Minister knows, it is not enough.

I welcome the First Minister's commitment to 50:50 by 2020, but she can do that for public bodies right now. There is no need for quotas in order to do that, because ministers make all the appointments. We know that the boards of public bodies are dominated by men. I will not run through the full list, but we can look at the example of the Scottish Enterprise board, which has a mere three women to nine men. What signal are we sending about women in the economy? If the First Minister is serious about breaking down the barriers for women in public life and not just in politics, we agree that 50:50 representation is essential, but we believe that progress can be made on that right now.

I hope that the First Minister will also recognise the difficulty that many women experience in the workplace. If the SNP really wants to act on social justice, it could start by shining a light on the discrimination that is faced by working women. How about challenging every large private firm to audit and publish its pay gap? And let us do it for the public sector, too.

I turn to the living wage, because we all know that it will make a huge difference to women. We believe that the Scottish Government should promote better pay with a living wage strategy and a living wage unit. A convention is welcome, but we can do more. We want to see the passion and energy that the SNP showed for independence being put into delivering better wages for workers across the country.

Just a few months ago, we asked the First Minister, in her previous role, to support the living wage in all public sector contracts. She has the power to do that, and it would guarantee a rise to workers in low-paid jobs such as cleaning, catering and caring, the majority of whom are women. If Renfrewshire Council can agree that with its private care providers, surely the Government can do something, too.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** I wonder, then, whether the member will agree that control over the statutory minimum wage should be devolved.

**Jackie Baillie:** No, what I think is that the living wage is—*[Interruption.]* If members will let me finish, the living wage is considerably higher. Actually, the debate in Scotland has moved on to the living wage, and I think that that is critical. I welcome the SNP's new-found interest in this, because it has voted against it in the past. This year alone, it has voted against the living wage no fewer than five times. The people of Scotland deserve better than that.

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

**Jackie Baillie:** No, thank you.

They should not have to put up with a Scottish Government that talks left but walks right.

The reality for too many Scots is that work does not pay. It is a moral scandal that, after seven years of SNP Government and four years of the Tories, some working families in Scotland rely on food banks and payday lenders to make ends meet. If the boiler breaks down or the electricity bill is higher than expected, they are in trouble, because the cost of living crisis is increasing. Nearly one in five children in Scotland are living in relative poverty, which is an increase of 15 per cent on the previous year. Some 30,000 more children are living in poverty in Scotland today, and that is something that this Parliament and the First Minister can change.

Scottish Labour more than halved child poverty in just 10 years. We lifted 200,000 Scottish children out of poverty and we can do that again. The reality is that this Parliament has always had significant powers to fight poverty.

**Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP):** One of the achievements of Labour in government in the UK was the tax credit system, including the child tax credit system. That has been altered, which has made things worse for working families. Will Ms Baillie support the devolution of those powers to this Parliament so that we can address that here?

**Jackie Baillie:** The Smith commission will report tomorrow. The member has people in that commission who are taking forward his agenda. Why does he not talk to John Swinney and we will see what the consensus delivers tomorrow?

Let me talk about the powers that the SNP Government has, because that will be interesting. On housing, for example, this Government has a shameful record. *[Interruption.]* Scotland faces a social housing crisis—

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Jackie Baillie:** Presiding Officer, they do not like the facts, do they? They like to shout them down.

**The First Minister:** Will the member give way?

**Jackie Baillie:** No. Scotland faces—

**Members:** Oh!

**Jackie Baillie:** Well, I ask the First Minister to answer this question, then: why is it that social housing in Scotland is at a level that has not been seen since the second world war?

**The First Minister:** This Government is well on track to meet its target on social housing, but the question that I wanted to ask Jackie Baillie is this: can she remind the Parliament exactly how many council houses the last Labour Administration built?

**Jackie Baillie:** Perhaps—

**Members:** Six.

**Jackie Baillie:** I know that the First Minister is fixated on council houses. [*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Jackie Baillie:** Perhaps she would like to tell us how many were built by housing associations in the social rented sector, because we built more than she is currently doing.

At this point, 180,000 Scots sit on waiting lists, 23,000 homes lie empty and the Scottish Government's statistics yesterday showed a 22 per cent drop in social housing completions in the past year. That is not a record to be proud of. If the Government is serious about tackling poverty, that has to change.

We must also reform the private rented sector for those who are unable to access social housing or get a foot on the property ladder. We called for a ban on rip-off rent rises and the SNP said no. It voted with the Tories to protect rogue landlords rather than offer some support and protection to the one in four Scots who live in poverty in the private rented sector. Where is the bill? It is not here.

We are encouraged by the First Minister's recent comments about the importance of childcare. We regard that as an economic rather than a gender issue, although it will come as a surprise to many Scots that a transformative childcare agenda does not require Scotland to leave the United Kingdom. As Scottish Labour has said all along, we need the political will to make a difference to families across this country. If we want a thriving economy, we need to fix that barrier for parents. It can also be a huge game changer in the fight against poverty. Our current childcare system is not working. It must become more affordable and more flexible. The costs are among the highest in Europe.

Although the First Minister's ambition to make childcare free for 27 per cent of two-year-olds is welcome, it would see Scotland lag behind

England, where the figure is 40 per cent. We cannot make all childcare free, but we can make it affordable and flexible. We are committed to capping childcare costs and we are working through the details with experts. We would ensure a childcare place for every mother and father who wants to go to college to gain the skills needed to get a job.

During the referendum campaign, the Scottish Government realised that childcare was an important issue. It should remain one, but the programme for government does not have a bill to match that ambition. The Government is "planning", or it is in consultation, so we could be waiting for six years before we see a difference. That is a pity, as the Government would have had our full support for taking radical action.

The First Minister must also accept that her Government has presided over budgets that have disproportionately hurt the poorest people in Scotland. The cuts to local authorities have scarred our communities. These cuts are felt on the front-line public services that are most relied on by our poor and vulnerable.

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy Growth (John Swinney):** Will the member give way?

**Jackie Baillie:** Yes, if the cabinet secretary can explain why there are 70,000 fewer local government workers and why the bulk of them are women.

**John Swinney:** On how many occasions has the Labour Party asked me to give local government more money at any stage of the formal budget negotiations? The answer—because Jackie Baillie will not give it—is that it has done that on no occasion.

**Jackie Baillie:** As a former local government worker, I am always happy to see more money being given to local government because it will do something with it. As a consequence of John Swinney's Government's decisions, there are 70,000 fewer local government workers in Scotland today.

We welcome the Government's intention to finally do something about the council tax freeze. I am not opposed to a freeze; after all it was Glasgow City Council that led the way, but the Government has underfunded that promise. We are promised a consultation, not legislation, so it is off into the long grass again.

As the First Minister knows, Scottish Labour led the way on land reform with a series of radical measures including the introduction of the right to roam and the ending of feudalism. We will support whatever the Government now wants to do on

land reform as long as it meets the test of being radical. My colleague Claire Baker will say more about that later.

Few things unite us across the chamber more than the horror of domestic abuse. More needs to be done to end violence against women. As a minister, I was proud of Scottish Labour's work, which began to tackle the issue and on which the current Government has built. However, one in five women will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lives. This is not an issue of party politics; it is an issue of human decency. I therefore very much welcome the Government's intention to legislate in this area and on revenge porn. The Government will have our full support. When are we likely to see that legislation? We support its introduction as soon as possible.

I am also delighted to welcome the First Minister's commitment to carrying on with a bill on human trafficking that was initially introduced by my colleague Jenny Marra. I hope that that can serve as an example of what can be achieved when we work together.

Nobody will be in any doubt that winter is approaching. For 900,000 Scots who are living in fuel poverty, this winter is something to dread. It means hardships, tough challenges and higher bills. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, which we all supported in the chamber, pledged to eradicate fuel poverty by 2016. That target is unlikely to be met, although I would happily take an intervention to be told that I am wrong. Well, there you go.

It is shameful that this Government has underspent the fuel poverty budget at a time when the need is self-evident. As families across Scotland choose between heating and eating, the Scottish Government is doing nothing about it. However, it does not have to be like that. In the spirit of the new consensus, the First Minister should join Scottish Labour and support a freeze on energy prices. We know that the SNP wanted to give energy companies a double windfall in the shape of a corporation tax cut and the removal of the green levy, but I hope that its new-found commitment to social justice will lead it to support our plans, which would save every Scottish household an average of £120 while we overhauled the energy market and took on vested interests. Scottish Labour has already produced a fuel poverty strategy, which I commend to the First Minister.

A new era means a new Cabinet, but it is not without its challenges. Our national health service is in crisis and education budgets have been slashed. Change at the top means nothing if the new faces do not have a new approach.

It is disappointing that the agenda contains little action to repair our broken NHS, because it is

clear that urgent action is needed. Delayed discharge is up by 106 per cent since last year, as more patients take up beds that they no longer need, due to the lack of care packages. NHS complaints are up by 23 per cent. Accident and emergency waiting time targets are not being met. Cancer waiting time targets are being missed. Just last week, we found out that the Scottish Government's promises on access to cancer medicines have been broken.

When she was in opposition, the First Minister promised to increase the number of available hospital beds, yet in Scotland hospital beds are disappearing faster than in almost anywhere else in the western world. More than 6,000 beds have been withdrawn from Scottish hospitals over the past 10 years, which is a drop of 21 per cent.

I care passionately about our NHS and all those who work in it, and I know that the First Minister does, too. However, the NHS and its staff face challenges. As our NHS teeters on the brink, the Government's response is inadequate. Our NHS deserves much better than that, which is why we believe that it is time for a fundamental review of the NHS, to ensure that our resources are being put in the right places, to strengthen our NHS for decades to come. It is time for a Beveridge report for the 21st century.

When the previous First Minister left office, he called free tuition his greatest achievement. There is even a large rock sculpture to prove it. However, the reality is different. For thousands of Scots, education at any level means being caught between a rock and a hard place. The numbers speak for themselves. The budget for further education has been slashed by £67 million. The number of college students in Scotland has been cut by more than 140,000. The number of Scottish students attending university is down by 12,000, and for those from the poorest backgrounds the number is down by more than 3,500. Student bursaries have been cut by 35 per cent and student debt has shot up by 69 per cent in the past year alone.

The Government has failed to close the inequality gap in numeracy and literacy.

**Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** Will the member give way on that point?

**The Presiding Officer:** The member is winding up.

**Jackie Baillie:** The silver bullet in battling poverty is education, yet we have lost 4,000 teachers since 2007. The SNP promised to halve classroom sizes in our primary schools. At every level of education the SNP is failing Scotland.

I will take a final moment to pay tribute to the incredible campaigning of Gordon Aikman. I have

known and worked alongside Gordon for years and it would be wonderful if his diagnosis could leave a lasting, positive legacy for vulnerable people across Scotland. I welcome the First Minister's pledge today and I also support her action to ensure that local authorities will not charge for those who require care and have a terminal illness. I also support the measures in the carers bill.

Charging for social care is of course a wider issue. Those under 65 in non-residential care increasingly have to contribute higher proportions of their benefit towards the cost of care. Some have cancelled services as a result. The care tax is a tax on the most vulnerable members of our communities. It is a tax that, working together, we can abolish. It would cost about £50 million. If the Government is to protect the most vulnerable, I urge the First Minister, in the interests of fairness and equality, to do that.

15:30

**Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con):** The First Minister has made a point at this, the start of her period of office, of saying that she will be a listening First Minister, one who works with people from any and all political stripes where there is agreement. She says that she will be open to ideas and suggestions for improvement. I welcome that approach.

Last week, I laid out a Conservative vision, which, I believe, would make our country better, using the taxation powers that are coming to the Parliament to reduce the financial burden on Scotland's families; introducing school choice in order to drive up standards; recognising the importance of our colleges and stopping the political vandalism that has resulted in 140,000 places being cut under the present Government; creating a Scotland where we value our vocational education as highly as our academic education; and stopping the removal of £60 million each and every year from our nation's health budget by giving free prescriptions to the better-off in our society, who had previously been happy to pay a contribution. Rather, we should use that £60 million to fund 1,000 extra nurses and midwives across our land.

The First Minister said that there was little on which we could agree, so let me appeal to the angel of her better nature as regards areas where we might. Let us consider the new bills that have been unveiled today and, first, those that are already in train.

The First Minister is a lawyer by trade. She understands the concept of due process. She has been a politician for five times as long as she ever practised law. She understands legislation. It was

simply wrong to attempt the scrapping of the centuries-old tenet of corroboration without telling MSPs, never mind the public at large, what would replace it. Loyal to her colleagues as she is, she has a great opportunity, as a new First Minister with a new Cabinet Secretary for Justice, to revisit the fudge that came out of that aborted parliamentary fix.

As the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill makes its passage through the Parliament, let us get back to first principles. How do we better secure justice for victims and fairness for the accused? We need the wholesale review of the law of evidence that the Conservatives have been calling for. We will help in any way that we can to clean up the mess that has been created.

On Thursday, I asked our new First Minister about ending automatic early release. The independent Scottish Parliament information centre showed that, under the SNP's current plans, fewer than 1 per cent of the criminals who are jailed would be subject to the sentence that is handed down. The First Minister said that there would be opportunities to amend the Prisoners (Control of Release) (Scotland) Bill during this legislative diet. I am asking for assurances that improvements, which have been put forward in good faith to stop those who break their contract with society having their prison doors flung open early, are considered in the same good faith in which they are offered.

That should be an area on which there is agreement. The SNP manifestos of both 2007 and 2011 contained a pledge to end automatic early release. That pledge is not honoured if it does not apply to more than 99 per cent of our prison population. The present Government has been in power for more than seven years now. For each of those seven years, it has said that it believes in that policy, and it has promised to deliver it. Let us make that happen in the final 18 months of this session.

It is not just in areas of justice where we want to help the new First Minister; it is in areas of social justice, too. Nicola Sturgeon, having said that the improvements to childcare could happen only under independence, has now found a way, through the proposed bill that has been unveiled today, to address the matter under the powers of devolution.

The Scottish Conservatives have always placed great import on early years education. We applaud moves to increase provision for two-year-olds. Indeed, I am long on record decrying the fact that Scotland has lagged behind south of the border in that very area. However, we see nothing socially just at all in the idea that the amount of provision someone receives depends on a fluke of nature or the lottery of birth.

It is not just, socially or otherwise, that families with children who were born in one half of the year benefit more than families with children born in the other half. The issue is not just that only half of families in Scotland benefit from two full years of free provision. The First Minister is a smart lady, and it cannot be beyond the wit of man, or woman, to address that iniquity, and we will support any attempts to do so under the proposed bill.

Should the Smith commission deliver the powers for it, we can also support votes for 16-year-olds in future Scottish elections. We support increasing the provision of apprenticeships. We support the roll-out of Clare's law, which we called for. We can support future human trafficking legislation.

**Mark McDonald:** Will Ruth Davidson give way?

**Ruth Davidson:** Not this time.

We also support the belated commitment to increase health spending. The rise in national health service spend each year down south means that, each year, the Scottish Government's health consequentials have also risen. The Government has not always delivered those millions to Scotland's health service, and external bodies agree: it is long past time that it did so. If the First Minister honours today's commitment, we will welcome that too.

There was much fanfare today—indeed, journalists were briefed overnight—that the programme would contain significant new measures to boost Scotland's economy. I fear that the measures are, at best, underwhelming. I back the rates relief and small business bonus conditions that the First Minister announced, but the Government has a far greater number of levers at its disposal that it is not using or that are hindering, not helping, business.

The Government has talked many times in many ways about creating the most business-friendly environment, the most competitive tax regime and the most attractive business solutions, but let us set its record against its promises.

What happened on the promises in the 2011 SNP manifesto to help to create new retail banks and support social banking? Nothing.

On the overall tax burden to business, the Government received this year £30 million in Barnett consequentials from a UK scheme that gives small high street shops and cafes a £1,000 rebate. The money was trousered, but the £1,000 rebate was never passed on.

Our larger retailers were hit with a mercurial £95 million smash-and-grab levy. It came from nowhere and hokey cokeyed in and out over three years to plug a funding gap.

**Mark McDonald:** Will Ruth Davidson give way?

**Ruth Davidson:** On behalf of businesses throughout Scotland, I am happy to cede the floor to an intervention from any of the front-bench team so that I can get an assurance and guarantee that the unfair smash-and-grab retail levy will not raise its head again in the same or any other form. I am sorry that Mr McDonald does not quite qualify.

**John Swinney** *rose—*

**Ruth Davidson:** I will give way to the cabinet secretary.

**John Swinney:** I am happy to confirm to Ruth Davidson that, as I confirmed in the budget, the Scottish Government is not introducing a public health supplement. However, as we had the gumption to introduce one, why is she criticising us for investing that necessary resource in delivering preventive interventions in our public services to tackle the social injustices that she is talking about?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** I am afraid that you must begin to conclude Ms Davidson.

**Ruth Davidson:** I beg your pardon, Presiding Officer?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You have eight minutes, so you must begin to conclude.

**Ruth Davidson:** The finance secretary cannot have it both ways: either introducing a levy is an important and necessary idea to help public health or he does not need the money, which is why he scrapped it. Which way round is it? We have not seen the answer.

Land and buildings transaction tax not only delivers an eye-watering 10 per cent tax on residential purchases but has an implication for business premises. Why does the Government think that it is a good idea to make it financially more attractive for people to set up factory floor space, depots, warehousing and industrial units in Carlisle than in Dumfries?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am afraid that there is no time in hand in the debate and I must ask you to come to a conclusion.

**Ruth Davidson:** I will come to a conclusion right now.

Where we find common cause, such as on early release and extending childcare, we will work with the Government to improve the situation. Where we see signs of life in the Government trying to help business, we will encourage and cajole it to deliver on promises that are yet unfulfilled. Where we differ—sometimes categorically so—we will continue to state our case and challenge the Government.



The Government has only 18 months left of a five-year term with a majority in which it could have done much more. It needs to get a move on.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Willie Rennie. I must ask you to keep to your six minutes, Mr Rennie.

15:39

**Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** Six minutes exactly, Presiding Officer.

I hope, believe and expect that, by the time the debate concludes tomorrow afternoon, Scotland will have an agreement on more powers that will match the spirit and unique experience of the referendum and deliver for the Scottish Parliament the power to be flexible and agile so that we can do things differently if we so choose. That is why we advocated the transfer of financial, constitutional and, now, welfare powers. Crucially, it is also why we argued that the agreement on Scotland's future must not be crafted only by the referendum victors. For the first time ever, all five parties—including the SNP—are in the room. It is because we have set the right foundations that I am confident that we can secure a sustainable set of powers for the Parliament.

Apart from the obvious winners during the referendum, there were two other significant winners. First were the 16 and 17-year-olds who carried themselves with great dignity and great maturity and who contributed in significant ways to the debate about our country's future. That is why we will pledge our support to accelerate the process as much as we possibly can so that 16 and 17-year-olds can vote at the next election. The second victor during the referendum was the islands, which organised quite a dramatic and effective campaign that has secured more powers for their communities. Likewise, we will support the Government on that.

I will take an intervention—unlike Ruth Davidson—from the great Mark McDonald.

**Mark McDonald:** I am grateful to Mr Rennie. I welcome the cross-party support for 16 and 17-year-olds to be given the vote at the 2016 elections. However, an election is looming next year. Does Willie Rennie agree that it will be a missed opportunity if the UK Government does not take similar action to lower the voting age for UK elections as well, given that young people were able to participate in the most historic vote in this country?

**Willie Rennie:** Absolutely. I agree completely that we should use the opportunity of the referendum, which showed how maturely 16 and 17-year-olds can deal with their democratic rights, to move forward in Westminster. The member will

find no disagreement from me on that point. We have advocated that policy for many years.

The fair, legal and decisive decision to reject independence means that, for the first time for many years, as far as I can remember, we can assess legislation on its own merits, without it being mired in the debate over independence. I am sure that we can now find alliances that were perhaps prevented in previous years. In that spirit, I welcome much of today's programme for government.

I want a Scotland that strives for a fairer society and a stronger economy so that there is opportunity for everyone. That is what Liberal Democrats have always believed in. By combining strong liberal values, real local power and protection for our environment, we can build a better country.

There is much in the programme that we can agree with and I am sure that we will work constructively on other areas to make those bills better. However, I will focus on one important omission. We know that one in four people are likely to suffer from mental health problems at some point in their lives, but a survey has shown that almost one in four people are not comfortable about making friends with someone with depression, having them as a colleague or even having them move in next door.

Our young people face long waits to begin treatment at mental health services. Too many wait six months to access treatment, which is an indefensible waiting time for a young person at such an important time in their life. That is why I am delighted that the UK coalition Government has written it into law that, for the first time, mental health and physical health will receive equal recognition. Getting the right combination of public mental health measures, anti-stigma initiatives, timely access to therapy and reliable crisis and emergency care will all be part of the picture. I hope that we can persuade the new health minister and the new health secretary to support such legislation.

Jim Hume has been moving forward with his bill on smoking in cars when children are present. He has made significant progress and set the weather on that policy. I hope that we can persuade the health secretary to adopt and support Jim Hume's bill and make sure that it moves forward, because we need to tackle the danger of second-hand smoke inhalation in the confined space of a car. I hope that the Government looks on that sympathetically.

I hope that the new justice secretary indicates a new direction of travel on the justice portfolio. The Parliament knows that we have great reservations about the centralisation of the police force, the

lack of democracy in that system, the massive increase in stop and search—which is now at a rate seven times higher than that in England—and police carrying guns.

We have set out proposals based on our belief that the chief constable's powers should be defined more clearly so that we can have more control over how our police force works. The way in which it is working is inadequate and needs to change. I hope that we will talk to the new justice secretary about how that can be achieved practically.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am afraid that the member must draw to a close.

**Willie Rennie:** Finally, we welcome the proposed expansion of nursery education in the next session of Parliament, but we think that the expansion should begin now. We are still lagging behind England on nursery education for two-year-olds—only 27 per cent of two-year-olds are in nursery in Scotland, in comparison with 47 per cent in England, so Scotland needs to catch up fast. If the new education secretary embraces that proposal, she will find willing participants on the Liberal Democrat benches.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I apologise for raising a point of order, but the First Minister said that the Government is spending £114 million per year in relation to carers. According to the Scottish Parliament information centre, the figure is £114 million for the period from 2007 to 2015. Is it possible for the Government to clarify that?

The Government said 18 months ago that it would legislate for my proposed lobbying transparency (Scotland) bill, but there is no such bill in the legislative programme. What can you do, Presiding Officer, to protect the rights of members—[*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order, please.

**Neil Findlay:** What can you do to protect the rights of members who propose legislation but see the Government playing games to prevent it from being introduced?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Mr Findlay. I appreciate that those are debating points, but they are not points of order. As members well know, if they have inadvertently made a mistake with figures, there are opportunities to correct the *Official Report*.

15:46

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** There are many legislative proposals to scrutinise and much for the Government to achieve. We have a new First Minister and a new Deputy First Minister,

and a refreshed and gender-balanced ministerial team. I take this opportunity to wish them well in their work.

The First Minister set out her theme of social justice, the important work to deliver new powers to Scotland and the need to put people at the heart of decision making. The Smith commission on new powers will report tomorrow. The Government's programme is about the powers that we already have, which we must use as ambitiously as possible.

There is much to welcome. I welcome the commitment to allow 16 and 17-year-olds to vote; the focus on tackling in-work poverty; the commitment to end the collection of debts from non-payment of the poll tax; the Scottish business pledge; the proposed action against domestic abuse; and the human trafficking legislation.

However, elements are missing from the legislative programme. We are missing a way to deliver a step change in the energy efficiency of our existing homes and workplaces. WWF points out that, as well as tackling fuel poverty, the energy efficiency industry could provide 3,500 jobs in the short term and some 9,000 jobs by 2027. That offers an opportunity for modern apprenticeships and to enable people to become expert in treating hard-to-treat houses.

John Swinney responded positively to my suggestion during the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's budget work that energy efficiency should become a national infrastructure priority. He clearly understands the link between the need to retrofit our houses and the opportunities that that provides for much-needed new jobs and important new skills. We need affordable rents and affordable heating but, to deliver those things, we need ambition and a tight timescale on the regulation of energy efficiency in private sector homes.

Alex Neil understands from his time as Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment the energy efficiency challenge in existing homes. That area is now back in his portfolio, and I hope that he will meet the challenge head on. As the new fair work and skills secretary, Roseanna Cunningham has an important role to play in creating a workforce with skills in sustainable construction and retrofitting.

Also missing from the Government's programme is a bill on private renting. The Government announced that it would introduce legislation on the private rented sector during the current session of Parliament to make private renting more secure. That seems to have disappeared, and I would welcome some clarity on it. The consultation is open now but, if legislation is not

introduced in good time, the issue might end up being kicked into the long grass.

I welcome Angela Constance to her cabinet role. The First Minister has made it clear today that there is more to do on attainment, and I welcome the two proposed new bills. I fully support the Wood commission's call for parity of esteem and encouraging a culture that does not see colleges playing second fiddle to universities. Colleges provide the flexible learning that people need to have opportunities in life, which links in with the First Minister's theme today.

Childcare is a key component of allowing people to study and work flexibly. I welcome the increase in hours, but it is important that we do that with the child's best interests at heart and not just the economy's. To give children the best start in life means parental involvement as well as high-quality play, care and education. There may well be merit in starting formal education later in life, but that does not mean that childcare professionals do not play a vital part in a child's life. More hours must be linked with flexibility and they must be delivered by qualified and well-paid staff.

I highlight the need for citizenship education. That is not a legislative proposal, but the referendum has shown that young people are and want to be active citizens, so we should ensure that our schools have the necessary resources and confidence to support and promote that citizenship.

I am pleased to see proposals on land reform—particularly the proposal to remove business rate exemptions for shooting and deerstalking estates and the measures on transparency of land ownership, which I hope will include beneficial ownership. Land reform is a broad topic and is an urban issue as well as a rural one. Delivering social justice and a fairer economy at a time of austerity is hugely challenging, but land reform is an opportunity that is within the Parliament's powers. High land prices push up house prices. The budget expects house prices to rise by 5 per cent over the next two years but, at the same time, wages are stagnant and struggling to catch up with inflation.

I hope that the First Minister sees that land reform is linked intrinsically with tax reform. In our view, the council tax is unfair, but so is the council tax freeze, as it disempowers local authorities, is centralising, results in cuts to public services and forces councils to charge regressive fees. I welcome the announcement of a commission on fairer alternatives to the council tax. Local taxation has a massive impact on people's lives and is a powerful tool. The commission needs to look more broadly at local taxation, including non-domestic rates, and should seriously consider a land value

tax and the recommendations of the important report by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on strengthening local democracy.

The First Minister's focus on creating a society in which everyone has the same chances in life is welcome. However, transport is an area of Government responsibility in which there are stark inequalities. We have created a transport system in which the car is king. To those who walk or cycle through our towns and cities, it is clear who rules the road. Another dimension to transport inequality is the straight-up fact that a large proportion of people do not or cannot use a car or cannot afford to run one.

Derek Mackay will understand the challenges in changing our cities from his time as planning minister, and Keith Brown, his cabinet secretary, knows the ins and outs of the transport brief. I hope that they will work together on a project for transport justice for Scotland, although there are no proposals on that today. I suggest that better buses should be the first step on that journey.

I look forward to working with the First Minister and her team as constructively as possible. The Green and independent group will continue to oppose Government policies when we do not agree, but we are open to working constructively whenever possible, as I am sure are ministers.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We now turn to the open debate, in which we are extremely tight for time. I remind members that, if they are participating in the debate over the two days, they should be here for the opening speeches and again tomorrow for the closing speeches.

15:53

**Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):** Quite often in the chamber, I feel that I am in a parallel universe. The First Minister gave a positive speech about the programme for government and the Opposition parties have taken a huge amount of it out of context and have argued against things that they have previously argued for.

For example, I welcome the independent commission on local government funding, which Alex Rowley and Anne McTaggart called for in the Local Government and Regeneration Committee's report "Flexibility and Autonomy in Local Government", but it seems from Ms Baillie's opening speech that that is no longer what Labour wants. Ms Baillie also talked about a reduction in teacher numbers. Today, Mr Rowley argued at the committee that there should be flexibility on teacher numbers and the pupil teacher ratio and that, if local government wants to reduce numbers, it should be able to choose to do so. I sometimes get that parallel universe feeling.

I welcome both the proposed independent commission on local government funding and the news that the council tax will continue to be frozen throughout this parliamentary session.

I also welcome the proposed community charge debt bill. We will see the final demise of the community charge—the poll tax—some 21 years after its abolition. Nearly 85 per cent of those of our fellow countrymen and women who are registered to vote turned out across Scotland to vote in the referendum, and I think that they did so because they thought that there would be a new society. They did not think that they would be hounded for past debts.

I hope that we can continue to get people to participate in such large numbers. We cannot afford to lose the people who voted. We must harness people power by ensuring that more power is given to people.

In recent weeks, the Parliament's Local Government and Regeneration Committee has been taking evidence on the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill. We have travelled to Dumfries and Fort William to hear the views of people in those towns and the surrounding areas.

The other night in Fort William, we had the opportunity to meet members of the Buzz Project. I played drums, Bruce Crawford was on lead guitar, and we got an idea of what that voluntary project is doing across Lochaber, without any money from the council or the Scottish Government. That is the kind of thing that we need to encourage.

As well as hearing from people while we have been out and about, here in the Parliament we have heard from witnesses from Dundee, North Lanarkshire, Aberdeen and many other parts of Scotland. Many folk are already very much empowered, but we know that many communities are not quite in the same league. I am so pleased that an extra £10 million will go to the empowering communities fund, because community capacity building still has a way to go and £10 million can do a lot.

The message that we have received from people is that they want to be more involved in shaping services, they want better communication from public bodies, and they often want to take full control of the assets in their villages, towns and cities. In some parts of the country, it seems that public bodies do well at communicating with folk and involving communities in shaping services. In others, the very basics of encouraging participation are sadly lacking.

What do I mean by "the very basics"? In Aberdeen, a number of community councils think that Aberdeen City Council is failing to communicate with them about planning

applications and that their voices are not heard. In Dumfries, the Local Government and Regeneration Committee heard from representatives of the usual place project, which is trying to establish a fully accessible community cafe with a changing places toilet. They told us about their frustration in trying to get a lease from Dumfries and Galloway Council and being pushed through a maze from one council officer to another.

The provisions in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill on participation requests and asset transfers will help to shift the balance of power to communities. However, legislation and additional funding will not necessarily lead to the best outcomes. The Government and public bodies must ensure that best practice is exported from places such as Dundee, which seems to be doing very well at encouraging community participation, to every public body and council in our land.

I know that all members value the work of volunteers and the third sector. We must remove impediments to their work, so that it can continue to thrive. In the next few days I will visit Barnardo's, Silver City Surfers and the Trussell Trust's Seaton food bank, in Aberdeen. Those organisations, and countless others in Aberdeen and throughout Scotland, serve our people well. Their efforts often make a huge difference to folk's lives, helping to tackle injustice and inequality. I am so pleased that this Government is making participation a top priority.

15:59

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):**

The debate has been wide ranging, but I will focus on land reform. I welcome the announcement by the First Minister that the Government will produce a land reform bill as part of its legislative programme. Scottish Labour takes land reform seriously. The 2003 act was a landmark piece of legislation in the early years of the Parliament, and we are willing to work with others across the chamber to achieve the aims of land reform. Land reform is a means of delivering greater quality and social justice and of promoting the public interest.

It is 11 years since we last passed land reform legislation and I am pleased that, although we are now seven years into an SNP Government, we are on the verge of another land reform act. We have seen the Government encourage land ownership but, so far, we have not seen mechanisms to change the nature of land ownership in Scotland. The bill and a land reform programme, as well as the commitment of Government time and resources, can give us the opportunity to do that.

We face a short timescale for delivery of the bill, so the necessary consultation on and scrutiny of

the bill will have to be concentrated if we are to see results by April 2016. We are committed to working with the Government to deliver radical and meaningful change. That can be done in this session of Parliament, but the Government must be prepared to take on the big challenges and address the issues of maximum landholdings, statutory land rights, the transparency of land ownership—I welcome what the First Minister said about that—tax and financial benefits. Delivery in those areas will be challenging, given the short timescale, but we should all commit to pursuing the agenda in the Parliament and beyond.

I welcome the intention to establish a land reform commission, which should provide continuity and focus outwith the election cycles, making recommendations on how to keep our land laws current and relevant.

The final report of the land reform review group provides us with a road map. Fifty-eight out of the 62 recommendations can be delivered with the current powers of this Parliament. Although I welcome the proposed land reform bill, it will be only part of the solution and I look forward to the policy statement that is expected next week.

We must take a comprehensive approach. We cannot deliver everything through a bill, but we need to be clear about the path that we are on and the destination that we are headed towards. We should think about the long term and have a discussion about where we want to be in 10 to 20 years' time. Scotland has a highly concentrated land ownership pattern, and we should think about how we can encourage and support greater diversity of ownership, opening up the benefits that that can bring for local economic development, housing and renewable energy.

As well as land use, land ownership needs to be seen as a public interest matter because land is a "finite and crucial resource". Although the headline proposals dominated the reporting on the land reform review group's report, the group's significant statement was that recognition that

"Land is a finite and crucial resource and should be used and owned in the public interest for the common good".

That is key, and it is the principle that we should use to direct public policy.

How do we do that? If we accept that land ownership patterns must change in the public interest, that implies that there must be ways to have the public interest tested in land transactions, potentially by tackling further concentration in ownership patterns or shifting the focus to land being sold in smaller lots or parcels. What practical steps could be taken in the Parliament? The land reform review group argued that there should be upper limits to landholdings. Is there a point at which ownership that is concentrated in

the hands of the few becomes detrimental? In a modern Scotland, is it acceptable, justified or beneficial that 432 people own 50 per cent of private land or that 16 individuals own 10 per cent?

In the interests of increasing social justice and widening access, could a public interest test or measure be introduced? France uses the SAFER system to consider the public interest, and we need to look at what model we could use here. Do we need a use-it-or-lose-it policy for developers and land speculators who land bank? The review group proposed the establishment of a number of new bodies, but the idea of a land agency, which Community Land Scotland and the review group supported, seems to offer a practical way forward on which we can make swift progress.

If we are clear about where we are headed with land reform in Scotland, solutions must come from across Government—from finance, housing and local government. We need to understand and act on the land dimension in all areas. We need only look at the Land Registration etc (Scotland) Act 2012, which was narrowly defined in terms of ministerial portfolio and was a missed opportunity in relation to land reform, for an example of a lack of joined-up government.

The announcement of the removal of business rates exemptions for shooting and deerstalking estates is welcome, particularly because of the additional support that that will provide to the Scottish land fund.

Are there other opportunities open to us through, for example, the replacement of stamp duty with land and buildings transaction tax? Taxes and financial incentives that are decided by the UK Government are relevant, but we need to look at the powers that we have here and how we can use them.

In the budget, the focus has been on domestic and commercial property in relation to land and buildings transaction tax, but is there not also an opportunity to look at how Government could influence land values if it so wished? At this point, I thank Paul Wheelhouse for his work on land reform. We have worked constructively across the Parliament, and I hope that that will continue with the new minister. However, land reform is complex; it cannot be delivered solely by the new minister. If the Government is serious about changing our pattern of ownership, it needs to be open to a debate about using all Government levers.

Much of what the First Minister talked about is relevant to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill, which is going through Parliament. The bill has a significant role to play in opening up more land opportunities to communities. Labour is

committed to strengthening the bill. However, at the moment, the bill looks as though it is too cautious in some areas, and there is a danger that it will be too restrictive. There is also a difficulty with defining and determining some of the tests that are being placed in the bill.

The proposed land reform bill gives the Parliament an opportunity to deliver meaningful change in Scotland. I look forward to its introduction and its progress.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you. I am afraid that we are fast running out of time, so I ask everyone to keep to their six minutes, please.

16:06

**Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** I welcome the First Minister to her new role and I congratulate all my colleagues on their ministerial appointments.

Along with everyone else, I look forward to progressing the programme for government. I welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to legislate to allow 16 and 17-year-olds to vote in the 2016 Scottish elections. From speaking to many young people in my constituency, I know that they would welcome that; they also want the opportunity to vote in Westminster elections, so I hope that that matter will go forward, whether as a result of the Smith commission or otherwise.

I welcome the strengthening of community involvement, which my colleague Kevin Stewart mentioned. That is fantastic news. Groups in my constituency and in many other constituencies throughout Scotland will benefit from that move.

I will touch on two areas: gender equality and domestic abuse. The First Minister mentioned the new Cabinet's make-up, and the 50:50 split sends out a strong message about gender equality. The United Nations hailed that move, and we in the Scottish Parliament should be very proud of that.

The Scottish Parliament does not have the legislative powers to address gender equality, as the First Minister said. I understand that, in August, the Scottish Government wrote to the UK Government proposing a transfer of the relevant provisions in the Equality Act 2010 to the Scottish Parliament. Can we have an update on that issue?

The Scottish Government's "Women on Board: Quality through Diversity" consultation, which was launched in April 2014, proposed measures to achieve gender equality through quotas on public body boards. Like other members, I welcome the consultation and the announcement of the 50:50 by 2020 pledge, and the Government and this Parliament should be proud of those measures. However, in the long term, we need to change the culture in Scotland to get full gender equality.

The commitment to increase childcare will help to create gender equality by giving all three and four-year-olds and our most disadvantaged two-year-olds 600 hours of childcare a year. We all know that that equals 16 hours a week during term time, and there are plans to increase it to 30 hours a week if the Government is re-elected. That would make it so much easier for mothers, and parents in general, to go back to work.

Perhaps the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning will want to look at and take on board an issue that relates to local authorities. We need local authorities to play their part and ensure that places are available for those hours in pre-school provision such as nurseries.

Stopping domestic abuse is a crucial issue for us all; indeed, we are united behind that goal. I will mention some of the things that this Government has been doing in that area. Since 2007, it has funded initiatives to tackle the domestic abuse of women, which has increased by 62 per cent. Between 2012 and 2015, the Scottish Government is investing £34.5 million, which is to be targeted at a wide range of initiatives to tackle violence against women.

The First Minister mentioned Clare's law. Yesterday, a six-month trial of Clare's law started in Ayrshire and Aberdeen. It will allow women and men to access information on their new partner's offending history. That information can be used by someone who is concerned about their partner's abusive behaviour or by a third party. It is really important that a third party who is worried about someone who is in a potentially dangerous relationship will be able to access such information, and I look forward to the pilot being rolled out throughout the rest of the country.

The consultation on the introduction of a criminal offence of committing domestic abuse is also to be welcomed, as are the proposed legislation on revenge porn and the proposed new trafficking laws.

I look forward to the introduction of legislation not just in the areas that I have mentioned, but in all those that the First Minister mentioned. I think that it is an excellent programme for government. The Scottish Government should be proud of its record on equalities and social issues since 2007. We have tried to look at all aspects of government. We have focused on the economy, but we have also dealt with social issues. I thank the First Minister for putting forward her programme for government, and I look forward to working with members of the Government.

16:11

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** I am pleased that the first official visit that the First

Minister undertook was the visit that she made last week to carers. I extend my appreciation to the 657,000 carers for the work that they do in looking after loved ones, and I welcome the proposed carers bill. As Friday is international carers' rights day, it is right—and timely—that that bill has been announced this week.

Many people who are carers do not see themselves as carers; they regard themselves simply as loving family members who, regardless of the lack of support that they receive, will continue to care. It is important that we do not take advantage of that commitment and that we support and enable them, and that we ensure that their caring role does not impact on their life chances. We need, where we can, to help them to continue to earn an income, and to support their continued employment. Carers save our public services more than £10 billion a year, so they deserve good quality and suitable support.

In her statement, the First Minister said that the Scottish Government had given almost £114 million a year to carers over the past seven years. My colleague Neil Findlay said that it was our understanding that, rather than being an annual figure, that was the total over the past seven years. I would be grateful if the First Minister could clarify that when she sums up.

The statement and, indeed, the documents on the proposed carers bill give very little detail on what might be included in it. It is vital that the bill will not consist only of empty words, but will have some bite and give carers access to first-class support and services. I understand that carers assessments will be renamed as carers support plans, but we need provisions that give carers a right to short breaks. We also need to be able to identify carers more easily, and we need to be able to make transitional arrangements for carers when they move from one health board or local authority area to another, when the person for whom they are caring moves from youth to adult services, or when they themselves move from youth to adult services.

Young carers are among the most vulnerable carers, so we must ensure that they get the support that they need; they must have their own carers support plans. We also need to tackle many of the challenges that young carers face. They should have their own advice and support services. I heard today that Skye and Lochalsh young carers group is devising a toolkit for schools to make them aware of the needs of young carers and to help them to support young carers. We need to ensure that young carers have the same opportunities as other young people and that they can access education just as they would have been able to were they not young carers.

The carers bill should also deliver on other promises that have been made. For example, a promise was made on emergency plans more than three years ago, but it has still not come to fruition. Carers are extremely concerned about that.

The First Minister's statement referred to accessible advice, not accessible support. We must ensure that support is available in ways that suit carers and are person centred. Moreover, we need access to appropriate respite care. Whether it be a day, a few hours or a weekend, it must suit the carer and give them the ability to lead their life.

As the First Minister will be aware, Scottish Labour has pledged its support for the Scottish Youth Parliament's care fair share campaign, and I would really appreciate it if the carers bill would allow the Government to do the same. It is not hugely expensive, but it makes a big difference to young carers' lives. We have also suggested that the Care Inspectorate be given responsibility for inspecting services to carers, and that local authorities publicly and annually report on the services that they provide to carers. Much more needs to be done; the carers bill is a vehicle for that work.

**The First Minister:** Rhoda Grant has mentioned a statement that I made about funding for carers, so I would like to take this opportunity to clarify that, due to a misprint in my statement, I said that the funding was per year. In fact, Rhoda Grant is correct: that funding was for the period 2007 to 2015. I wanted to take the earliest opportunity to rectify that.

**Rhoda Grant:** I appreciate the clarification, and the fact that it has come so early

I welcome the consultations on revenge porn and on domestic abuse legislation. However, we have been calling this for quite some time. We very much hope that the legislation will be introduced in this parliamentary session, although we perhaps question the need for a wide consultation, given that most people are probably signed up to the importance of tackling violence against women. The Parliament has a track record of work in the area, but we need to do an awful lot more. The First Minister said that she genuinely wants to work across the chamber; we would certainly be more than willing to work with her on the issue.

Yesterday marked the start of the 16 days of action for the elimination of violence against women, and it was also the same day that crime figures showed sexual offences to be on the rise. That might be the result of better reporting and detection, but the figures are very worrying, and I wonder whether more could be done.

Could I also just mention briefly—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You can if you are brief. You really need to conclude.

**Rhoda Grant:** Will the trafficking and exploitation bill cover sexual exploitation? It is a really important issue, and the bill provides an opportunity to address it.

I am grateful that the First Minister has met Gordon Aikman, who is, we will all agree, inspirational, and I welcome the announcement that she has made today. However, as she will know, Mr Aikman will be in a wheelchair before he reaches the relevant stage in his life, and he will still have to pay for his care. I ask the First Minister to join us and to scrap the unfair care tax today.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Once again, I appeal to members to keep to their six minutes.

16:17

**Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP):** I thank the First Minister for her truly inspirational programme for government, which sets out the legislation and policies that will shape our urban and rural communities and, indeed, our country. I believe that it will ensure that Scotland is both socially democratic and socially just.

At the heart of the programme is the land reform bill. I must make it clear that for the many rural north-east constituents whom I represent, land reform is very much about social justice for the young people who are growing up in our rural communities. The issue is not as complex as Claire Baker made out. The First Minister has talked about a radical programme of land reform but, in the north-east, the programme will not be seen as radical.

In Banchory earlier this year, I witnessed a packed hall of people who had come to listen to Lesley Riddoch talk about her book, "Blossom", and that audience made no apology for declaring their strong support for land reform. Looking back, I realise that the people who came to listen to Lesley Riddoch were not local farmers and that some, like me, were not born and bred in royal Deeside. However, all of them understood that in order for our rural communities to flourish, land reform is needed from this Parliament. There is a burning desire across rural Scotland to build more prosperous, fairer and better communities. Access to land is what our young farmers want in order to stay in the communities that they were born in, and it is about the right to live and work where one's parents live and work. I meet too many young people who have the skills and expertise to farm but who, without access to land, cannot do so. Access to land is not all about land ownership; it is about having the mechanism to allow the land to be farmed by the people who live on it—some families have lived there for generations.

The land reform commitment that we talked about is as much about social justice, which Alison Johnstone mentioned, as it is about local democracy. Many people see the French revolution's main legacy as being the land reform agenda that shaped what modern France is today: a country of villages—a modern country with vibrant rural communities where social justice and local democracy are thriving. We want a little bit of that in Scotland.

Many people are looking forward to the main legacy of this Scottish Parliament being its land reform agenda, which will bring many parts of rural Scotland into the 21st century. Sometimes I wonder why so little has changed in the attitudes of the people who live in our rural communities, and why old practices that belong to the 18th century still prevail. However, this is where we are. This Parliament has the opportunity to shape our country for the better; I look forward to debating the new land reform bill.

I look forward as well to any progress that this Government can make on the law of succession and I acknowledge the First Minister's announcement of a succession bill. The feudal difference between land and other property still survives as part of Scotland's law of succession, while other European countries have moved on. The introduction of feudal tenure in Scotland was 900 years ago. Some would call the addition of the succession bill radical. I disagree—900-year-old legislation is not fit for the modern Scotland in which I choose to live.

We need to be honest about our weaknesses and we need to be confident when we address them. We also need to be proud of our successes if rural Scotland is to be a place where ideas flourish, businesses locate and jobs are created.

I also represent many coastal communities in the north-east. Just as with our rural communities, anything that the Government can do to empower coastal communities is very welcome. I thank the First Minister for her announcement of the harbours bill and I look forward to debating it in Parliament. It is a great opportunity to reform aspects of current harbours legislation.

Legislation to remove Scottish ministers' power to compel trust ports to bring forward privatisation proposals is more than welcome. I understand that the power has not been exercised by Scottish ministers since devolution, but for me privatisation is never the answer. I saw the UK manufacturing industry being decimated by privatisation, just as many of our public services have been eroded. Coastal communities are looking forward to keeping control of their future, their local economy and their harbours. The harbours bill is important for the future of our coastal communities, from Peterhead to Fraserburgh, for our booming energy



sector in the north-east and, of course, for our fishing industry.

I thank the First Minister for responding to the needs of our rural and coastal communities. Her commitment to empowerment is reaching every part of the north-east of Scotland.

For many businesses in the north-east of Scotland that are paying business rates, the announcement of the withdrawal of business rates exemptions for shooting and deerstalking is welcome.

The programme, under this First Minister, will shape our communities and our country. Scotland can see that this First Minister is leading a Government that has purpose—a Scottish Government for all of us who live here. The result will be a Scotland that is both socially democratic and socially just—a society that is based on prosperity, participation and fairness.

16:23

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):**

As Ruth Davidson pointed out earlier, this statement was trailed as a boost to the Scottish economy. I must say that I struggled to find many measures that would deliver that. The small business bonus is to continue, which we welcome, but was it ever in doubt? Indeed, what we see is an expansion of business rates to cover previously exempt areas.

The expansion in childcare was also trailed. However, when we examine the statement we see that nothing new is proposed beyond what has already been announced, except of course that we now seem to have killed off for ever the notion that only with independence can better childcare be delivered. As Ruth Davidson also pointed out, there is no attempt to address the issue of age discrimination in childcare. I can illustrate that perfectly, because I have two children: a daughter who was born in August and who got a full two years of nursery provision, and a son who was born in January but who got merely five terms of nursery provision. An attempt by my colleague Liz Smith to overturn the current position and provide equity was defeated in the Education and Culture Committee despite its being supported by all parties other than the SNP. If the SNP is serious about equity, social justice and improving childcare, it must start to tackle the current anomaly.

The First Minister's statement dealt with access to higher education for people from disadvantaged backgrounds, which is a laudable ambition. I have pointed out in the chamber many times before Scotland's poor record on such access compared with that of every other part of the UK, notwithstanding that tuition fees apply elsewhere

in the UK. The First Minister trumpets free education, but of course there is no evidence of a deterrent effect from a graduate contribution or tuition fees. Why? It is because those fees come with generous bursaries that are funded from the fee income.

I do not know the First Minister's personal circumstances and I am a few years older than she is, but when I went to university, I did so on a full grant because of my parental circumstances. I suspect that if I applied in the same circumstances today to go to university in England, I would not only be exempt from paying any fees but would be the beneficiary of a generous bursary, and maybe the same would apply to the First Minister. It is therefore disingenuous for her to suggest that she would not have been able to go to higher education if a graduate contribution were introduced here on similar lines as apply in England. In fact, Scotland's record on access to higher education is not a good one and it needs to be improved.

I want to deal with the question of land reform. I am a veteran of the parliamentary scrutiny in 2003 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill, which became an act. Members with long memories will remember our erstwhile colleague Bill Aitken railing at that time against Mugabe-style land raids. It seems to me that what we have in the First Minister's statement today is a mish-mash of proposals that will do little to improve land use or to support good practice. The proposed land reform bill will have

"Powers for ministers to intervene where the scale of land ownership or the conduct of a landlord is acting as a barrier to sustainable development".

We await the detail of the bill, which will come out in due course, but on any level that proposal represents a massive expansion of state power. What qualifies Scottish ministers as arbiters of what is good land use or to decide what is an appropriate scale of land ownership? The best that can be said of the proposed bill is that it will be a charter for lawyers. We on the Conservative side of the chamber might even have to rethink our opposition to the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Scottish Government also proposes to have a land reform commission. That is just what rural Scotland needs: another quango. There is also a proposal to impose business rates on sporting estates. The class war is alive and well in the Scottish Parliament. Has any assessment been done of the economic impact of the proposal? Has any assessment been done of the cost? Has any assessment been done of the jobs that might be lost?

**Christian Allard:** Will Murdo Fraser take an intervention?

**Murdo Fraser:** Mr Allard will tell us.

**Christian Allard:** Does Murdo Fraser not think that plenty of other businesses, particularly in the north-east of Scotland, find it unacceptable that they have to pay business rates while large sporting estates do not?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Fraser, you are approaching your last minute.

**Murdo Fraser:** I look forward to Mr Allard taking that argument to the gamekeepers who are employed on estates in the north-east of Scotland and explaining to them why the income that pays their wages is likely to be affected by the proposed measure.

What is wrong with the approach of the Scottish Government to land reform is that it has an ideological opposition to ownership of large areas of land by private individuals or private trusts. However, what is important is not who owns the land but how the land is used. Even community ownership, as we have heard this week, has its problems. There are many excellent estates. Atholl Estates in Perthshire, with its combination of forestry, farming, sporting interests, tourism, energy and housing, is an exemplar. It speaks volumes that the factor of Atholl Estates, Andrew Bruce Wootton, was so dismayed by the ideological direction of the land reform review group that he resigned from it in protest because in his view it lacked understanding of the real issues.

What concerns me is that we are seeing a bidding war on the left between the Labour Party and the SNP, with each trying to be more radical on land reform, but lacking any clear understanding of the real issues in rural Scotland. What we need is an evidence-based approach, not an ideological one, and that is what the Scottish Conservatives will provide.

16:29

**George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** I welcome the First Minister's first legislative programme. We live in challenging times, but the programme shows vision and provides hope for the future. As Kevin Stewart said, some of the Opposition members who have spoken seem to be in a parallel universe. The Scottish Government has achieved so much since its first election in 2007.

One of the major issues, and one that the First Minister mentioned, is how we support our families across Scotland. I welcome her commitment on childcare. Perhaps I should declare an interest; in two weeks' time I will be a grandfather. My daughter, Jessica, and her husband, John, may look for such support in future as both of them go on to work. As Sandra White rightly said, access

to work is the whole reason for the policy: it will make an economic difference. As the First Minister said, one of the best investments that we can make is to ensure that families get that opportunity.

The legislative programme is founded on the three key principles of priorities, participation and prosperity—in fairness, priorities was not actually one of the commitments. What is important is that the First Minister has already announced that the SNP's 2016 manifesto will set out an ambitious plan to almost double childcare provision. If the SNP gets another term, as has been mentioned, there will be more hours of provision for our children and families. The Scottish Government has expanded funded hours by 45 per cent since 2007. There is still more work to be done, but that is worth up to £707 per child per year, and it is a big investment.

Further devolution of tax and benefits will enable us to unlock the resources that are required to support a transformational change in provision. Access to tax revenues and benefits savings that arise from increased labour market participation will contribute to the costs of achieving that transformational change.

However, with more powers comes more responsibility. Every debate seems to be about what will happen next, and the challenge is before the Smith commission.

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Will the member take an intervention?

**George Adam:** Not at the moment, thanks.

Promises were made and our citizens' expectations are high. Let us not forget that Gordon Brown said:

"We're going to be, within a year or two, as close to a federal state as you can be".

He underwrote the infamous vow and became the credible voice—the hero, if you wish—of the no campaign. "Within a year or two," he said. Where has this credible voice gone at a time when Scotland needs people to put their arguments forward? He is off on the after-dinner speaking circuit. *[Interruption.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order, please. Let us hear Mr Adam.

**George Adam:** His Westminster crony Danny Alexander called for

"effective Home Rule"

with

"unprecedented new powers"

that put us

"irreversibly on the journey towards a federal UK."

With all that in mind, is it not the case that we must give the Parliament the powers that the people of Scotland want? We can then talk about making the type of transformational change that we all want, using those powers.

In education, the Scottish Government already has a strong commitment to driving improvement and ensuring equity in attainment throughout Scotland, as the First Minister said. To see that, we only have to look at the raising attainment for all programme, which was launched in June 2014. It is working in our communities to try to ensure that children are not victims of their postcode and that, through education, they get the opportunity to be all that they can be. That is what the First Minister is trying to do here.

All that stands in stark contrast with the situation that we find with the beliefs of the Westminster elite. They believe that they are going back to business as usual.

**Liz Smith:** Can the member explain what prevents the SNP from changing the birthday discrimination when it comes to nursery provision? That is nothing whatsoever to do with Westminster policy.

**George Adam:** We are talking about transformational change in this debate. We are talking about being able to give young people the opportunity to move forward. I am saying that, for us, everything is connected. We need to have in this Parliament the powers and the levers that were promised by all the no parties. *[Interruption.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order, please.

**George Adam:** The SNP Government's achievements have been made during challenging times, and Westminster is continually promising us yet more austerity.

This programme builds on the Scottish Government's previous work, but we need to ensure that Westminster delivers on the promises that it made to the people of Scotland. We need to ensure that we have the powers that mean that we can make the transformational change that my constituents—all our constituents—want. Much good work has already been done but we must continue to be ambitious and bold in our ideas. I welcome the programme for Government and look forward to working towards the type of country that we all want.

16:35

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** I welcome the First Minister's commitment to reviewing the council tax and looking at new ways of funding local government. That is long overdue and hugely welcome, especially given the massive pressures on our local services, particularly schools and care

services, and councils' lack of capacity to act in the civic leadership role that we expect of them in community renewables or town centres, for example. The council tax is a critical issue and I welcome the fact that we have a statement in front of us that puts it centre stage.

The First Minister said that the council tax freeze would continue. In effect, that means that it will continue next year and the year after, so I would like her to review the issue of fully funding that council tax freeze because that is a key issue that comes back to me from local government colleagues.

The challenge is that the council tax freeze has not benefited those who are on the lowest incomes, particularly those who rely on council tax benefit to survive. The freeze also impacts other vulnerable adults, particularly older people and people who have disabilities, whose support services are being cut back or rationed, or who are having to pay for services that used to be free. The current situation has a financial cost.

Jackie Baillie mentioned how the loss of 70,000 jobs in local government since 2008 has impacted on local government's capacity to deliver the range of services. There is scope for more efficiency, but after the prolonged—

**Kevin Stewart:** Will the member give way?

**Sarah Boyack:** Lovely. I was predicting that Mr Stewart's intervention would come within two minutes.

**Kevin Stewart:** The 70,000 jobs have been oft-quoted. How many of them have been transferred to arm's-length organisations that councils have set up?

**Sarah Boyack:** The key thing is that the number of people who have gone from local government means an impact on strategic thinking and the delivery of services, not just the output of service delivery. Many councils no longer have the expertise to take up the challenging and innovative opportunities that we need them to take up.

It is clear that the concordat is dead, if not buried. It was not mentioned in this year's budget, so as the new First Minister takes office, it is important that we move on from the past. I thought that Kevin Stewart's intervention was going to be about his committee's recommendation for cross-party talks, which many of us support. It is important because a new council tax system must have buy-in across the chamber and in council chambers throughout the country. If we look at the range of political involvement we can see that we all need to be part of the buy-in. I welcome the cross-party nature of the commission and the timescale. If we are looking at designing an

effective replacement for council tax, it is important to get it right.

I welcome the lack of detail about the type of system signalled by the Scottish Government. I hope that that means that the Scottish Government is prepared to take a wider view and go beyond its previous support for local income tax. Many of us have criticisms of it. It is not local. The rate would have to be significantly higher than previously suggested by the Scottish Government, and that would hit young people in particular. I hope that that means that we can move on.

Reports made during the past couple of years have suggested potential ways forward. I was keen for the Labour Party's devolution commission to look at a property tax and at widening the tax base for local government in general. As the Scottish Government gets more tax powers and accountability, surely that should also be on the agenda for our local government colleagues. That is unfinished business.

The work that has been done by our commission and the strengthening local democracy commission points in the direction of new property taxes. We can all agree that the current council tax is not fair or effective, that it is well out of date and that property needs to be on the agenda if we are designing a new tax system. Across Europe, it is the most regularly used system to provide a key part of local government finance.

We must also broaden the range of resource that comes to local government. Notwithstanding the council tax freeze, the amount that local government raises by its own hand is 18 per cent, which presents a big challenge. We need to look not only at the council tax but at fair funding across the country—the issue of pooling and sharing—and, critically, at funding national priorities, which are set out in national legislation, but which are also local priorities, as councils might want to deliver services in different ways, according to geography and social need.

It is important that the new commission does not look at the council tax in isolation. We must make sure that there is robust funding for local government. Members only need to look at the announcements over the past couple of weeks: the hits on class sizes, the teacher number drops, the suggested library closures—

**Kevin Stewart:** Will Ms Boyack give way?

**Sarah Boyack:** No, Kevin Stewart has already come in.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Ms Boyack is in her last minute.

**Sarah Boyack:** We have a crisis in social care. It is interesting that local government will have to

pay extra into the pot to tackle the social care crisis. We have an urgent problem regarding resources at local level for providing for the range of vulnerable adults and older people. That is not just a problem to be dealt with in the future; it is a current problem. Unison's time to care campaign makes that clear.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must close.

**Sarah Boyack:** The scale of the challenge means that we need more than is in the programme, but I welcome the fact that we will have a cross-party commission. We all need to engage in that process and make it work.

16:41

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** I welcome the First Minister's commitments to social justice and to represent all the people. Following the previous speaker I will focus on older people, who, as the First Minister said in her speech, are carers for spouses and children. Indeed, sometimes they are carers for their own parents.

What is an older person? They are not a homogeneous group; older people are as individual as people in any other age group. To define older people is tricky. Most people tend to think that somebody is an older person if they are 15 years older than they are. For the sake of debate, let us say that older people are between 55 and 95. Forty years is some age range. In 2012 there were more than 1 million Scottish pensioners.

It is not all well out there, but so far the Scottish Government has not done badly for this age group. The concessionary bus pass is a wonderful asset. It provides social care, takes people out and about, means that people are included, is good for mental wellbeing and keeps people active. Seventy-seven thousand pensioners receive free personal care courtesy of this Parliament. The UK's cuts of £40 million to the council tax benefit budget were plugged by this Government to help 200,000 people over 65.

Importantly, the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 puts a duty on local authorities to offer people who are assessed as needing social care an option to design their own care package.

I welcome the investment to reduce delayed discharge, which is deleterious to the patient, who is often an older person who wants to get home, and to those who are waiting for treatment.

Community engagement is very important to the individual, who should be at the centre of decisions. In fact, in the recent old people's

assembly here it was proposed that there should be an older person on the board of say, the NHS or a housing association. Wee quotas are very fashionable; what about having them for those things?

I presume that attendance allowance is devolved, but I may be wrong. The programme will at last do something about the iniquity of the savings that go to the Treasury because we pay for free personal care while attendance allowance is not claimed.

I want to move on from the idea that older people are a problem. They are a huge asset. I love this picture from NHS Health Scotland—it is not a self-portrait—of a lady with boxing gloves, ready to take on the world.

Pensioners are a huge economic asset. In the UK they make a tax contribution of some £45 billion per annum. Their spending power is some £76 billion per annum. Their volunteering has a hidden value of around £10 billion and their charity and family donations have a value of another £10 billion. They are a major economic force. Pensioner power rules, OK! They are not a problem; they give much back to society. Sometimes, we might even refer to them as our much-needed social glue. I am pleased that the Scottish Government's programme recognises the substantial contribution of Scotland's older people, while also recognising their needs.

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights, Alex Neil, and I had a bit of a stramash in the tea room, trying to work out what 60-year-olds are called. We came up with "sexagenarian"—which we have to say properly—or "hexagenarian". My hope is that having this sexagenarian or hexagenarian in the Cabinet, with a portfolio for social justice but also focusing on older people, will ensure that we have the policies that we need. We do not always need legislation, but we need policies that recognise—[*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order on the front benches, please.

**Christine Grahame:** Am I being heckled? Remember the boxing gloves.

We need policies that not only support older people when they are in need, but recognise the huge amount that they give to society. Remember the lady with the boxing gloves: she may come after you.

16:45

**Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab):** I am glad that I am going to be a sexagenarian next month; that makes me feel a lot better about it.

I congratulate the new Cabinet Secretary for Justice and the new Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs—who is in the chamber—on their new roles.

The First Minister indicated that she was keen to listen to the views of Opposition members. In that spirit, on behalf of my party, I put forward some suggestions for consideration by the new justice team. I look forward to working with them but, given the situation in my party at the moment, I cannot guarantee how much longer I will be able to do that for. I certainly look forward to working with them in any case.

As Murdo Fraser mentioned, one bill that has already been introduced is the Prisoners (Control of Release) (Scotland) Bill, which is sometimes incorrectly described as ending automatic early release. Currently, all prisoners who are serving a sentence of less than four years must be released after serving half their sentence. In 2012-13, more than 14,000 people were serving less than four years. The bill will not affect that at all—people who are serving four-year sentences will still be released after two years. The bill applies only to sex offenders who are serving more than four years and to other offenders who are serving 10 years or more. That covers about 1 per cent of the current prison population. Obviously, there would be significant implications for the Scottish Prison Service and prison populations if automatic early release were to be abolished altogether, and to propose that would of course be fiscally irresponsible. However, it could be argued that the bill is tokenistic.

I suggest that we take a more radical longer-term approach to sentencing, to reducing reoffending and to reconviction. In 2006, the Sentencing Commission for Scotland produced a report on the early release of prisoners and their supervision on release. That report recommended:

"At the time when a custodial sentence is imposed the sentencer should explain the effect of the sentence so that the offender, the victim, the media and the public at large are in no doubt about what the sentence means in terms of the time to be served in custody and that which may be served in the community".

In a written submission to the Justice Committee in May, Victim Support Scotland said that it wanted to see

"a system in which sentences are straightforward and understandable to the victim(s) and the wider community".

The Prisoners (Control of Release) (Scotland) Bill does not add clarity to what a sentence means. It would still be possible for the Parole Board for Scotland to release a prisoner after they had served half their sentence.

I suggest that we consider an extension of the approach that was taken under the Custodial

Sentences and Weapons (Scotland) Act 2007, which has not yet come into force, which would be for the sentencer, when passing the sentence, to prescribe the minimum term for which the offender would remain in custody. When the offender reached the end of the minimum period, he or she would be assessed with regard to their risk to the public and with regard to their engagement with programmes in prison aimed at reducing reoffending. If the offender posed little risk and had addressed their offending behaviour, he or she could be released under supervision. If they had not, a further period of custody, up to a maximum limit, would then be served.

That would require a change in sentencing policy, and it would need to be supported by a mandatory national programme of education, skills development and drug or alcohol rehabilitation that was available to all offenders—and, I think, standardised methods of recording engagement and accrediting prisoners for the skills that they gain or for the recovery programmes that they have engaged in. Where appropriate, that could continue—in fact, it should continue—in the community, after the offender has been released. The high prison population should be tackled through prevention and addressing reoffending. There are opportunities to investigate extending that further.

My second suggestion relates to the controversial issue of the abolition of the requirement for corroboration. Lord Bonomy's review group on safeguards is due to report in April but, having attended one of the sessions, it is clear to me that his remit is still to investigate what safeguards to introduce when the requirement is abolished and not to consider whether the requirement could be modified to provide better access to justice for the victims of person-to-person crimes, such as sexual and domestic abuse. I wonder whether the new cabinet secretary would consider extending the remit of Lord Bonomy's group to include that. I am sure that, if he did so, he would have the agreement of all Opposition parties.

Our third suggestion concerns the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. We know that there are problems with the accountability of Police Scotland in particular. Those problems have surfaced since the single police and fire and rescue services were formed in April 2013. In particular, local accountability is far weaker than many of us were promised and I would like the new team to review how the 2012 act is working.

I am pleased that the new Scottish Government has adopted Jenny Marra's proposed bill on human trafficking. I hope that it will be advanced with the same force and purpose that her original proposals were. However, I am disappointed not

to see Neil Findlay's proposed lobbying bill in the programme for government. I thought that the Scottish Government had adopted that too. If it is not being progressed this year, I wonder whether there will be time to progress it.

The previous Cabinet Secretary for Justice was also less sympathetic to the proposal by my colleague Patricia Ferguson for an inquiries into deaths bill. There are proposals for a fatal accident inquiry bill, but the consultation on that oddly seemed to spend a lot of time criticising Patricia Ferguson's proposal. That is disappointing and I wonder whether the new ministerial team might be prepared to meet her to discuss the aims of her proposal and whether some of them could be incorporated into the new proposed bill.

There are many opportunities for consensus and collaboration. If the Government is serious about that, we are serious about genuinely taking part in discussion. We volunteer our views in good faith in the hope that the new Cabinet is prepared to listen to some of the things that we have to say and to discuss them with us. If it is prepared to do that, we are certainly prepared to take part in those discussions.

16:52

**The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Angela Constance):** The Government's ambition for radical reform remains undiminished and the programme for government detailed today is the springboard for the future.

The success of our nation depends on us all working together to deliver a stronger economy and build a fairer Scotland. Fairness and prosperity go hand in hand; we cannot have one without the other. That is why our commitment to introduce a Scottish business pledge is important. It ensures that, for public money and public support, we can in turn work with Scottish businesses to deliver on that agenda for fairness.

Fairness is fundamental to growing the Scottish economy. Therefore, in the programme for government, we are focused on more and better-paid jobs with a view to continuing our principal goal of sustainable economic growth. We are also focused on tackling inequality and passing power to people and our communities.

The debate has been colourful in part. There has also been much consensus. It is important to note the consensus across the chamber on the First Minister's commitment that there should be no social care charges for people living with terminal illness in the latter stages of their lives.

It was welcome to hear the unanimity on the proposed human trafficking bill and Clare's law. Our proposals for radical land reform are largely

welcomed, I think, but we look forward to a spicy debate between Murdo Fraser and Christian Allard.

I noted that there was spontaneous applause across the chamber for the First Minister's announcement on giving the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate the power to order ward closures when it is in the interests of patient safety.

It was also heartening to hear that there is support in the Parliament for the franchise to be extended to 16 and 17-year-olds, who did us proud in the recent referendum campaign. It is a great pity that those 16 and 17-year-olds will not be allowed to participate in the next election, which is the Westminster election next May.

On a personal note, I am proud to be part of a Government with the first woman as First Minister and a Cabinet that has a 50:50 gender balance between women and men. We are one of only three Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries that have such a balance and we have been commended by the United Nations for the Cabinet becoming a role model.

However, I want to be clear: this is not just about the position of a few women in a few positions of leadership; it is not about a few women climbing through the cracks or the gaps in the glass ceiling. This is about kicking open the door of opportunity for all women and others to achieve their full potential. I am very pleased that the First Minister has announced that we will work towards a voluntary target of 50:50 representation right across the public, private and third sectors.

Of course, we would very much welcome in this chamber the devolution of equalities legislation, which would allow us to take further action if need be—if voluntary measures do not succeed. The Government also wrote, well in advance of the referendum, to the UK Government seeking a section 30 order for the devolution of equality powers.

We know that public appointments are improving. We know that 42 per cent of applicants to public boards are women. However, we also know that there is much more to do, particularly when the number of women appointed as chairs remains far too low.

Much of the debate has focused on childcare—rightly so. Childcare is welcomed as the best investment for children and as a foundation stone to our economy, because we know that lack of access to affordable, flexible, high-quality childcare is indeed the biggest barrier to women getting into work.

I am proud that this Government, over the next two years, will invest £329 million in that area; that

we will have 16 hours of childcare and early learning a week for three and four-year-olds and eligible two-year-olds; and that by 2020, we will double that to 30 hours a week for eligible children. Of course, with independence, that 30 hours a week would be available to children aged between one and five years old. I express some caution about emulating the UK Government in its record on childcare, because when it comes to delivering for two-year-olds it appears to have overpromised yet underdelivered.

The First Minister spoke about her personal mission and about the importance of quality, free education, which was imperative to her being able to pursue her chosen career. That, of course, is an objective that is shared across the Government because many of us who are now in Government positions were the first in their families to go to university—children from working-class backgrounds who, 20, 30 or more years ago, took that step into higher education.

We want to do more to improve access to higher education for young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. We know that the situation is indeed improving according to the latest Universities and Colleges Admissions Service statistics, but it is not improving fast enough and we will not demur from that acknowledgement.

We have set out our ambitions and we have set out our targets—a child born today should indeed have an equal chance of participating in higher education. The situation is similar with attainment. Education in Scotland is improving, but we have to address the long-standing issue of the attainment gap. We will pick up the pace and the programme for government has signalled that.

In this Government, we accept that there is always a case to do more within our existing resources and existing powers. However, there is also a case for more powers to come to this Parliament because the foundations of a strong and fair society are at the very heart of the debate about powers with a purpose. Take, for example, the attainment debate. At the very heart of the attainment debate is the debate about poverty. Poverty does not stop at the school gates. Eradicating poverty is indeed the greatest challenge, but it is also the greatest prize.

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Thank you. The debate will continue tomorrow afternoon.

## Business Motions

16:59

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-11682, 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 2 December 2014

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)

*followed by* Ministerial Statement: The Smith Commission

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Tourism, A Legacy from 2014

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 3 December 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 4 December 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* Justice Committee Debate: Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Violence against Women

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 9 December 2014

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)

*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Food (Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 10 December 2014

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions  
Fair Work, Skills and Training;  
Social Justice, Communities and  
Pensioners' Rights

*followed by* Scottish Government Business

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 11 December 2014

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

*followed by* Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Scottish Government Business

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-11683, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a stage 1 timetable for the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 15 May 2015.—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-11684, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a stage 1 timetable for the Prisoners (Control of Release) (Scotland) Bill.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Prisoners (Control of Release) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 3 April 2015.—[Joe FitzPatrick.]



*Motion agreed to.*

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is consideration of three Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motions S4M-11685, S4M-11686 and S4M-11688, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments, en bloc.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Land Register of Scotland (Automated Registration) etc. Regulations 2014 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Land Registration etc. (Scotland) Act 2012 (Amendment and Transitional) Order 2014 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Scotland Act 1998 (River Tweed) Amendment Order 2015 [draft] be approved.—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** The question on the motions will be put at decision time.

## Decision Time

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The question is, that motions S4M-11685, S4M-11686 and S4M-11688, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments, be agreed to.

*Motions agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Land Register of Scotland (Automated Registration) etc. Regulations 2014 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Land Registration etc. (Scotland) Act 2012 (Amendment and Transitional) Order 2014 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Scotland Act 1998 (River Tweed) Amendment Order 2015 [draft] be approved.

## Extreme Inequality

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-11340, on "Even it up: Time to end extreme inequality", Oxfam's report and campaign. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament welcomes Oxfam's latest report, *Even it up: Time to end extreme inequality*; notes that the report highlights that, in 2013, seven out of 10 people lived in countries where economic inequality is worse than 30 years ago; further notes that the report states that extreme inequality is a barrier to poverty reduction, that economic inequality hurts everyone, including people in East Renfrewshire, and drives inequalities in health, education and life chances while compounding inequality between women and men; recognises that poverty and inequality are not inevitable but the result of policy choices; understands that a diverse range of people and organisations, from Pope Francis to the International Monetary Fund, are speaking out on the issue of inequality; welcomes the call from Oxfam that, with the right political and economic choices that redistribute money and power, people can help reduce economic inequality; notes the recommendations in the report, which include calls to close tax loopholes, introduce progressive taxes, pay workers a living wage, establish pay ratios, achieve universal free public services for all by 2020, implement a universal social protection floor and promote women's economic equality and women's rights, and wishes Oxfam continued success with its campaign.

17:03

**Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** Like many members in the Parliament, I have always thought of myself as a progressive politician. I was brought up in the expectation that progress—economic, social and political—was not just desirable but almost inevitable and that, with our advances in science and technology, our society would advance in mutual prosperity, understanding and tolerance.

I have not lost my optimism that we can make it so, but the evidence from the past 30 or 40 years has provided a salutary reminder that we have to choose to make it so. Yes, we are a far wealthier nation and, if we measure wealth in material goods—televisions, mobile phones, cars—it is clear that we have prospered. However, on so many other measurements, the gap between rich and poor, between the haves and have-nots, has increased.

Audit Scotland has pointed out that, while our overall life expectancy has increased over the past decade, the better-off have benefited most. The difference in average life expectancy between women living in the least deprived areas in comparison with women living in the most deprived areas has risen from approximately 6.5

years to approximately 7.5 years. Similarly, the overall death rate from cancer fell by 12 per cent between 2001 and 2011, but the gap between the most and least deprived areas has again widened.

It is not just on health that we have failed to make progress on tackling inequality. We are proud to have one of the most equitable education systems in the developed world, yet the findings of the 2007 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report on the issue still hold true—in Scotland, who you are is far more important than what school you attend, so far as achievement is concerned.

The new campaign from Oxfam and the report “Even it up: Time to end extreme inequality” are a powerful and welcome reminder of the task that is before us. In fact, the report offers some consolation, in that we are clearly not alone in Scotland, but it is not the consolation that we might want to hear. As the report points out, seven out of 10 people on the planet now live in countries where economic inequality is worse than it was 30 years ago.

The report is full of evidence and research that fascinates and horrifies but which I hope potentially inspires us to action, too. To give just one example, members might be familiar with the line, “We’re all in this together.” It turns out that, as a statement of fact, those words are wider of the mark than even I suspected. Oxfam highlights that, since the start of the financial crisis, the number of billionaires in the world has more than doubled. Here we are, knee-deep in austerity and trying to do what we can to mitigate the impact of the welfare cuts and yet, with every day, the obscenely rich are getting obscenely richer. As a sobering contrast, how many members read the report from the Trussell Trust earlier this week that revealed that the number of Scots turning to food banks in the last year has also more than doubled?

I cannot do justice to the many juxtapositions between rich and poor that are illuminated in the report. However, the key point is not simply that such inequality is offensive and morally repugnant but that it is damaging to us all. It is damaging to poverty reduction, it stifles social mobility, it undermines economic growth, it holds us back in the fight against climate change and it compounds one of the most long-standing and deep-seated inequalities: that between men and women. Many of us have taken encouragement from the new First Minister’s implementation of a 50:50 approach to gender balance at Cabinet level but, as I reminded members last week, just as we slap each other on the back for our commitment to progressivism, the pay gap between men and women in this country is widening again. If we are

not constantly aware of the hill that we are trying to climb, we will slip backwards.

Extreme inequality reveals itself in many destructive ways, from poor health and illiteracy to levels of violence, but I want to return, as the Oxfam report does, to the central issue of economic inequality. The global scale of the problem suggests that we need to take action at global level. Earlier this year, Oxfam and others reported that the combined wealth of the 85 richest people in the world is the same as the wealth of the poorest half of the world’s population, which is approximately 3.5 billion people. One answer that has been suggested by economists such as Thomas Picketty is a wealth tax. Oxfam has calculated that a tax of 1.5 per cent, for example, on the wealth of the world’s billionaires would raise £74 billion, which would be enough to get every child into school and deliver health services in the poorest 49 countries.

While supporting those global initiatives, we should look closer to home. In Scotland, three families have more wealth than the poorest 20 per cent of Scots put together. Another statistic that is also quoted by ministers is that fewer than 500 people own more than half the land in Scotland. A land reform bill will come before the Parliament in this session. Do we not need to ask ourselves how we can use that piece of legislation to tackle that particular inequality?

Poverty wages are clearly central to the issue. I doubt that I have to convince anyone in the debate about the importance of implementing the living wage, but what are we doing about wage differentials? We cannot address extreme inequality if we simply help those at the bottom—we need to look at the gap between what those at the top earn and what those same people pay their employees. When I proposed using the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill to minimise wage ratios between the highest and lowest paid, the then Deputy First Minister spoke warmly about such an approach and then promptly asked colleagues to vote against it. I will not pretend that there are easy answers to any of these complex issues, but the point is that we could take a different approach.

Here in Scotland for example, the finance secretary has imposed a wage freeze or a 1 per cent cap on public sector workers for each of the past four years, yet our university principals have enjoyed a median increase of more than 4 per cent on salaries that were already approaching or exceeding a quarter of a million pounds. Need I point out that our universities are the same publicly funded institutions that are currently employing staff on zero-hours contracts?

The Equality Trust has estimated that none of the large companies that bid for public service

contracts pays its chief executives less than 59 times United Kingdom median earnings. We are using public money not to reduce inequality but to increase it. Is it really the case that we want one rule for the rich and another for the rest of us?

This is not about envy. It is not about suppressing ambition or capping aspiration. It is not even about blame. It is about balance and reasonableness. It is about ending exploitation. It is about recognising that our communal and individual wellbeing and prosperity depend on our taking action to reduce inequality.

We like to portray ourselves as a progressive country, but if we are truly to become the progressive beacon that we want to be, we need more than warm words and good intentions.

I could not wish for a more timely occasion to hold this members' business debate than the day when the Government outlines its programme for government, because Oxfam has highlighted a programme to which we can all sign up. Here is a vision for Scotland that has the potential to unite us across party lines and that can unite civic Scotland, businesses, trade unions, churches and voluntary organisations. Now is the time to end extreme inequality in Scotland.

17:11

**Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP):** I welcome Ken Macintosh's contribution in securing the debate. In the time that is available to us, we can hardly do more than scratch the surface of the issue.

I commend Ken Macintosh for the way in which he put his motion together. It is a wonderful example of how to write an essay, in that he laid out the information in such a way that the reader knows where they are going. He made it clear that poverty itself is a barrier to poverty reduction, that poverty hurts everyone, and that the solutions include closing tax loopholes, progressive taxation, implementation of the living wage, universal free public services, universal social protection and recognition of the importance of women's rights—one might add children's rights to that.

Let me address those points in turn. I recognise that economic growth, by its nature, tends to favour those who have put their own money into it. It is the richest who have the capital and it is usually the capital that is first to derive the benefit. Because the benefits of economic growth go to people who are already socially advantaged—because they put themselves in such a position—they tend to go to men in societies around the world, including the UK, and to the better off, who are in a better position to put themselves in the right place. Poverty is its own barrier.

We have had a demonstration of that in the past week or two. A calculation was done that demonstrates that people who are poor and who do not have credit or bank account facilities pay an extra £1,200 a year for the services that they receive, simply because they are unable to pay by credit or direct debit. That is another example of poverty generating itself. It is enormously difficult to get out of that cycle.

Poverty generates poor health, low self-esteem and low ambition, and it is a self-fulfilling failure, but we also now know that inequality hurts everyone. This feels a bit like a rerun of a debate that we had about three weeks ago, when I pointed members in the direction of the wonderful book "The Spirit Level"—I do not have my copy with me. I encourage all members to read it, because it demonstrates how everyone benefits in a more equal society. For example, a more equal society will have a lower crime rate, which means that those who are wealthy and who pay taxes will have to pay less into the justice system. Not only is the amount that taxpayers have to pay reduced, but prevention is better—and cheaper—than cure.

I come on to tax loopholes. Ken Macintosh was right to suggest that some things can be dealt with locally and some require international action. The Oxfam report suggests that the international community is losing \$156 billion per year because people are putting their money into tax havens. That is an enormous sum of money, but it is not going to be moved out of tax havens until we decide globally to do something about it. That is totally outwith the powers of any national Government; it requires collective judgment around the world and it is, unfortunately, extremely unlikely to happen. However, who knows? If we do not ask for it and work towards it, it is certainly never going to happen.

Progressive taxation is also mentioned in the motion, and that has to be a good thing. However, there is already research suggesting that progressive taxation is not, of itself, the whole answer and that how the wealth is redistributed within a society may be a better discriminator. We therefore need to be slightly careful on that.

Comment was made on the living wage in this afternoon's debate on the Government's legislative programme. We have got the message and understand that, because it defines the minimum standard of a sensible life, the living wage must be what we should try to pay. I still despair when people tell me that we can already do it. That message tends to come, unfortunately, from members of the Labour Party who seem to ignore the fact that Labour-run Glasgow City Council has been told by its lawyers that it cannot be done in law. I wish that we could get past that and have a sensible debate.

**Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab):**

Perhaps Nigel Don can explain how Renfrewshire Council manages to ensure that people are paid the living wage.

**Nigel Don:** That would be interesting, but Hugh Henry should ask Renfrewshire Council why it thinks that it is lawful when others plainly do not. I am not a lawyer and cannot say that it cannot happen, but I am aware of the fact that a lot of sensible lawyers have said that the living wage cannot be imposed. Who is to judge?

Why do universal free public services matter? Ruth Davidson went over that subject again this afternoon. Why do the Tories not yet understand that, if we do not go down that route, we force people to make judgments that they do not want to make and they make bad judgments?

I am being asked to wind up, so I will do so.

This is a timely debate. Some of what the motion asks for can be done locally, and what we have heard this afternoon encourages us to believe that the Government wants to go in that direction. However, we must recognise that some of it requires action on a global scale—I am not even complaining about our lack of independence at this point—and effort right across the globe, which will happen only when people around the globe are galvanised to make that effort.

17:17

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I congratulate Ken Macintosh on securing time for the debate and on his speech this evening. I very much welcome Oxfam's report "Even it up: Time to end extreme inequality".

It is clear to everyone in the chamber that inequality is, as Barack Obama has called it, "the defining challenge of our time".

Global inequality has been on the rise for decades. Even in developed countries with high levels of wealth redistribution such as the UK, the level of income inequality is persistently high.

It is also clear that politicians at every level of government have a part to play in the elimination of poverty and inequality, and in that context I turn to the Scottish Government, which I believe already has the powers to take substantial action. In childcare, housing, education and healthcare, all the powers are available now. As has been much commented on today, we are suddenly able to bring about the transformational childcare change that we were told could be delivered only in an independent Scotland. I welcome that, but I think that we can deliver such change across a range of other policy areas and I believe that we should work together to do so.

In her inaugural speech as leader, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon declared that it would be her "personal mission" to tackle poverty and inequality. I believe that all members share that view, so let us all work together to deliver that. The Scottish Government will be judged on its actions, not its words, so let me review some of its actions since 2007.

There are 6,000 fewer beds in Scotland's hospitals, 4,000 fewer teachers and 140,000 fewer college places. All those things contribute to poverty and inequality. Since 2008, 70,000 public sector jobs have been lost, and since 2007 the Scottish Government has stripped £1 billion away from local anti-poverty work. We know that the council tax freeze is underfunded, leaving local government to bear the brunt of public spending cuts and forcing it to cut services.

Meanwhile, the cost of living, particularly the cost of childcare, is rapidly on the rise. Since 2008, the cost of a basket of essential goods has risen by 28 per cent; and, since 2010 alone, childcare costs have risen by 27 per cent. At the same time, wages are not keeping pace with inflation, and the minimum wage is more than £1 behind the living wage of £7.85. Nearly 300,000 people in poverty are working and half of poor children have a parent in work. In-work poverty is a persistent and growing problem that we need to address.

Committing to a living wage; expanding educational opportunities; increasing childcare provision and making it affordable and flexible; and tackling in-work poverty and inequality—those are all matters that are well within the Scottish Government's powers to tackle.

I said in the previous debate that we had five opportunities in this year alone to support the living wage and the Government said no five times. We have the power to do something about the living wage now. Therefore, I welcome very much the proposals set out today by the First Minister. However, we had the opportunity to legislate and to help 400,000 low-paid workers, 64 per cent of who are women. I remember the debate on the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill. We talked about equal pay audits and zero-hours contracts. The proposals on those issues were all dismissed by the Government; all were voted down. Talk is cheap; it is action that counts.

The motion mentions progressive taxation. If we are to believe the press reports on the Smith commission it looks as though income tax will be devolved. Will the Scottish National Party support progressive taxation? Will it support a 50p top rate of income tax for the richest people to help the poorest? I ask the minister to respond on that issue.

I will finish with one of my favourite quotes from Professor Joe Stiglitz:

“inequality is not inevitable. It is not ... like the weather, something that just happens to us. It is not the result of the laws of nature or the laws of economics. Rather, it is something that we create, by our policies, by what we do.”

I could not agree more. There is no greater ambition for Government than delivering social justice and ending inequality. I challenge the Government to work with us to do so.

17:22

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):**

I am not entirely sure that Jackie Baillie did not just miss the point of the debate. I know that the message that she delivered is consistent with the view that she has expressed regularly, but to take the debate in the context of Scotland or Britain alone is to misunderstand the objective that we are discussing. We need to look at the matter internationally and see where we are as a nation in relation to what is going on in the rest of the world.

First, there are many people in this Parliament who assume that equality is a key element of what we want to achieve. However, I have equal respect for those who put their family, their community or perhaps their country first. As a consequence, the idea of equality is perhaps something that individuals, particularly in the more impoverished countries in the world, cannot afford to consider when their priority is to look after their own and to make their own way in difficult circumstances.

If we are to achieve our objective of cutting the extreme difference in incomes that exists in the wealthiest and in the most impoverished countries, we must consider what the impact of that is likely to be in this country. It is undeniable that we have spent generations striving to increase the quality of our lives as individuals, and to increase average incomes in our country, and that for every part of our share of the world's resources we have consumed over and above the average. Consequently, someone, somewhere, has had to have less so that we could have more. The impact that that has had in places including sub-Saharan Africa is massive. We must accept that if we are determined to maintain our high standards of living, someone else will have to carry the can.

As a result of those pressures—but not only those pressures—we have in government at Westminster a party that, prior to its election, made the key commitment that when it took office it would exceed the requirement that 0.7 per cent of gross national income be put into international aid. The latest figures that we have show that 0.72 per cent of Britain's GNI—£11.4 billion a year—

goes to international aid, which makes Britain the second highest contributor to international aid in the world in absolute terms, and the fifth highest in terms of share of GNI.

However, if we look at the reaction to that here in our own country, we find that there are many people who criticise the Westminster Government for having taken that decisive step. When by-elections take place in which parties such as the UK Independence Party compete to win seats in Parliament, we hear our Government being attacked and criticised for having set that target and stuck to it during its time in government.

**Ken Macintosh:** I am very grateful to Alex Johnstone for taking part in the debate and for flagging up the issue of global inequality, but I ask him to reflect on what the report says. It talks about not only global inequality—that is, the inequality between nations—but extreme inequality within nations. Indeed, that is its main focus. In other words, it addresses not just the difference between the wealth of Britain and that of sub-Saharan Africa, but the differences between the wealthiest people in Britain and the poorest people in Britain, and between the wealthiest people in sub-Saharan Africa and the poorest people in sub-Saharan Africa.

**Alex Johnstone:** I have 35 seconds to cover that.

I accept that there are key issues that we need to address even within our own country, but under the Westminster Government, a situation has arisen in which the top 1 per cent of earners pay 30 per cent of all income tax and the top 5 per cent of earners pay 50 per cent of all income tax.

On looking through the report's recommendations, I identified a key difference in understanding that I must address, which relates to the demands that are made for taxes to be imposed on wealth. I have said previously in the chamber that I am a good old-fashioned capitalist. I think that we should tax growth in wealth and that we should tax income, but taxing wealth is a dangerous place to go. The purpose of wealth is to enable proper investment to take place so that we can have economic growth and fair trade around the world; we can use our wealth to invest and create jobs in countries to the benefit of the people of those countries as well as of the people in this country. The appropriate use of wealth is to invest it. To consume wealth by taxing it to pay costs on the current account is to shrink wealth, to shrink economies and to shrink ambition.

I understand the objectives of Oxfam's report, but members will understand it if I take a slightly different view of how some of those objectives might be achieved.

17:28

**Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab):** I congratulate Ken Macintosh on his eloquent and passionate statement about why we need to do something to tackle the obvious inequality that exists in this country and throughout the world.

I do not disagree with Nigel Don—I think that global action is required by large companies and by Governments. Oxfam has outlined the sobering and shocking fact that in 2013, seven out of 10 people lived in countries in which economic inequality was worse than it was 30 years ago.

Let us think about the technological advances that have been made in the world in the past 30 years. My children and grandchildren laugh at me when I reflect on how the world has changed, even in my working life. When I left IBM to commence a teaching career, I went into a school that was the same as schools throughout the country. Computers did not exist, and mobile phones were not on anyone's horizon. The human race has progressed so much, but when we cast our eyes around the world we still see the sheer extremes of inequality, poverty and deprivation.

We very rarely take the time to reflect on the fact that many of the things that we in this country take for granted in the run-up to Christmas—the commercial and consumer goods that we will want to exchange with each other as we remind everyone to have a happy Christmas or, for those who are of a religious nature, to reflect on the religious significance of the event—are produced by child labour in squalid conditions and on poverty wages. We very easily forget the hundreds of women and child workers who died in the clothing factories in Bangladesh, and we forget the squalor that many people in factories throughout the world are working in to give us something that we simply take for granted. When we compare country with country and society with society, we see that inequality has deepened and become worse.

Even within countries, there is shocking inequality. In a debate last week that was led by John Wilson, I said that as a welfare rights officer I worked in communities where the stark consequences of Government action were all too obvious. One of the things that we neglect at our peril is that much of what happens is the result of conscious decisions by individuals and politicians to make things happen as they do.

Another shocking fact is that in 21st century Scotland one of the councils in my constituency, Renfrewshire Council, has had to set up a commission on tackling poverty. With all the material wealth that surrounds us, why should any council in this country have to consider something like that? However—in this, I am no different from

anyone else in this Parliament—when I look at my constituency, I see communities just a few miles from each other, such as Brookfield and Linwood, where all the statistics on poverty and deprivation stand in sharp contrast. In fact, in some parts of Scotland, the contrast is even worse than it is in those two communities.

As a result, the subject becomes a matter of political will. I say to Nigel Don that politicians are all too keen to hide behind the advice of lawyers when it suits them. What Renfrewshire Council did was a matter of political will. It used its scarce resources to make it clear that it wants its contractors to pay the living wage. The consequence was that the council had to compensate the contractors through their contracts. The Scottish Government could do the same thing with its contractors, if it had the political will.

Let us not hide behind lawyers or weasel words. Instead, let us make it clear that there are issues that we can resolve if we have the will to do so.

17:33

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** I, too, thank Ken Macintosh for securing debating time on this important issue. In such a debate, we need to consider the many deeply upsetting facts that surround the global issue of extreme income inequality, which greatly hinders the aim of reducing and ending world poverty on a global scale, as set out in Oxfam's report, "Even it up: Time to end extreme inequality".

Poverty is a condition that is defined in terms of income. According to thresholds set by the World Bank, about half the world's population lives in a state of poverty. Extreme poverty is defined as an income level of \$1.25, or 80p, a day and according to recent studies, roughly 1.3 billion people fall into that category. Of that staggering number, three quarters are children.

Extreme poverty is a blanket term that involves a lack of decent, dependable access to basic amenities, such as food, clean water, shelter, healthcare and education.

It is estimated that every year 2 million children die from preventable diseases such as diarrhoea and pneumonia because they lack access to basic medical treatment. Since Oxfam published its report on battling poverty by addressing extreme inequality just under a month ago, more than half a million people have died of hunger or hunger-related causes alone. Malnutrition—and its associated effects—is the number 1 cause of death in the developing world, killing more than HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.

Studies by the Pew Research Center found that deepening income inequality is considered to be the main threat to economic and social progress. Tackling it is therefore a top priority when working towards poverty reduction.

The trends show that not only is nations' wealth increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few, and therefore away from the wider public, but a great majority of the income and wealth is held by just the top 0.1 per cent of the population.

As Ken Macintosh said, while poverty impacts the lives of half the global population, the number of billionaires in the world has grown to more than 1,600—an increase of 200 since last year, according to Forbes.

The effects of income inequality on a population are well known. Countries with large and widening income inequality have a higher incidence of drug use, crime, mental illness and infant mortality and a lower life expectancy overall.

Extreme wealth inequality is also linked to a limiting of women's ability to succeed economically and the repression of their social rights—those are already major problems in countries with high poverty rates.

The most devastating aspect of economic inequality is that it is a self-perpetuating problem. As long as those in control have the ability to influence or set policy, the poor are prevented from lifting themselves above the poverty threshold. At that point, other nations must intercede on behalf of the oppressed. I welcome the contribution of the UK Government to poverty reduction overseas.

A step that the Scottish Government can take to address the issue would be to continue to work to end severe economic inequality in Scotland and, where possible, in other nations. That must involve both wealth creation and redistributive policies. We know that there is an imbalance in earning potential, which, in the interests of fairness, our Government must work to address.

According to data collected by the Equality Trust, between 2011-12 and the following year, the annual income of the poorest 10 per cent in Scotland—more than half a million people—dropped by 8 per cent, while income of the wealthiest 10 per cent increased by 3 per cent. The poor are getting poorer while the rich are getting richer. Within the UK, the richest 10 per cent earn 27 times more than the poorest 10 per cent. As we know, tens of thousands of people in Scotland now rely on food banks. Are we to believe, unequivocally, that the wealthiest members of our society are really working 27 times harder than the poorest?

It is this Government's responsibility to all the people of Scotland—particularly the majority—to ensure that our employment practices and the tax and economic policies over which we have control promote fairness.

As Scotland continues to increase its participation globally, working to reduce world poverty by reducing economic inequality will improve the future outlook of millions of people who are currently stuck in a state of extreme poverty.

Extreme wealth comes at the price of extreme poverty and to end one requires us to end the other. I sincerely hope that this Government will take on board the recommendations that are outlined in the Oxfam report and that it will, to the best of its ability, continue to develop policies to combat poverty both in Scotland and overseas.

17:38

**Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab):** It is my pleasure to speak on the Oxfam report "Even it up: Time to end extreme inequality". I thank Ken Macintosh for securing the debate.

Oxfam estimates that the richest 85 people in the world own as much as the poorer half of the world population. That frightening figure dramatically illustrates extreme inequality in the world.

Economic inequality prevents those who live in poverty from meeting their basic needs, such as access to food, clean water, education and healthcare, and means that they lack opportunities to improve their quality of life.

The report looks at increases in inequality in countries and states that

"the poorest struggle to get by while their neighbours prosper."

Across the world, seven out of 10 people live in countries where the gap between rich and poor is greater than it was 30 years ago. I accept that some people will earn more than others, but economic inequality means that people do not have equality of opportunity and a fair chance to have a better future. It is vital that the poorer in society have enough. The Oxfam report highlights that in 2014

"the UK top 100 executives took home 131 times as much as their average employee, yet only 15 of these companies have committed to pay their employees a living wage."

That is quite shameful.

One way in which we could tackle economic inequality in Scotland, and specifically in Glasgow, would be to address the high unemployment rates in many ethnic minority communities. We should act to find solutions to facilitate more employment



and, if necessary, more education for such citizens. The 2011 census showed that, in Scotland, the unemployment rate for Africans was 22 per cent; the rate for Caribbeans was 16 per cent; and the rate for Asians was 11 per cent. In comparison, the rate for the indigenous white community was 8 per cent. The numbers are higher in Glasgow constituencies, with an unemployment rate for the African community, for example, of 32 per cent, whereas the rate for the indigenous white population is 11 per cent. That is a difference of 21 per cent, which is a horrendous figure. We talk about what is happening overseas, but we should talk about what is happening in Scotland.

Employment inequality here is facilitated by similar factors: a lack of education and insufficient housing and healthcare. That is not the equality that the Scottish Government aspires to—or is it?

Earlier this afternoon, I asked the Minister for Housing and Welfare a question on housing and on overcrowding in particular, and she suggested that everything is reasonable and going okay. I suggested that she visit my constituency to see what poverty and overcrowding actually mean for some families—to see what it means to be in a family where the children have no opportunity to do their homework or have a social or private life. Those are the families who suffer injustice and who lack opportunities. I again invite the minister to visit some of those families to get first-hand experience of what it is really like on the ground, so that we can try to reverse the trends that people in Glasgow are facing today.

17:42

**The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):** I, too, congratulate Ken Macintosh on bringing this debate to the chamber. It was either Ken Macintosh or another member who said that it was appropriate to have the debate on the day that the Scottish Government laid out its programme for government because central to that programme is reducing inequalities in Scotland.

Ken Macintosh, Hugh Henry, Kenneth Gibson and Alex Johnstone mentioned the global economic inequalities, and I concur with a lot of what was said on that. Scotland and the Scottish Government will always play their part in trying to tackle global inequalities as we see them. We know that the more developed that countries become, the wider the gap between the rich and the poor. At the moment, the UK sits at 28th among the 34 OECD countries on inequality, which is something that we should all reflect on.

Some things are improving here in Scotland. For the first time since records began, full-time weekly

earnings in Scotland are now higher than those in the UK. Real earnings have risen in Scotland and we have had the first annual increase since 2008, which compares with a real-terms reduction across the UK. I am not hailing that situation, because I understand that there are inequalities across the UK. Since 1999, the Scottish gender pay gap has decreased by 7.7 percentage points, but I accept that it is still far too big.

We have heard a lot about the living wage. The number of living wage accredited employers in Scotland has tripled since April this year thanks to the Poverty Alliance's living wage accreditation initiative, which has been funded by the Scottish Government. We fully support the living wage campaign. We advocate the living wage, and we recognise the real benefits that it can bring to the lives of lower paid workers in Scotland.

As the economy grows, more and more women are moving into work. This month's labour market statistics show that the women's employment rate is now 71.2 per cent, which is 10 percentage points higher than when records began in 1992. As many members said, work should be a route out of poverty, but we know that women predominate in low-paid jobs and they are more at risk than men of being in in-work poverty. Part-time working by women has increased by 97,000 since 2008 and underemployment rates for women continue to rise despite two years of economic growth. Women should be benefiting from the levels of growth that we are seeing, but it is clear that many are not.

The Scottish Government is taking action. Through the implementation of our women's enterprise framework, more women are being supported to start up their own businesses. That can be a flexible employment solution for women who have caring responsibilities. The increase in early learning and childcare eligibility to 600 hours for three and four-year-olds and two-year-olds in workless households will also help more women to enter and sustain work, and we are growing the capacity to increase that provision to 30 hours a week should we be elected again in 2016. That falls short of what we said in the white paper that we could do with independence, but we are doing what we can with the powers that we have. We have increased eligibility to 600 hours, and that will almost double in future as we increase our capacity to cope.

In helping women to enter work, we have to address the challenges of occupational segregation and equal pay that impact on so many women. Otherwise, there is a risk that women will remain in poverty. By implementing the recommendations of the commission for developing Scotland's young workforce, we hope to see a real shift in the gender balance in skills

training and further and higher education. We want more young women to enter non-traditional roles, particularly in science, technology, engineering and maths related careers. From the next academic year, colleges and universities will be required to report on work to tackle gender imbalance in courses. However, career options and choices are often made early, so it is key that we ensure that young people receive unbiased advice from an early age. Teachers and parents have a crucial role to play in that.

Earlier today, the First Minister published the programme for government, continuing the Government's commitment to our central purpose of sustainable economic growth and setting out three key priorities: to provide fair work, for example through our commitment to pay the living wage and increase funding to the Poverty Alliance to grow the number of accredited living wage employers; to focus on school attainment and university access for those from disadvantaged backgrounds; and to support increased childcare and free school meals. All of those priorities are designed to reduce intergenerational poverty and tackle inequality.

The programme for government emphasises our commitment to empower communities by handing decisions on key issues over to them and making government open and accessible through public participation in the decisions that we make that affect them.

We have committed to poverty proofing all our new policies and legislation through the use of poverty impact assessments whenever we make a change. In addition, as the First Minister said today, the Scottish Government will appoint an independent adviser on poverty and inequality to hold public events with the First Minister, to raise awareness of the realities of living in poverty, to make recommendations to the Government on how collectively we should respond and, importantly, to hold the Government to account for its performance.

With all of that, however, we know that poverty levels are increasing in Scotland because of UK Government policies, and we are aware that £6 billion could come out of the Scottish economy by 2015-16. Jackie Baillie commented on the Smith commission. Earlier, when she was asked a question, she said that we should wait until the commission reports, so I will give her the same answer to the question that she put to me about it.

The Smith commission will report tomorrow. The Scottish Government has made its case for full powers over tax and welfare to help us to tackle the scourge of poverty and inequality, and that case is backed by many of our stakeholders. The Scottish Government is committed to working collaboratively with people and communities

throughout Scotland to bring an end to inequalities and, to use the words of Oxfam's report, to "even it up". That is what we intend to do through our programme for government.

*Meeting closed at 17:50.*

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