



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 27 November 2014

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 27 November 2014

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

General Question Time

Antisocial Behaviour (Quad Bikes)

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

To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to deal with antisocial behaviour on quad bikes. (S4O-03751)

The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs (Paul Wheelhouse): Section 126 of the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004 provides powers for the police to seize vehicles being used in a manner that causes alarm, distress or annoyance. The Scottish Government supports the work of Police Scotland in dealing with vehicles that are being used antisocially. Local community policing teams are ideally placed to engage with members of the community to identify areas of concern that can be prioritised for proactive patrols to prevent repeat instances of such behaviour and to deal with any offences.

Claire Baker: Antisocial behaviour happens on farmland and grass land and is increasingly a nuisance and threat on pavements and urban streets. I recognise that the minister is new to his post and I wish him well in his new role. Can he say whether the Government is open to the option of strengthening fixed-penalty notices to deal with the problem and to give the police more tools in their box?

Paul Wheelhouse: I would be happy to discuss those issues with Claire Baker, especially if she has any ideas to propose that would tackle the issue. It is worth stressing that we have specific offences that can cover off-road activities as well as those on the road, depending on which section of the Road Traffic Act 1988 applies. The police can proactively patrol areas to clamp down on antisocial behaviour. I am willing to listen to any positive ideas from members and am happy to meet Claire Baker on that basis.

Rural Crime

2. Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making on tackling rural crime. (S4O-03752)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson): Tackling crime, including rural crime, is an operational matter for Police Scotland. Local

policing remains the bedrock of Police Scotland's activities and has been strengthened under a single service. All 14 divisions have a designated local commander to work with communities, councils and other partners to shape and deliver local policing.

The Scottish Government funds Neighbourhood Watch Scotland and its well-respected alert system, which allows individuals, businesses, Police Scotland and other agencies to share general safety messages and alerts. Farm watch and rural watch areas across Scotland enable specific alerts about thefts, appeals for information and work being carried out on and around farms to be shared quickly and easily.

Alex Fergusson: I congratulate Michael Matheson on his elevation to the Cabinet.

Despite the figures that have been given, rural crime cost Scotland almost £2 million in 2013. Ayrshire seemed to be a particular hotspot and the cost to its local economy was almost £0.5 million in that same year. Last weekend, goods worth £6,000 were stolen from a farm near Hawick. Oil, tools, quad bikes, machinery and garden equipment seem to be the top items that are targeted.

Greater geographical distances and a lower concentration of police resources in rural areas make tackling crime more difficult. On top of the steps that the cabinet secretary has detailed, what more might the Government do to ensure that the barriers of rurality are overcome?

Michael Matheson: I appreciate that some aspects of policing in rural areas create additional challenges. The data that we received this week show that crime in Scotland is at a 40-year low, but in some areas increases in particular types of crime—the very types of crime to which the member refers—can be identified. In the discussions that I had yesterday with Vic Emery, the chair of the Scottish Police Authority, I was keen to explore how local policing strategies will reflect those data. I want to make sure that all 32 of our local authority policing plans and local scrutiny committees have a role to play in considering that data so that the plans reflect the rural dimension and the needs of that community.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): While local policing plans are all well and good, concerns have been expressed that there are insufficient specialist wildlife crime officers in Scotland. Will the cabinet secretary raise those concerns in his conversations with the SPA and Police Scotland, particularly the chief constable?

Michael Matheson: Tackling wildlife crime is very important, and Police Scotland has a team of officers who specialise in that particular field. If

Christine Grahame has any specific suggestions that she feels the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland should consider, I would be happy to consider them too.

It is important that we progress a range of measures that can help to reduce wildlife crime, on top of the measures that are already in place, to build on the work that has been done in recent years. I am happy to hear from Christine Grahame any suggestions that she thinks could assist in tackling wildlife crime much more effectively, and to consider how the Scottish Police Authority might take those forward.

Immigration (Economic Benefits)

3. John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):

To ask the Scottish Government what the economic benefits of immigration from the European Union are to Scotland. (S4O-03753)

The Minister for Europe and International Development (Humza Yousaf): The Scottish Government recognises the importance of migration for healthy population growth and sustainable economic growth. European Union migrants play a valuable role in our economic prosperity and will always be welcome in Scotland. A University College London report that was published earlier this month made the value of EU migrants clear. It found that, between 2001 and 2011, recent European migrants made a net contribution of £20 billion to the United Kingdom economy.

John Mason: I thank the minister very much for that response. My understanding is that certain sectors in our economy are very dependent on folk from overseas, including those from European Union countries. Will he join me in deploring the anti-immigration hysteria that has been encouraged by some political parties?

Humza Yousaf: John Mason makes a very valid point. Where concerns and tensions exist we have a duty to address them, but politicians must not be tempted to use inflammatory rhetoric in the pursuit of cheap political gain.

I felt disheartened and angry when I read the comments from the UK Secretary of State for Defence, Michael Fallon, about towns and cities being “swamped” and “under siege” from immigrants. We must condemn such distasteful language, which is, frankly, straight out of the British National Party’s handbook.

Immigrants contribute culturally, socially and even—thank god for it—through their cuisine, so EU migrants are very, very welcome in Scotland.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I fully recognise the many benefits that immigration, especially from eastern Europe, has

brought to Scotland and to the tourism industry in particular, not least in my region of the Highlands and Islands. However, does the minister agree that it is paramount that we ensure that we have a fair immigration system that favours those who want to come here to work hard and contribute to Scottish society rather than those who wish only to reap benefits?

Humza Yousaf: I do not see anybody advocating, and I have never come across a politician or political party that advocates, illegal immigration. We all want to clamp down on those who choose to abuse the system, and that is absolutely correct. However, we must understand that being part of the European Union means that, for every person who comes from eastern Europe to work in Scotland, there is a Scot who has a retirement villa on the Costa del Sol. It is a two-way process, which we enjoy.

I agree with Jamie McGrigor that there are vital sectors that need immigration, and the UK Government’s immigration rules are completely counterproductive in filling those skills gaps. That is why the Institute of Directors, the Scottish Trades Union Congress and Universities Scotland have requested a measure of devolution on immigration.

We will chew over what the Smith commission has said on the matter as one of the issues for consideration. I am sure that Jamie McGrigor, given the geography that he represents, will wish to make further representation on the matter too.

Non-domestic Rates

4. Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has in respect of the non-domestic rates system. (S4O-03754)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy (John Swinney): This Government remains committed to maintaining the most competitive tax environment that is available anywhere in the United Kingdom.

Gavin Brown: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer, and congratulate him on his new role as Deputy First Minister for Scotland.

Does the Scottish Government support the continuation of the below-inflation cap on increases for non-domestic rates?

John Swinney: First, I thank Gavin Brown for his kind remarks, which are greatly appreciated.

On our approach on business rates, the Government remains committed to two things: first, to uprating business rates in line with the September retail prices index figures, which represent the normal metrics by which that process is undertaken; and, secondly, to ensuring

that business rates poundage in Scotland is equal to that south of the border. That will be the Government's approach in any future decisions.

Integration of Health and Social Care

5. Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):

To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making with the integration of health and social care. (S4O-03755)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 came into effect in April 2014. A full public consultation on the regulations and orders that support the act has been conducted. The regulations and orders have now been laid with the Scottish Parliament and are due to come into effect in December. Partnerships are currently developing their integration schemes, which must be submitted to the Scottish Government by 1 April 2015.

Kevin Stewart: We have seen a dramatic rise in delayed discharge in Aberdeen since the inception of the arm's-length company Bon Accord Care. When the Scottish National Party was in power in Aberdeen, delayed discharge was at zero. Does the cabinet secretary foresee any problems with the integration of health and social care in areas where councils have passed the delivery of care to arm's-length companies?

Shona Robison: First, the member can be assured that addressing delayed discharge is absolutely my top priority going forward. It is obviously up to local partnerships to take a collective view on the provision of health and social care services in their area. I am sure that the member will be aware that one of the key problems in Aberdeen with regard to delayed discharge is the challenge of recruitment and retention of staff to deliver the care. Aberdeen is an area of low unemployment with a strong economy, so there are significant challenges in attracting employees to the care sector there.

The member might be aware of the discussions between NHS Grampian and Aberdeen City Council, which are working together to identify land assets that could be developed as low-cost, affordable housing to help with the on-going recruitment problem in the area. I am very keen that both organisations pursue that, and I have asked to be kept up to date on that regularly.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): The integration of health and social care is vital for dealing with delayed discharge but, given the crisis in local government finance, where on earth are councils expected to find the match funding demanded in the First Minister's statement yesterday?

Shona Robison: Of course, local government has received a higher percentage share of funding

than happened under the previous Labour Administration. What I can say to Neil Findlay is that the critical element is the integration of health and social care, because for too long the national health service and local government have budgeted and worked in two separate silos. In-between those silos in many cases are the vulnerable elderly people who are not getting the quality of service that they require. Integration of the two significant resources of health and local government is critical for addressing that.

I point out to Neil Findlay that the joint resource that health and social care will have from April next year will amount to £7.6 billion, which is a huge resource. However, what is important is how that resource is spent. I am absolutely clear that I expect both organisations to make the improvements that require to be made.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): The cabinet secretary will be aware of the delayed discharge problems in NHS Ayrshire and Arran and of the shortage of available beds there at the moment, with the winter bugs not having kicked in yet. Does she share my concern about the situation in Ayrshire and will she raise the problem as a matter of urgency with NHS Ayrshire and Arran with a view to finding a solution?

Shona Robison: All the health boards are under no illusion about the priority that we give to tackling delayed discharge, but of course the solution to that problem does not lie only within the health service. It is about the health service working with local government to address the problem. The partnerships have been working very hard to address some of the challenges from winter pressures, which we know are short-term but big challenges.

The plans that are beginning to be put in place for the partnerships from April are critical. We need to redesign many of the services. We need to avoid people turning up to hospital when they do not need to be there, and we need to have far better alternatives, particularly for vulnerable elderly people, for many of whom an acute hospital setting is not the right one.

I give the member an absolute assurance that this is my top priority going forward, and I would be very happy to keep him up to date on developments in his area.

Commonwealth Games Legacy

6. James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):

To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its legacy plans from the Commonwealth games. (S4O-03756)

The Minister for Sport and Health Improvement (Jamie Hepburn): The Scottish Government and our legacy partners are working

to capitalise on the opportunities that were brought about by our hosting the best Commonwealth games ever. In the days following the games, £6 million was announced towards Scotland's first ever dedicated parasports centre, as well as a further £2 million to build on and deepen the legacy, which is already delivering benefits nationwide.

A further £50 million will be invested by sportscotland in the active schools programme between 2015 and 2019, significantly increasing opportunities for children to participate in sport across the whole of Scotland.

More recently, on Tuesday, the opening at Grangemouth stadium of a new track that uses the track from Hampden park means that young people can now train on the track that was used by Eilidh Child and Usain Bolt, which will inspire the next generation of champions.

A full economic assessment of the games will be published in the spring, but recent analysis points to £282 million being spent by visitors to the games. A post-games legacy evaluation report that assesses progress towards legacy outcomes will be published in July 2015.

James Dornan: I thank the minister for that comprehensive response and congratulate him on his well-deserved new position as a minister.

My Glasgow Cathcart constituency has a number of interesting legacy projects, including a plan to turn the disused St Martin's church in Castlemilk into the Cathkin Braes mountain bike and activity centre. Will the minister come and visit the site of the proposed centre and meet those who are involved in the proposal? What assistance is the Government giving or intending to give to local and community projects to assist them with such legacy building in local communities?

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Briefly, minister.

Jamie Hepburn: I thank Mr Dornan for his welcome.

Having delivered the most successful Commonwealth games ever, we are determined to secure its legacy, and communities across Scotland are interested in playing their part. I encourage communities across Scotland to visit the legacy website to find out more about the on-going sources of support such as the legacy 2014 active places fund and the legacy 2014 sustainable sport for communities fund.

I am delighted to learn of the efforts in Glasgow Cathcart. I wish those who are involved well, and of course I will be happy to visit with Mr Dornan.

Energy Storage Technologies

7. Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its policy is on the development of energy storage technologies. (S4O-03757)

The Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): Energy storage can help us to make the most effective use of Scotland's energy resources. Pumped hydro plays a vital role in meeting United Kingdom energy security, which is why our third national planning framework identified new and expanded pumped storage facilities as a national development, and why we are seeking to work with the UK Government and industry to consider how pumped storage can be supported in the future.

Joan McAlpine: The Institution of Mechanical Engineers estimates that 3.4GW of energy storage will be needed in Scotland by 2020, but current storage capacity is only a little over 0.75GW and is largely pumped storage. A number of companies are developing technologies such as liquid air battery storage, and the former nuclear power station at Chapelcross is being suggested as a possible site for such developments. Does the Government agree that such projects should be encouraged, particularly as a way to make the most of Scotland's renewable energy resources?

Fergus Ewing: Yes, I do. I met the member and one of the individuals involved regarding the Chapelcross proposal, and since then Scottish Enterprise has had a follow-up meeting on 17 November.

On the general point, there is over 2GW of potential pump storage capacity at present, but what there is not is a route to make that happen under electricity market reform. The EMR proposals are entirely devoid of any mechanism to bring forward pump storage. That is entirely wrong, and it is why I support the proposal by Scottish Renewables that a Scottish and UK Government intergovernmental panel should be established. I put that proposal to the UK energy minister on 13 November and a reply is awaited.

The Presiding Officer: That ends general questions. Before we move on to the next item of business, members will wish to join me in welcoming to the gallery His Excellency Mr Péter Szabadhegy, ambassador of Hungary. [Applause.]

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Engagements

1. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what engagements she has planned for the rest of the day. (S4F-02424)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Later this afternoon I will travel to the Isle of Man for tomorrow's meeting of the British-Irish Council.

Jackie Baillie: I wish the First Minister a safe journey.

I am sure that the whole chamber will welcome the all-party consensus on the Smith commission. I thank Lord Smith and all the party commissioners for their hard work in reaching agreement. They have delivered a powerhouse Parliament; a promise made before the referendum is now a promise delivered—and more. Does the First Minister agree that this is the most substantial transfer of powers to Scotland since a Labour Government delivered the Scottish Parliament itself in 1999?

The First Minister: On a note of consensus, I, too, pay tribute to Lord Smith, who is to be commended. I spoke to him this morning and thanked him, on behalf of the Scottish Government, for his role in this process.

I also welcome the new powers that are recommended. I want this Parliament to be as powerful as possible, so I welcome any new powers that come to it. The powers now have to be delivered. Some of what is recommended—devolution of air passenger duty, for example—was first recommended by the Calman commission, but the Westminster parties decided to shelve that. We need to ensure that the powers are delivered. If some of the sabre rattling that we are hearing on English votes for English laws is anything to go by, that might not be as smooth as we think.

Overall, the package is disappointing.

Members: Aw!

The First Minister: Labour should perhaps listen to what I am about to say. I heard Grahame Smith of the Scottish Trades Union Congress on Radio Clyde a little while ago. He said that the package is underwhelming and that it falls short of the vow.

Seventy per cent of our taxes will continue to be set at Westminster. Eighty-five per cent of social security spending will be controlled at Westminster. This Parliament will be responsible for less than half of the money that we will spend.

It is not so much the home rule that was promised; in so many respects it is continued Westminster rule.

Jackie Baillie: That consensus lasted less than a minute.

Any politician not electrified by the possibilities that these new powers present for us—

Members: Oh!

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Order!

Jackie Baillie: —to change the lives of the most vulnerable people in our country needs to ask themselves whether they are in the right job.

The Smith proposals will see huge devolution of power to this Parliament: control over £20 billion of taxation and £3 billion of welfare and the power to create new benefits. The Parliament will have substantial control over income tax, borrowing, air passenger duty, the Crown Estate, the work programme, work choices, a long list of benefits and much more.

It is time to talk about what we would do with those powers; on that I agree with the First Minister. One of the key economic powers that are coming to this Parliament is the power over income tax. Will the First Minister confirm whether she supports Labour's proposal to raise the top rate of income tax to 50p?

The First Minister: On the last point, if I was taking that decision now, yes, I would raise the top rate of income tax to 50p. Scottish National Party MPs voted in the House of Commons against the reduction of the top rate of tax; Labour MPs did not turn up to vote. That is the reality.

The question that Labour should ask itself is how has it managed to find itself on the same side as the Tories and on the wrong side of the STUC. What has gone wrong with Labour?

I prefer to look at the views of those organisations that represent real people—so let us look at some of them. One Parent Families Scotland has said that it is “disappointed”; the STUC has said that it is “underwhelmed” and that there is

“not enough to empower the Scottish Parliament to tackle inequality”;

Engender Scotland is “disappointed”; and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, too, is “disappointed”. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order!

The First Minister: Finally, I say to Jackie Baillie that what would have electrified me and this Parliament would have been control of job-creating powers, control of the minimum wage, control of the income tax personal allowance,

control of national insurance contributions, control of universal credit and tax credits and control of the kind of things that create jobs and help us tackle inequality. Those are the kind of powers that any self-respecting Labour Party would be arguing for instead of siding with the Tories. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: One moment, Ms Baillie. There is too much shouting across the chamber. Please allow Ms Baillie to speak and the First Minister to answer.

Jackie Baillie: Before the ink has dried, the Scottish National Party is already unpicking the consensus. I listed in my previous question a range of work-creation powers that will help put Scotland back to work, but the First Minister clearly was not listening.

The Parliament will also be responsible for £3 billion of welfare—and, yes, I am excited about the possibility of creating new benefits that will help the most vulnerable in the country. We will also have power over disability living allowance, personal independence payments, attendance allowance, carers allowance, severe disability allowance, sure start grants, cold weather payments, winter fuel payments and many more besides. These are serious and substantial powers.

The First Minister has been in the job for a week, and she has been handed the biggest transfer of powers since the Parliament was established in 1999. Frankly, I would be excited by that, but today John Swinney, her Deputy First Minister, has criticised it and Stewart Hosie, her deputy leader, has done likewise. All she can talk about is what she has not got and what she cannot do. Surely she should be focusing on what she can do with these new powers to change the lives of people across Scotland.

The First Minister needs to understand the mood of the country—

Members: Oh! *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order! Let us hear Ms Baillie.

Jackie Baillie: The First Minister has the opportunity to transform lives. What particular powers in the Smith commission report will she use to transform the country?

The First Minister: I said at the outset of my first answer to Jackie Baillie that I welcome all new powers that come to this Parliament. Every power that is recommended for devolution to this Parliament in the Smith commission report I warmly welcome, and when we get our hands on those powers we will use them all to better serve the people of Scotland.

Jackie Baillie might find it easy to dismiss my view—that is fair enough; that is politics—but I caution her against dismissing the view of the STUC, the SCVO and organisations such as Engender Scotland. Those organisations speak for real people across this country, and they are saying that this package of powers falls short of what is needed to create jobs and more equality in our country.

If the proposals are implemented, we will get control over £2.5 billion of welfare spend. However, that is £2.5 billion out of £17.5 billion. I do not want to have the power just to top up Tory cuts to welfare or to put a sticking plaster on a broken system. I want to have the power in our hands to create a better system, to lift people out of poverty and to get our economy growing. That is the kind of powerhouse Parliament I want, but sadly that is not the one that will be delivered.

Jackie Baillie: If that was a warm welcome from the First Minister, I would hate to get on her wrong side.

We cannot face two ways. Just two weeks ago, the First Minister told her conference that

“the promise of more powers will evaporate, the vow will be broken.” *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order!

Jackie Baillie: It might not be comfortable for SNP members to hear this, but the vow that was made to the people of Scotland has been delivered before St Andrew's day, ahead of schedule.

I genuinely thank the Scottish National Party for its help in delivering the vow, because, working together, we have delivered the biggest transfer of powers to the Scottish Parliament since its inception. Promise made; promise delivered—£20 billion of taxation and £3 billion of welfare. Further, I encourage the First Minister to read the small print, because she now has the power to create her own benefits, and I look forward to hearing what they will be.

The First Minister promised that the referendum was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We have kept our promise to the people of Scotland. Will the First Minister now keep hers?

The First Minister: If Jackie Baillie says often enough that this is the biggest transfer of power ever, she might manage to convince herself but, unfortunately, she will not convince anybody else.

I quote, again, Grahame Smith of the STUC, who said that the proposals fall short of the vow. I thought that Labour was on the side of the trade unions. It turns out that Labour is just on the side of the Tories.

It is not me who Labour has to worry about being on the wrong side of. Increasingly, Labour has to worry about being on the wrong side of the people of Scotland. When it comes to the general election in May, I think that it will find out just how much on the wrong side of the people of Scotland it has become.

Prime Minister (Meetings)

2. Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con): To ask the First Minister when she will next meet the Prime Minister. (S4F-02421)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): No plans in the near future.

Ruth Davidson: Well, Nicola Sturgeon's consensus politics seems to go only so far because, this morning, she was tweeting lines that she did not like from the Smith report before the commissioners had even sat down. Personally, I think that this is a great day for Scotland. This pocket-money Parliament is finally going to have to look taxpayers in the eye.

The First Minister needs to check the figures that she gave today. This morning, I asked the Scottish Parliament information centre to do just that, and it confirmed that nearly 60 per cent of all money that is spent by the Scottish Government will now have to be raised by the Scottish Government.

We all know that anything short of independence would not satisfy the First Minister, but she should remember that independence was the one option that the people of Scotland roundly rejected. This is a big, bold package of measures, so why can the First Minister not give it the warmer welcome that it clearly deserves?

The First Minister: I am happy to trade figures with Ruth Davidson but, even taking account of the assignation of VAT revenues—which I welcome, although I would rather be in control of tax than have tax revenues assigned—we will be responsible for raising less than half the money that we spend: 48 per cent.

However, even if Ruth Davidson is correct, is that the limit of her ambition—that we should control 60 per cent of the spending of this Government? For goodness' sake, how on earth can anyone describe that as a responsible, powerhouse Scottish Parliament?

I have already welcomed the powers that are being transferred. Nobody on this side of the chamber will ever do anything other than welcome powers coming to this Parliament, because the difference between us and some other parties in this chamber is that we want to have maximum powers so that we can do the maximum amount of good for the people of Scotland.

Let me read to Ruth Davidson from paragraphs 80 to 85 of the Smith commission report:

"All aspects of National Insurance Contributions will remain reserved ... All aspects of Inheritance Tax and Capital Gains Tax will remain reserved ... All aspects of Corporation Tax will remain reserved ... All aspects of the taxation of oil and gas receipts will remain reserved ... All other aspects of VAT will remain reserved."

There are sections of the report that talk more about what is being kept in the hands of Westminster than about what is coming to this Parliament.

At the end of the day, we can argue in this Parliament about what we think is good and what we think is bad about the report, but the ultimate verdict will be for the Scottish people. I think that, in the general election in May, the Scottish people have an opportunity to say to the Westminster parties, quite clearly, "Thanks very much for your opening offer; now we want to up it."

Ruth Davidson: Drowning not waving, I think—the First Minister is purposefully missing the scope of what is proposed today. Let me put her grievance in a bit of context for her. Professors David Bell and David Eiser at the University of Stirling have looked at how much devolution exists in countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. They have even plotted it on a handy graph. Today's announcement means that Scotland will have more devolved tax and spending than exists in nearly every other country in the developed world. Arguably, Scotland is behind only Canada, and we are now set to overtake Belgium, Norway, Italy, Finland, Iceland, France, Sweden and even the fully federal countries of America and Germany. Holyrood will become one of the most powerful devolved Parliaments on the planet.

With that in mind, and in the spirit of the new consensus, will the First Minister agree that these new powers can deliver for everyone in Scotland, no matter which way they voted in the referendum?

The First Minister: In the spirit of consensus that has been offered, I repeat that we will use all the new powers that come to the Parliament in the best way possible to improve the lives of the people of Scotland. That is what we do with the existing powers that we have and it is what we will do with any additional powers that we get.

I guess that Ruth Davidson and I will just have to have an honest disagreement. She may believe—she is entitled to believe this—that a situation that leaves 70 per cent of our tax being set at Westminster and 85 per cent of our social security spending being controlled at Westminster represents what was described in the referendum campaign as genuine home rule, but I am afraid

that I take a different view, and I think that the people of Scotland will take a different view of it as well.

I appreciate that the quotations from respected organisations—the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Scottish Trades Union Congress—that I gave in response to Jackie Baillie might not cut much ice with the Tories, so I will quote an organisation that might cut more. The Institute of Economic Affairs has stated:

“The Smith proposals are a dangerous half-way house, failing to bring about the benefits that much fuller devolution would have brought to Scotland.”

I say again—I cannot say this any clearer—that I welcome what is being recommended. I hope that, unlike the situation with Calman, the Westminster parties will now deliver all those proposals. However, I think that the verdict of the Scottish people will be that it is not enough—that it does not live up to the vow and it does not deliver the modern form of home rule, the near-federalism solution—and I think that, in the general election, they will choose to make that verdict very clear.

Cabinet (Meetings)

3. Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):

To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Cabinet. (S4F-02419)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): A range of issues to carry forward the Government’s programme for Scotland will be discussed

Willie Rennie: So much for the new beginning from the new First Minister. For the first time ever, all Scotland’s political parties have reached a powerful constitutional agreement. Three hours later, she is sitting there rubbing the agreement that she has just signed. The agreement means that we will have a new £3 billion Scottish welfare system and the Scottish Parliament will get the financial muscle that it needs with taxes worth £20 billion. Cannot the First Minister be a little bit more positive?

The First Minister: Let me say again, for the benefit of Willie Rennie, what I said to both Jackie Baillie and Ruth Davidson. I welcome all the powers that have been recommended for devolution to the Scottish Parliament. I think that that devolution represents a degree of progress.

However, I am not going to stand here and pretend. My idea of consensus—I say this seriously to Willie Rennie—is not my somehow refusing to stand up for what I think is right on behalf of the Scottish people. I do not think that the proposals go far enough because—in this I am in agreement with the Scottish Trades Union Congress—I do not think that the powers that

have been recommended will give me and my Government the ability that we need in order to get our economy growing faster and to tackle the inequality that is a scar on the face of our nation.

Yes—we will take the new powers and use them in the best way we can, but we will keep arguing for the real powers that the Parliament needs in order to do the best possible job for the people of Scotland.

Willie Rennie: The First Minister cannot keep on rerunning the referendum. She must accept that the report recommends more powers on income tax and VAT; powers on a new welfare system, with disability living allowance, attendance allowance and carers allowance and the power to create new benefits; powers on the work programme; powers on housing benefits; control over tribunals, railways and pay-day lenders; and powers on votes at 16. The list goes on. Will the First Minister give unqualified support for what will be a massive transfer of power, or is she always going to say that that will never be enough?

The First Minister: First, if the Westminster parties carry on as they are, it will not be me who forces the rerunning of the referendum, but them.

On a genuine attempt to find some consensus—I hope that Willie Rennie will agree with me on this—I welcome the fact that disability living allowance and personal independence payments are recommended for devolution to this Parliament. Will he join me in asking for those powers to be transferred before the Tory-Liberal coalition imposes a 20 per cent cut on the budget? Yes or no?

Willie Rennie: The luxury of having three supplementary questions—[*Interruption.*]

Members: Answer the question!

The Presiding Officer: Order!

Willie Rennie: The First Minister seeks consensus across the chamber. She needs to recognise that this is a big package. Of course we will work together across the chamber, but she needs to start off by recognising what we have achieved today. So far, she has absolutely not done that.

The First Minister: I will take that as a no.

There is a serious point to be made here. I warmly welcome the transfer of disability benefits. However, as matters stand, by the time we get those powers the budget for them will have been cut by 20 per cent. If we want genuine consensus across the Parliament—where we can find it—I say genuinely to all parties let us, as a Parliament, ask the Westminster Government to transfer the powers as soon as possible and to do it before the

cut is imposed, so that we can decide the right level of budget to protect our disabled people.

Mental Health Services (Royal College of Nursing Report)

4. Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the Royal College of Nursing report on mental health services. (S4F-02423)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I very much welcome the report, which highlights the importance of mental health services and acknowledges that care in treatment has improved over the past 15 years.

Of course, we can always do more. Earlier this month, we announced an additional £15 million investment over the next three years to improve mental health services. The new funding will be targeted on two main areas: a mental health innovation fund, and boosting staff numbers to address the mental health needs of children and adolescents, and to meet the rising demand for child and adolescent mental health services.

Mark McDonald: I welcome the innovation fund and the additional funding that has been allocated by the Scottish Government. The RCN has stated that pursuing nurse-led services and using advanced nursing practitioners to deliver services that were previously led by doctors could assist in delivering even stronger outcomes for mental health patients.

I am aware of nurse-practitioner-led services in my constituency in the Middlefield healthy hoose, which, although it does not deal directly with mental health services, operates across services that have more traditionally been delivered by general practitioners. Does the First Minister agree that health boards, in using the funding to invest in the appropriate recruitment and training, should examine whether nurse-led services and mental health services could be provided in communities?

The First Minister: I agree that that should be examined. I am a big supporter, from my time as health secretary, of the work of advanced nurse practitioners across a range of specialties in our national health service.

We have seen a substantial increase in the number of mental health nursing staff under this Government, but we should always be looking for ways to improve services further. Mark McDonald has made a very constructive suggestion. I am sure that the health secretary will be happy to discuss that further with him.

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): What is the First Minister's view of the fact that there is only one available child psychiatric bed in

the north and north-east of Scotland, which has created a situation in which young people are being admitted to adult psychiatric wards? Have any young people with mental health problems ever been admitted into a young offenders institution for treatment? Will she agree to undertake a review of the provision of child psychiatric beds?

The First Minister: I am happy to ask the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport to write in more detail to Nanette Milne or to meet her on the serious issue that she has raised. There are occasions on which young people under 18 are admitted to adult wards. Most of them are aged 16 and 17. An adult facility might, in certain circumstances, be judged to be clinically appropriate. Obviously, it is not something that we want to happen.

We have been seeing increases in capacity for young people under 18. For example, work on a new 12-bed in-patient unit to replace the current six-bed unit in Dundee has already commenced on site and it is expected that the new unit will be commissioned in late 2015. That will increase the national bed base from 42 to 48 beds.

The issue is serious and the Government is doing serious work to address it, but I recognise that we need to do more. As I said at the outset of my answer, the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport will be happy to discuss the matter further with Nanette Milne.

Child Literacy

5. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Government will respond to Save the Children's "Read On. Get On." report on child literacy. (S4F-02428)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The Government welcomes the timely launch of the "Read On. Get on." campaign. The campaign complements the work that we are already doing through our literacy action plan, curriculum for excellence and the getting it right for every child approach, plus specific programmes such as play, talk, read and bookbug.

We will now give all that existing good work an even sharper focus by introducing a read, write, count literacy and numeracy campaign aimed at primary 1 to 3 children. There will be a particular focus on improving outcomes for our most deprived communities.

Kezia Dugdale: The report maps the literacy levels of 11-year-olds. Every day of their school lives has been spent under the Scottish National Party Government and the report tells us that 20 per cent of kids from the poorest backgrounds still cannot read well enough. It tells us that progress has been too slow. The call is for the Scottish

Government to ensure that every child leaves school able to read. After seven years in power, is it really too much to ask?

The First Minister: I know Kezia Dugdale, and I genuinely believe that she has an understanding of the complex issues that lie behind the important matter that she raises. I hope that we can find some consensus on it.

I also know that Kezia Dugdale will have listened carefully to my statement yesterday announcing the Government's programme for the next year, in which I specifically mentioned the need to raise attainment in our most disadvantaged areas and in which I focused on literacy and numeracy. In my first answer, I referred again to the new campaign that we are about to launch.

Let us not get into a political point-scoring exercise if we can avoid it. *[Interruption.]* Well, the Labour Party wants consensus until it does not suit it to have consensus. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: On an issue as important as the educational attainment of our young people, we should strive to work together. Therefore, I will happily reach out to Kezia Dugdale, whatever capacity she might find herself in over the coming weeks, and see whether we can find ways to work together on that important issue.

Food Banks

6. Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the Trussell Trust report indicating that the number of people in Scotland visiting food banks has doubled. (S4F-02425)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The numbers in food poverty in Scotland are completely unacceptable and an indictment of the United Kingdom Government's programme of welfare cuts. To be frank, it is shocking that more than 51,000 people visited Trussell Trust food banks between April and September this year and even more shocking that more than 15,000 of them were children.

The Trussell Trust points out that welfare problems account for the highest proportion of those numbers. We are funding 26 projects with more than £500,000 through our emergency food fund. We will continue to do all that we can to tackle the problem, but it underlines the need for the Scottish Parliament to have not only limited powers over welfare but all powers over it.

Stuart McMillan: I am sure that the First Minister will agree that the report should be a wake-up call for all society, bearing in mind the

fact that Scotland and the UK are wealthy countries.

Does the First Minister consider that the failings and, more specifically, delays of welfare reform could have been prevented? That would have ensured that many of our citizens need not have been forced to go to food banks.

Does the First Minister also welcome the support that many of the 42 Scottish Professional Football League football clubs, to which I have written, are giving to their local food banks? That support also aims to remove the stigma among some supporters and the feeling that food banks are not for them, even in times of need.

The First Minister: It is appalling that, in a country as wealthy as Scotland, anybody has to rely on a food bank. Some football clubs are already providing valuable assistance in their local communities and helping the organisations that seek to help others.

I am aware of Stuart McMillan's campaign to encourage SPFL clubs to support their local food banks through collections and awareness raising, and I agree whole-heartedly that football can play a much wider role in our society. Our football clubs are a vital part of our communities, and it is very welcome that so many of them are playing their part in supporting those people who are forced to use food banks by the UK Government's devastating welfare cuts.

Rail Services (Reston and East Linton)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-11550, in the name of Jim Hume, on being one step closer to trains at Reston and East Linton. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes the Scottish Government's agreement in the ScotRail franchise contract to provide a two-hourly service between Edinburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed that will call at Reston and East Linton stations; further welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to having the service operational by December 2016; notes what it considers the socioeconomic benefits that this will undoubtedly bring to the Scottish Borders and East Lothian, a view that was echoed in the 2011 report that was commissioned by Network Rail, *The Value of Station Investment*, which suggested that stations can have a significant impact on the towns and cities that they serve by acting as regional gateways, attracting businesses and helping to stimulate economic growth; further notes that the Scottish Government's document, *Rail 2014 – Public Consultation*, states that "new stations assist with a number of strategic aims such as stimulating sustainable economic growth or encouraging modal shift"; recognises the joint feasibility study launched in December 2013, which recommends that this local service with the reopened stations should be taken forward to the next stage; praises what it considers the tireless work of the local campaigners, Barrie Forrest and Tom Thorburn, and all their volunteer colleagues from the Rail Action Group East of Scotland (RAGES), in driving forward this rail transport vision for south-east Scotland, and notes the collaborative funding bid to the Scottish Stations Fund by Scottish Borders Council, East Lothian Council and the South East Scotland Regional Transport Partnership.

12:31

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): I am delighted to host this members' business debate, which I am even more delighted to say marks a key moment in the long-running campaign to bring trains to Reston and East Linton. Over the years, the campaign to get rail services to Reston and East Linton has rightly received widespread support from residents and community councils. It has attracted cross-party support from MSPs and has been supported across boundaries by East Lothian Council and Scottish Borders Council. Such is the social and economic case for the reinstatement of rail services at Reston that, more recently, Scottish Borders Council increased its financial commitment to the project to £1.28 million.

The tenacity of the members of the rail action group east of Scotland—or RAGES, as we all know it—is immense. Without a shadow of a doubt, their sheer hard work, determination and savvy campaigning have kept the issue in the

spotlight across changing Holyrood and council administrations since the group was set up back in 1999. The chairman of RAGES, Tom Thorburn, its vice-chairman, Barrie Forrest, its secretary, Russell Darling, and all its committee members have campaigned tirelessly to keep rail services for Reston and East Linton on the agenda. That hard work is paying off.

The RAGES team is an exemplar of community campaigning, and I am pleased to say that we are in the presence of that campaigning tour de force, as some of the RAGES team are in the public gallery. I hope that the debate lives up to their expectations, and I am sure that my MSP colleagues will join me in welcoming them to the Scottish Parliament.

To provide rail services for communities across coastal Berwickshire and rural East Lothian is a historic achievement, and I welcomed the news from Keith Brown in his previous post as transport minister that a two-hourly service had been agreed in the ScotRail franchise and that trains would come to Reston and East Linton from December 2016. I hope that the new minister will be in a position to echo that commitment, and I look forward to hearing from him on that.

I am pleased that good progress is being made on the joint bid to the Scottish stations fund by Scottish Borders Council, East Lothian Council and the south east of Scotland transport partnership. Again, I welcome the positive comments that Keith Brown made on that submission, and I hope that the new minister will also look favourably on it.

In time, it will be important to see an affordable pricing structure for passengers and a timetable that works for commuters and tourists alike. More immediately, it is imperative that we get a firm timetable and deadline for construction works, and I look forward to hearing from the minister on that. I welcome Derek Mackay to his new position.

I have already hinted at the length of time for which the campaign has been running. In 2002, Tom Thorburn of RAGES and Ted Clemit of Reston and Auchencrow community council took a petition to the Scottish Parliament to reinstate services at Reston and East Linton. Since then, I have been pleased to support RAGES fully in its work to secure rail services at Reston and East Linton. It is certainly clear from feasibility studies that there will be significant socioeconomic benefits.

On the other side of the Borders, work is under way on the Waverley rail line, which will benefit not just the Borders but Midlothian and, of course, Edinburgh. As work recently began on laying track, Alex Salmond set out his vision for 1 million passengers using the service annually. The two

projects are very different, but that sentiment underlines the promise of the benefit that rail services bring to our communities through both inward investment and the tourism economy. That in turn reflects what we wish to happen at Reston and East Linton.

I would like the Waverley line to be extended to Hawick and beyond, to join up with Carlisle. I see no reason why the Scottish Government should not at least commit to a feasibility study, in the light of the former First Minister's ambitious vision. That discussion is for another day, however—today is about Reston and East Linton.

Our rural and coastal areas can often be left behind when it comes to investment. Our coastal towns and villages, which have traditionally relied on fishing, have recently had to diversify in a changing economy. I am pleased to say that Eyemouth is still a busy working port that services fishing and commercial fleets. Over the years, an increase in tourism activities has brought visitors into the town and the wider county of Berwickshire, which has fantastic attractions along its coastline, such as St Abbs and Coldingham Bay, to name a couple.

It is easy to argue for the need for trains to Reston and East Linton. Such a move will make the area more attractive to young people and new business. Population alone justifies a rail service, which will help to get people out of their cars. It will perhaps even help Scotland to meet its climate change targets, too. Reston station could serve a population of roughly 10,000 in the eastern part of the Borders, and East Linton station will be a welcome addition, as we know that East Lothian's population is projected to experience the biggest increase in Scotland—33 per cent—by 2035.

It is not an overstatement to say that today's debate marks a seminal moment for rail travel in the south of Scotland. As work continues apace on the Waverley line, the east is now tantalisingly within touching distance of train services at Reston and East Linton.

I pay tribute to RAGES members for leading on this important local issue. They have been an impressive machine behind the campaign. They have kept up the momentum year after year, and I am sure that MSPs from across the chamber will agree that it is they who deserve the credit for bringing rail services back to Reston and East Linton.

12:37

Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): I thank Jim Hume for securing the debate. The campaign for additional services in East Lothian and the Borders has been on-going for a while—since the first East Lothian rail study in 1999.

I, too, pay credit to the rail action group east of Scotland for its role in the campaign. RAGES was formally established at an inaugural meeting in Dunbar on 13 January 1999, and it has been campaigning for the reopening of East Linton and Reston stations since then. In 2008, a steering group was established under the auspices of East Lothian Council. That brought together MSPs and councillors from all parties to take forward and co-ordinate the desirable plans. SEStran has also been instrumental in moving the project forward. The cross-party approach has proven to be very successful in getting us to the stage that we are at today. I know that Jim Hume agrees with that.

Keith Brown's announcement last week that the new train stations for East Linton and Reston are a step closer was welcome. Services that are written into the next franchise include the two-hourly service between Edinburgh and Berwick, with stops at the two new stations as part of the planned timetable. We hope that trains will run through both stations as soon as December 2016. That is a huge step forward towards the realisation of the services, and it shows real commitment from the Government.

That is a real investment. New stations elsewhere have been a driver for economic regeneration by bringing jobs, investment and social opportunities for communities.

The Scottish stations investment fund was launched in April 2012 to provide £30 million to support new railway stations and existing station refurbishments. The fund is now awaiting further details from the south east of Scotland transport partnership, East Lothian Council and Scottish Borders Council on the funding application that will make the new stations at East Linton and Reston a reality.

Investment in the stations will certainly encourage alternatives to private car use, which will contribute to the Government's ambitious targets for the reduction of greenhouse gases. Evidence from recent rail reopenings in Scotland suggests that passenger use often far exceeds the forecasts. One recent reopening was of the line from Edinburgh to Bathgate. In 1986, it was forecast to carry more than 250,000 passengers per annum, but by 1989, usage had already exceeded 1 million per annum.

The Berwickshire area has a high proportion of residents working in what are typically lower-paid sectors. The Scottish Borders area has deprived settlements such as Eyemouth, as identified by the Scottish index of multiple deprivation. Eyemouth has separately been identified as being among the most vulnerable rural communities in Scotland. Opening Reston station will provide new employment opportunities to residents in Berwickshire and subsequent economic benefits.

As we have heard, there is strong support from local businesses for the introduction of the new rail service and stations, which adds to the strong support from local stakeholders, community councils and of course elected representatives.

I will close with a quote from RAGES chairman Tom Thorburn. Following last week's announcement, he said:

"This is terrific news for our area and will be of huge benefit to a whole range of people and businesses, namely those wishing to access jobs in Edinburgh, students being able to commute for their tertiary education at QMU, Edinburgh etc, the ability to take in the theatre and sporting fixtures, and tourist access to our areas from other parts of the country."

Let us make sure that those benefits are fully realised.

12:42

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Jim Hume on obtaining the debate. He and I have worked together on the campaign over the years. However, for me, today is not the best day for him to have got the debate. With your forbearance, Presiding Officer, I will have to leave a little early for a Smith commission-related engagement, for which I apologise to colleagues and in particular the minister. I very much wanted to take part in the debate, because the campaign is important in East Lothian and the Borders.

The inclusion of a proper local service between Edinburgh and Berwick that will stop at new or restored stations at Reston and East Linton is a victory for common sense and for persistence. It is a victory for common sense because, in my constituency, the community of Dunbar has a working railway station but no proper local service, so my constituents there depend on east coast main line train services, which sometimes stop at Dunbar and sometimes do not, depending on the timetable. That is a ridiculous situation.

Even more ridiculous is the situation of my constituents in East Linton, where the station was closed many years ago. They see trains run through their community daily, but none of them stops and my constituents have no opportunity to use those services. It is simple common sense that those two communities should have a proper local rail service, and the same is true of Reston.

The decision is also a victory for persistence—particularly the persistence of the local rail campaign RAGES, to which Mr Hume and Mr Brodie paid tribute.

Mr Hume mentioned some of the stalwarts of RAGES. They are some of the politest and most courteous people one could ever do business with, but their group's acronym is not RAGES for no reason. For years they have raged against the

argument that it is not possible to reinstate services to their communities, they have raged against the argument that there are not enough train movements to enable services to be reinstated and they have raged against the argument that significantly underestimated potential passenger numbers on reinstated services. They have won every one of those arguments.

There has been persistence on the part of East Lothian Council and Scottish Borders Council, which provided resources for the original Scottish transport appraisal guidance assessment and have committed significant resources to the reopening of stations, as members said. There has also been persistence on the part of local politicians such as Councillor Norman Hampshire in Dunbar.

I am happy to acknowledge the role that the minister's predecessor, Keith Brown, played. He responded positively to representations that were made to him and he deserves credit for the inclusion of the services in the franchise.

The victory has been gradual. Some ScotRail services have been provided to Dunbar and there is the prospect of a two-hourly service, but we still have to build two stations to make it happen. My message to the new minister is this: make no mistake, RAGES will stay on the case and will not rest—and nor will we—until the victory is complete and literally on track.

12:46

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): I thank Jim Hume for bringing the subject to the Parliament for debate. The opening of railway stations will appear on our agendas increasingly over the years, because the case for each station can be made so effectively.

I apologise; I am a last-minute substitute in the debate, because local member John Lamont has been called away on a constituency matter. He was extremely keen for me to take the opportunity to express his support for the reopening of the stations at Reston and East Linton and his continuing support as we move towards achieving that objective once and for all.

For many years, evidence has been mounting that a little investment can go a long way in improving our rail services. Chic Brodie talked about the Bathgate line. I can talk about our experience in the north-east with the reopening of Laurencekirk station, which underlines the success of reopening stations.

Laurencekirk—like Reston and East Linton, it is on the east coast main line—is some 30 miles south of Aberdeen. The case for reopening

Laurencekirk station was made consistently for a time. We thought that the case had been made successfully, but the Government took no action in the early part of the previous decade. However, in one of the first actions of the Scottish National Party Government when it came to power in 2007, the transport minister at the time, Alex Neil, took the project forward. He was proud to come along and participate in the reopening of the station when that eventually happened.

The business case for reopening the station had been made, but Laurencekirk rewrote the book in that regard. The number of passengers that use the station has vastly exceeded expectations and Laurencekirk is experiencing all the problems that arise when transport links are better. There are huge-scale applications to build additional houses in the area, because people want to live in a town that has a station and direct rail services to Aberdeen, for those who work there, and to Edinburgh, Glasgow and the central belt, for those who want to go south.

If we provide services, people will use them. The evidence is there, all round Scotland. I think that the decision to go ahead with reopening Reston and East Linton stations will result in more evidence to back up the business cases for many more new stations in Scotland. As the minister takes the matter forward, let him be well warned: success breeds success and he will have to budget for a few more stations.

12:49

Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab): At the outset, I welcome Derek Mackay to his new ministerial role and tell him that I am missing him already from local government. I thank Jim Hume for recognising in the motion a great example of the Scottish Government doing its job.

The motion recognises a simple matter on which the Scottish Government has worked to benefit directly the people of the eastern borderlands. The creation of a bi-hourly service from Berwick-upon-Tweed to Edinburgh is an amazing way of directly helping the Scottish people, which we have been sent to this Parliament to do—sometimes we wonder.

Opening this service creates a host of benefits for the eastern borderlands and the commuters who live there. The service makes it realistic for people living in towns near the stations to come into Edinburgh for work and bring the money back into their own communities, which it was previously difficult to do.

In addition, the increased traffic makes the areas around the stations centres of their region and places for businesses to open and for people to live in. That is particularly true of the areas

around East Linton and Reston, which have had train stations sitting idle for nearly 50 years. The reactivated rail stations will bring in money and commerce, which have been missing. All of that spells economic prosperity for the borderlands and the Scottish people who live there.

This opportunity for benefit was clearly not missed by the local activists who succeeded in advocating this action by the Scottish Government. I am not sure whether the name of the group—RAGES—had anything to do with that, but I am sure that I would be afraid of it.

Particularly when times are still hard for many families, we need to see more actions such as these, which put money directly into projects that benefit people.

It should come as no surprise to the chamber that Jim Hume's motion has received cross-party support. Although the various parties of the Parliament do not always agree—anybody who was in the chamber earlier would testify to that—when it comes to measures such as promoting prosperity and commerce in Scotland, we are able to get together and do amazing things.

I sincerely hope that that spirit of co-operation continues to exist in the Parliament, so that we may work as a group to benefit our constituents and work towards a stronger, more prosperous Scotland.

I thank Jim Hume again for lodging the motion, not only because I support the work that the Scottish Government has done in opening railway stations for the benefit of the community but because the motion exemplifies the type of cross-party work that we could and should do in the Parliament.

12:53

The Minister for Transport and Islands (Derek Mackay): I thank members for their warm and generous welcome to my new post of Minister for Transport and Islands. I appreciate the keen interest that has been shown in this issue by a number of parties in the chamber.

I understood some contributions more readily and easily than others, given the geography involved. Added to that is the fact that I am obviously intimidated by my ministerial colleague sitting to my left, Paul Wheelhouse, who also has a keen interest in this issue, along with the other members who have taken forward this important local cause. In that tone, I congratulate Jim Hume on securing the debate.

This is an important issue to communities in East Lothian and the Scottish Borders. The Scottish Government's record on opening new stations—as broadcast and explained by Alex

Johnstone—shows just how important it is to us. Our record speaks for itself. Since 2007, six new stations have been built and nine more are due to be opened as part of the Borders rail project.

We are committed to supporting major projects and improvements to infrastructure and services across the network to contribute to sustainable economic growth. That is reflected in an ambitious £5 billion package of funding and investment until 2019.

We are delivering the Borders railway—the longest new domestic railway to be constructed in Britain for over 100 years—on time and within budget.

Next year, as we all know, two new exciting rail franchises will be in operation. They will build on passenger feedback to the rail 2014 consultation and the results of the national rail passenger surveys, all of which point to the need for an efficient, reliable and value-for-money service for Scotland's passengers. As such, we have secured contracts that reflect our desire that the franchise should put the passenger first, contribute to the overall economy and build on the successes of the current franchise. The successful bidder's proposals satisfy those requirements and more. They underline the Government's commitment to providing enhanced rail services across Scotland. Trains will be introduced that are more suited to the demands of intercity travel, journey times will be shorter, facilities will be improved and there will be galley catering and more comfort for passengers.

We will deliver value for money by offering passengers a £5 advance fare between any two cities together with other proposals such as the club 50 and reduced travel costs for jobseekers and the newly employed. That is in addition to Scottish ministers' commitment to restrict fare increases, which will further improve rail travel's appeal and encourage modal shift.

The Borders will also benefit from being part of the great Scottish scenic railway, which will market Scotland's scenery, heritage and tourist attractions to a wider audience. There will be special steam services to promote local attractions and grow tourism. I hope that community rail groups, local businesses and the wider rail industry engage with Abellio Scotrail to maximise the opportunities arising from those initiatives.

Mr Brown, my predecessor, was delighted to have secured services in the new Scotrail franchise that will accommodate stops at Reston and East Linton. The service is scheduled to be a two-hourly service between Edinburgh and Berwick and I am sure that we can all agree that it is a major step forward in bringing those stations back to life.

We have been open and responsive to the representations of East Lothian Council, Scottish Borders Council, SEStran and RAGES and we appreciate the work that they have done to date. East Lothian has a growing population and a new service will help to deliver sustainable economic growth and reduce the impact on the road network. In Berwickshire, the key issues are accessibility and social exclusion. Crucially, the proposed new services and station will provide improved access to work and educational opportunities and they will be a driver for economic regeneration. The benefits that the services will bring are evident to all.

The final element that is still to be put in place is the capital funding for the stations. We recognise the importance of infrastructure to sustaining our economy, providing access to opportunities and bringing our communities closer together. The investments that we have delivered or are in the midst of constructing and those for which we have detailed plans confirm our commitment to improving Scotland's infrastructure. That commitment is backed by our £30 million Scottish stations fund, which was announced in June 2012 as part of Scottish ministers' high-level output specification. The fund is designed to lever in third-party funding to provide new and improved stations, and it gives East Lothian Council and Scottish Borders Council the opportunity to achieve additional funding for the stations just as it was designed to do.

The bid is currently under consideration and a decision will be made once Network Rail has completed the scope and design work for each of those stations. I look forward to seeing that progressed as soon as possible.

Jim Hume: Would the minister be able to give us a—I cannot get away from the puns—timetable on such as decision?

Derek Mackay: I would be happy to write to the member with the details of how we will consider that and with a target date. I want to be transparent about the options that are open to us and to make sure that locals are informed about likely progress. However, the member will appreciate that, in my first week in the job, there is much for me to consider and I am waiting for the required information from Network Rail so that I can properly consider the bid, cost it and ensure that what we do is credible and beyond challenge.

I am proud of our impressive record of continued investment in transport and improved accessibility to the rail network across Scotland. The investment continues to create employment, to stimulate growth and to create conditions of advantage and opportunity for Scottish communities. I encourage all those who are working towards the opening of Reston and East

Linton stations to maintain that momentum with the new services, because they will greatly support the realisation of the goal of bringing the new stations to fruition and the benefit of public transport for all.

13:00

Meeting suspended.

14:00

On resuming—

St Andrew's Day 2014

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

Good afternoon. The first item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-11565, in the name of Annabelle Ewing, on St Andrew's day 2014. The debate will be concluded without any question being put, and I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak button now or as soon as possible.

I call Bruce Crawford to open the debate on behalf of Annabelle Ewing.

Motion debated,

That Parliament notes the view that St Andrew's Day should be celebrated as a full national holiday and for it to be celebrated at home and throughout the world; believes that St Andrew's Day is a valuable opportunity to showcase all that is great about Scotland and promote economic and cultural opportunities, and considers that, with St Andrew's own roots in Asia, Scotland's national day is an opportunity to celebrate diversity of cultures, faiths and ethnic origins and in this momentous year for Scotland, in which it has welcomed the world to the Commonwealth Games and Ryder Cup and voted in a historic referendum, that St Andrew's Day offers a great opportunity for Scotland and its friends at home and abroad to celebrate together.

14:00

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): I congratulate Annabelle Ewing on becoming a minister in the Scottish Government. I thank all those who signed the motion and those who have turned up for the debate. I also thank Annabelle Ewing for creating the opportunity for me to lead this debate on celebrating St Andrew's day.

I particularly want to reflect on Scotland's place in the world. As stated in the motion, St Andrew himself was a man who touched many countries. The obvious countries with which Scotland has links are our friends in the Commonwealth countries across the world. It was in the Commonwealth countries that many of our forebears chose to make new lives for themselves in the more recent past and, of course, vice versa.

However, Scotland also has centuries-old relationships with our Scandinavian neighbours, and with Poland, Germany and the Netherlands. Many Scots emigrated to those countries, mainly in search of economic or military careers, while many from those countries also settled here. It was the same for our neighbouring countries across these islands, and again vice versa.

Similarly, across the world, in more contemporary times, in first maritime and then air travel, we have witnessed Scotland take her place as part of a smaller and more interdependent

world. People have come to enrich our society, whether that has been the Italians and the Poles, or people from Pakistan and India and so on. In developing our place in the modern world, and as a result of our many links around the globe, we have become a much more ethnically rich and diverse country. That has helped us to retain a unique and outward-looking culture.

It goes without saying that 2014 has been a year like no other to celebrate all that is good about Scotland. Our referendum was a magnificent renewal of Scotland's national democracy, with an enormous turnout and truly incredible levels of democratic engagement from our citizens.

When I was in Fort William earlier this week with the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee, we had the chance to speak to many 16 and 17-year-olds who were involved in that democratic process. There is no doubt in my mind, given what we have heard from the Smith commission this week and from all the parties in Parliament, that we recognise and value the contribution of those young people as part of the referendum process. I am glad that everyone is now committed to giving 16 and 17-year-olds the vote in our country.

The referendum was a spectacle, which was watched in awe across the world. The journalist Jack Wright wrote this week in his "The View from ... America" column for *The National*—an excellent addition to Scotland's daily newspaper titles—as he commented on the new-found interest in Scotland and our politics, that

"Our brand is stronger than ever in the US".

However, it is more than that. We have welcomed visitors in the second year of homecoming from all over the world. I met many of them at the Bannockburn event. We have succeeded in organising and delivering the best Commonwealth games ever, as well as the magnificent spectacle that was the Ryder cup. We have had a wide range of cultural events at which to reflect upon and commemorate this year for Scotland. One example, relating to our country's historical heritage, was the hugely successful marking of the 700th anniversary of the battle of Bannockburn.

The Commonwealth games in particular presented a golden opportunity to celebrate the diversity of the family of nations that the Commonwealth represents and the diversity to be found in modern Scotland. Former First Minister Alex Salmond elegantly described the diversity of modern Scotland when he said:

"There are many different colours and threads woven into the Scottish tartan and all must be celebrated."

I whole-heartedly agree with those sentiments.

The richness of that tartan is reflected in analysis work that has been done on the 2011 census. Dr Andrew Smith, senior lecturer in sociology at the University of Glasgow, said:

"What our research in the Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity reveals is a picture of growing diversity within Scotland and of diversity spread across different areas of the country."

He added:

"What the analysis also reveals is that Scotland's growing diversity is not producing 'polarised islands of different groups' but a 'mosaic of differently mixed areas'."

Those findings are reassuring in modern Scotland, but there is no room for complacency in the Parliament or in Scottish society more generally. We must always strive to ensure that the diversity of society is celebrated and never divides us.

Just as modern Scotland is about those from elsewhere who have made their home in our country, Scots who have left these shores for opportunity have made a huge contribution to the modern world. The USA and Canada are oft-cited examples of countries where millions can claim Scottish ancestry. It is estimated that, from this wee country of ours, between 28 million and 40 million people may be able to claim Scottish descent. I was intrigued to discover recently that 80,000 people in Chile claim Scottish descent. I could not understand that number, as it is more than the figure for many European countries put together. I discovered that it was mostly about sheep and an admiral from Scotland who went to Chile to create the Chilean navy. Forgive me, but I cannot remember his name.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Bruce Crawford: Yes. I am sure that John Mason will now tell me his name.

John Mason: No. The member mentions other countries, but does he realise the connection with Jamaica, which also has a saltire in its flag? Scots were involved there and there are a huge number of Scottish names in Jamaica.

Bruce Crawford: Yes, I recognise that although, obviously, the saltire that goes through the flag of Jamaica is yellow. Further south from Jamaica, there are places such as Guyana, where lots of Scots went during the times of the sugar plantations. Scots have made a significant contribution in that part of the world. It is a pity that the bobsleighters from Jamaica are better than ours, though.

Yesterday, I was reminded by my American intern Heidi Brown that today is thanksgiving day in the United States. On that national holiday, families are given the day off to rejoice and celebrate the co-operation between native

Americans and the pilgrims during that period. Americans mark the day by feasting, as they did after their first successful harvest in 1621, and by giving thanks in a continued tradition of expressing gratitude to the native Americans. I therefore wish Americans here in Scotland a happy thanksgiving day on their national holiday.

The motion advocates the celebration of St Andrew's day as a national holiday. I have no doubt that it is not beyond our wit to designate St Andrew's day as a national holiday and to rearrange our calendar of public holidays to reflect that, if that is what we choose. If ever there was good reason to celebrate St Andrew with a public holiday, it is to celebrate Scotland's contribution to the world and, even more important, to celebrate and raise a toast to those from all round the planet who have chosen Scotland as their home and so enriched our culture and daily lives.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Christine Grahame, who has four minutes, or thereby.

14:08

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I like the "thereby", Presiding Officer.

I congratulate Bruce Crawford on congratulating Annabelle Ewing on securing the debate to celebrate St Andrew's day and our patron saint in Scotland. He is also the patron saint of not just Jamaica but Greece, Romania, Russia and some other countries. It is good to see Jamie McGrigor, who will speak later from the Conservative benches, in the chamber. I have to remark that there is nobody on the Labour or Liberal benches to speak to a motion celebrating Scotland's national day, which is pretty disgraceful.

The raising of the profile of our national day is undoubtedly due in part to the reconvening of this Parliament some 15 years ago, and not least to Dennis Canavan's St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Act 2007. However, St Andrew's day is not a full national holiday, as Bruce Crawford said, and is not yet as celebrated as Burns night.

At one time, Google displayed the saltire on its home page on St Andrew's day. I hope that it does so this year. I suggest that members who are not in the chamber—that is most of them—pay attention and suggest to Google that it puts the St Andrew's flag on its home page on 30 November. That is good business for Scotland, and it is appropriate.

St Andrew gave us the saltire. Flags are at the beating heart of a nation. It is symbols of nationhood, such as our patron saint and the flag that is emblematic of his crucifixion, that have carried the hearts and hopes of Scots in good and

bad times, from confrontations on football pitches to those on battlefields.

Where is that symbol of our patron saint more distinct than in our flag, the saltire, which was inspired by the vision at Athelstaneford in 832 AD? I should say that I wasnae there. At Athelstaneford, King Angus—Angus is my oldest son's name; there's DNA for you—led the Scots in battle to defeat the Angles. The night before battle, St Andrew appeared before King Angus, assuring him of victory, and in the morning a white saltire against a blue sky appeared to both sides. It scared the Angles to bits; they lost confidence and were defeated. The image has been our flag ever since.

The saltire was also used on the nation's coinage when it was introduced by King David I in the 12th century. It therefore has an ancient and noble lineage.

On St Andrew's day in our capital city there is the opportunity to fly the St Andrew's flag in a prominent position on the castle. Why does that not happen? There is a false argument that the castle is an army garrison—it is not. It ceased to be a garrison in 1920, and the army is there largely in a ceremonial capacity.

I am thankful that Historic Scotland saw the light last year and did not put the Olympic rings on the castle. I have another suggestion: why not project a large saltire on the ramparts of the castle on 30 November?

In commemoration of St Andrew's day, St Andrew's flag may fly over Edinburgh castle, but not in pole position; the British Government, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, designated the castle as an official flag-flying station, therefore the union flag takes precedence. However, under the Scotland Act 1998, and by agreement between the Crown Estate Commissioners and the Scottish Office, ownership of Edinburgh castle and other historic buildings transferred from the Crown to the Secretary of State for Scotland and thence to the Scottish ministers.

The transfer of 26 properties took place in 1999. Fact. The properties included, inter alia, Edinburgh castle. The Government, through its ministers, is the owner and is therefore landlord to the MOD. The MOD is merely our tenant. It is time for the landlords, on behalf of the Scottish people, to tell the tenants to take down the union flag and fly the saltire in its place, not only because it symbolises our nation and its patron saint but because—to be frank—if it is good enough for recruiting Scots to fight in illegal wars, it is good enough to fly all year round.

Despite the narrow miss of independence—or perhaps because of it, because of those 1.6 million Scots who voted yes in the face of a

unionist tsunami of negativity, and because of the baby steps that are being taken under the Smith commission, with the redefining of “substantial and cohesive”, “home rule” and “vow”—we all know, whatever side we are on in this Parliament, that Scotland’s story has not yet been told. The ending remains unwritten—but when it is written the saltire will fly everywhere.

14:13

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Like Christine Grahame, I am astonished that no one from the Labour benches is here for the debate. That was also the case in the debate on Ukraine the other day; I thought that that was rather odd. Perhaps Labour members have all been rendered speechless by something.

I congratulate Annabelle Ewing on securing this debate, and I am glad to take part in it, because it is important. Christine Grahame told the story of the Scottish saltire and the legend of St Andrew, which I was about to relate, so that has taken away some of my speech.

Christine Grahame: Sorry about that.

Jamie McGrigor: I was very glad to learn that it was a dream of St Andrew that inspired the saltire. It is a beautiful flag and it is owned by all the Scottish people—and of course it is part of the union jack.

Quite why St Andrews was considered to be the end of the earth, where St Rule was instructed to take St Andrew’s remains, is a mystery to me, as I have always considered it a very fine town, with a great university and a marvellous golf course. Perhaps St Rule arrived on a bad day, which was made worse by a haar or something like that. He was, however, lucky to get away with his life, unlike the Hussites who arrived in St Andrews from Czechoslovakia and were burnt at the stake.

What celebrations St Andrew has inspired worldwide, particularly in Australia and Canada. In China, the Caledonian Society of Beijing, of which my brother was a previous chairman, holds a St Andrew’s ball, where an enormous amount of Scotch whisky is consumed. Amazingly, in the Czech Republic, where the Hussites I spoke of came from, they hold a St Andrew’s night as well, which is very forgiving of them. In Saudi Arabia, they hold a St Andrew’s night ball in Jeddah, but I do not think that quite so much whisky is drunk at that one.

I turn to slightly more serious matters. During my time as an MSP, I have spoken in many debates on St Andrew’s day. I have argued before that our position on making the day a national holiday is consistent and clear. We have always been supportive of the desire to have St Andrew’s

day as a bank holiday, but in exchange for another day, not in addition to existing days.

That was the approach adopted in the 2007 act and we remain supportive of that. St Andrew’s day is, correctly, a voluntary public holiday. That is the approach that our Parliament takes. Strangely enough, Eton College also celebrates St Andrew’s day as a holiday and has done so for hundreds of years.

We did not support the argument that St Andrew’s day must be a compulsory national holiday, as the cost of that inevitably falls on businesses, especially small businesses, and the taxpayer.

John Mason: Will the member give way?

Jamie McGrigor: In a moment.

The Confederation of British Industry Scotland has stated in the past that more and more firms are moving away from closing on specified days to a system in which employees have an annual leave entitlement and decide for themselves, in agreement with their employer, when to take a holiday. We would be happy for employees to engage with their employers to discuss taking St Andrew’s day off instead of another holiday if that was appropriate, which might be the case if the employee’s spouse, partner or children have St Andrew’s day off.

I will take the intervention now.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Make it a brief one, please, as the member is in his last minute.

John Mason: Thank you, Presiding Officer. Does the member think that the retail sector might benefit from a holiday at this time of year, which could boost sales leading up to Christmas?

Jamie McGrigor: That is a good point well made.

I agree with the motion that St Andrew’s day is a great opportunity to celebrate the diversity of our cultures and faiths. We also recognise that tourism businesses can need extra promotion during the winter months, which we have talked about. We want to see a continued focus to boost winter tourism in Scotland.

I am pleased that Historic Scotland offered free tickets to many of its properties on St Andrew’s day. I pay tribute to all those enterprising businesses, shops and tourism enterprises in my region of the Highlands and Islands that seek to use St Andrew’s day to boost trade.

As a keen angler, I have always thought it very appropriate that our Scottish patron St Andrew was a fisherman from Galilee. I wish all those who have Friday off for St Andrew’s day an enjoyable day. I hope that some of them will do a spot of

fishing or even enjoy some of our first-class shellfish.

14:18

The Minister for Europe and International Development (Humza Yousaf): I congratulate Annabelle Ewing on lodging this motion and on her ministerial appointment, as she will be a colleague in the Government. I also congratulate Bruce Crawford on taking up the mantle somewhat at the last minute. I can think of no MSP more appropriate to have done so.

I am delighted to wind up this debate on behalf of the Government. I, too, am surprised at the lack of some Opposition members, but, nonetheless, today's debate about St Andrew's day being celebrated widely as a national holiday is incredibly important for a number of reasons.

I particularly want to pick up the point that Bruce Crawford and, latterly, Jamie McGrigor made about this being an opportunity to celebrate Scotland as an outward-looking nation. Scots have travelled the world over, sometimes for good reasons and sometimes—such as when it comes to Jamaica—probably not for particularly great reasons. It is also a country that has opened itself up to migrants and been welcoming in that regard.

As Jamie McGrigor alluded to, St Andrew is the patron saint of fishermen and fishmongers. I am certainly not looking at any members in the chamber, particularly not at any members behind me, when I say that St Andrew is also the patron saint of singers, spinsters, maidens, old maids, and women wishing to become mothers. Also—this is perhaps a good thing for politicians—he is the patron saint for people with sore throats.

It has been seven years since the Scottish Parliament approved the bill to have a national holiday on or around St Andrew's day. As members know, since then, the Scottish Government and public sector organisations such as VisitScotland have observed that holiday. Many local authorities also observe it but we hope that more will take up the challenge—and indeed the opportunity, as John Mason said—to take the day as a holiday.

Members will also be pleased to hear that we have gathered some encouraging evidence that suggests that the celebration of St Andrew's day is gathering momentum. For example, in 2013-14, Scottish winter festival events recorded a total footfall of 257,884. That is an 8 per cent increase on the footfall the year before. Also, the number of private sector organisations offering free or discounted entry on St Andrew's day increased by 140 per cent between 2012 and 2013.

Bruce Crawford's remarks about the global Scottish diaspora reminded me of a saying that I am sure members will have heard many a time: that there are two types of people in the world—Scots and those who wish they were Scottish. In that vein, it is estimated that 50 million people across the globe claim Scottish ancestry. Many of those Scots and Scots at heart, wherever they are from in the world—from Beijing to Rio, Toronto and Brisbane—will be remembering and marking the national day, as they do hogmanay and Burns night every year.

People were quite correct to mention that St Andrew is also the patron saint of many other countries, including Greece, Russia, Romania, and—apparently—Barbados, which is fantastic. As external affairs still come into my remit, if members would want me to, I could submit myself to the country to go on a fact-finding mission to Barbados in that regard—I would be more than happy to do that.

We are working hard with our partners across the world to establish St Andrew's day as an important day to mark. I am delighted that we are working closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to promote the celebration of St Andrew's day. I was having a Twitter exchange with the high commissioner to Zambia, James Thornton, who was at the Caledonian ball to celebrate St Andrew's day just this week. Jamie McGrigor also gave many examples of other celebrations. We are delighted that our partners are doing all they can—as we are doing all we can—to promote St Andrew's day across the world, as well as members here who will be celebrating in their local constituencies.

As the motion states, St Andrew's day is also

“an opportunity to celebrate diversity of cultures, faiths and ethnic origins”

of this small country. Bruce Crawford made that point extraordinarily well throughout his speech. During this year in particular, through all the events that we have had—including, of course, the Commonwealth games in particular—we have managed to bring those communities of Scotland closer together.

St Andrew himself, of course, was an immigrant. He emigrated and travelled to many different countries, including Ukraine, Romania, Russia, Greece and Turkey, to name just a few. One programme of events that helps to celebrate that ethnic diversity on St Andrew's day this year is the fantastic event that is called the multicultural homecoming. It is being organised by BEMIS Scotland, which is headed by the very able Dr Rami Ousta and his team. The finale of that homecoming celebration is on St Andrew's night and the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and

External Affairs will be representing the Scottish Government at that event. I myself will be celebrating St Andrew's day with our vibrant Sikh community in Scotland.

As we enter the winter festival season, it is important to remember that St Andrew's day is not the only celebration in these winter months. We have a fantastic programme, with hogmanay a month later and Burns night as well.

I thought that some of the ideas that came from members on how we can celebrate St Andrew's day further and give the day more prominence were very good indeed. Christine Grahame volunteered to climb the ramparts of Edinburgh castle with the saltire in her teeth in order to attach it to the top.

Christine Grahame: Absolutely—just give me the flag.

Humza Yousaf: I will certainly do so, and I will also get a photographer on site to capture the moment.

On a serious note, I recently visited Stirling castle, where the First Minister—the former First Minister, I should say—had managed to secure an agreement for the lion rampant to be flown there for only the second time in 400 years. I am more than happy to explore Christine Grahame's idea and her suggestion that we contact Google to find out whether it will be advocating the saltire on its page.

It is my hope that our 2015 year of food and drink will sustain and build on the momentum that has been generated by this year's homecoming. I hope that all members in the chamber will be impelled to take part, thereby helping to inspire the people of Scotland and our visitors to celebrate Scotland's outstanding natural larder; to further develop Scotland's ever-growing reputation as a land of food and drink; and to promote and celebrate our nation's culinary achievements not only on St Andrew's day but throughout the year.

There is a lesson in St Andrew's story for every single one of us. He was a man of great humility, which he demonstrated even in death and persecution when he refused to be crucified on the same cross as Christ.

There are many lessons that we can learn from St Andrew, but the best lesson, as Bruce Crawford said, is that our national day should be celebrated by all of Scotland's communities and all Scots who have chosen to make other parts of the globe their home. I hope that, in that spirit of unity, diversity and tolerance, each and every one of us will have a very happy, enjoyable and festive St Andrew's day.

Programme for Government 2014-15

Resumed debate.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): As the parties were advised, we now move straight to the continuation of yesterday's debate on the Scottish Government's programme for government 2014-15. I note that a number of members, despite the warning, are not in the chamber.

I say to all members, whether they are in the chamber or not, that if they spoke in the debate yesterday I expect them to be here for the closing speeches this afternoon. If anybody who spoke yesterday has not sought prior agreement to their being absent from the chamber, I will name and shame them later.

14:27

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights (Alex Neil): I begin by correcting something that Jackie Baillie said in yesterday's debate. On a number of occasions, she said that in the period in which the Scottish National Party has been in government, the number of people who worked for Scotland's local authorities who have lost their jobs is 70,000. I have checked the figures, and I can tell Jackie Baillie that, on a full-time equivalent basis, the reduction in the number of people working for local authorities in Scotland over that period is not 70,000 but 27,600.

Most interestingly, when one looks at the analysis of those figures, one sees that three local authorities account between them for 15,000 of those 27,600 job losses. Those three local authorities are Labour-controlled Glasgow City Council, which accounts for a reduction of 11,500 in the number of people employed; Labour-controlled North Lanarkshire Council, which accounts for a reduction of 1,600; and Labour-controlled Aberdeen City Council, which accounts for a reduction of 1,900.

In the future, when Jackie Baillie is quoting numbers, she should perhaps check the facts first. I wanted to register that point at the beginning.

I have just over four minutes left—

James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Alex Neil: Of course. I will always take an intervention from Mr Kelly.

James Kelly: I thank Mr Neil for taking the intervention. Does he accept, as a matter of fact, that thousands of local government workers have

lost their jobs because of the cuts that have been imposed by the SNP Government?

Alex Neil: If all the councils had followed the same employment policies as the Scottish Government, they would all be in a much better position. Given the record of Labour-controlled authorities, I do not think that Mr Kelly has much to boast about. The budgets that have been set by us are from budgets that were originally set by Alistair Darling and Gordon Brown. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Mr Kelly! Stop heckling!

Alex Neil: They were the ones who imposed the cuts originally. I really do not think that the Labour Party has much to boast about at all.

On a more positive note, I will focus on my new areas of responsibility. Although I cannot list all of them—it is a fairly long list—I will highlight a number of issues on which, as the First Minister said yesterday, we intend to make substantial progress in the period that is left of this session of Parliament. Although we are now within 16 months of the end of this session, there is still a great deal to be done, even before we move on to the extended agenda that will arise from the additional powers that we hope will be transferred to the Scottish Parliament in the months and years to come.

I have identified five or six areas to which I will give priority over the next 16 or 17 months or so: housing, fuel poverty, equalities, welfare, pensioners' rights and democratic renewal. It is important today of all days, when we are talking about the transfer of powers from London to Edinburgh, that we remind ourselves of the very important principles that were established in the declaration by the former First Minister, Alex Salmond, in relation to subsidiarity within Scotland. It is very much a part of the philosophy and intention of this Government to look at the future government of Scotland internally so that we maximise democratic participation by our people. We know from participation in the referendum and the 85 per cent turnout that there is among people out there a real hunger to become much more engaged in the politics and decision making of our country than they have been over the past 20 years. We want to help people to realise that ambition; democratic renewal is a key part of our forward-looking agenda.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that if power is to be devolved it should not stop at Glasgow city chambers but should go down to communities?

Alex Neil: I could not agree more. I represent a constituency in North Lanarkshire and I look at some of the ways in which the housing stock there is managed, which is anything but democratic or

accountable. Empowering tenants much more than we have done in the past is a very good example of how we can do much more genuinely to empower our communities, as we need to do. There was in the past something of the attitude whereby our only empowerment of tenants in some areas was to give them a yes or no choice about transfer of housing stock from the local authority to a third-party organisation. Any transfer should have the democratic acceptance of the tenants, but that is a very narrow view of how tenants should be involved. Extending tenant management and control of local authority housing stock is an area that is ripe for action in terms of democratic renewal and community empowerment.

In the less than a minute that I have left, the other area that I will mention is equalities. Three areas in particular will be priorities for me. The first is domestic abuse. Despite massive cross-party efforts by Parliament under successive Administrations, we still have much more to do to eliminate domestic abuse from Scotland. I will work with all the parties involved to ensure that we do that.

Secondly, the relatively new phenomenon of revenge porn clearly must be tackled. It is totally unacceptable and it damages young people in particular. Again, urgent action on that is required.

Thirdly, in terms of public sector appointments, getting more women on boards is absolutely essential. Obviously, the health department appoints more people to more boards than does any other function in Government, so when I was Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing I made a distinct effort to use every possible occasion to maximise recruitment of women to our health boards.

The Presiding Officer: You need to bring your speech to a close.

Alex Neil: I did that; if members consider health board proportions, they will see that the proportion of women is reasonably high. However, we need to extend that and we need to do more on equalities, as well as on women on boards.

I am sorry that I cannot say any more, as I have limited time, but I hope that I have given some sense of the priorities that I intend to follow in the 17 months that are left in the current session of Parliament.

14:35

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): I begin with my own words of welcome to the First Minister and her Administration. We are seven years into this SNP Government, but it is important that we acknowledge what can be seen at least as a

change in tone and style from the Government over the past two weeks—notwithstanding some of its reaction today to the Smith commission.

Like most colleagues from all sides in this Parliament, I want to work with the Government when it is taking action to support the lives of people in Scotland, and to that end there are a number of proposals in the legislative programme that give me encouragement.

Just last night, in our debate on Oxfam's even it up campaign, I outlined that land ownership reflects just one of the extreme inequalities that afflict our nation and which we need to tackle if we are to build a more progressive society. Fewer than 500 people own more than half the land in our country. That is not the threat that it would pose in relation to individual poverty if we had less in the way of alternative employment, but it is still an affront to our sense of fairness and to our broader social and economic wellbeing.

The indications are that Scottish ministers intend to take a slightly more radical approach than that which was indicated by their initial rather insipid response to the findings of the land reform review group. If that is indeed the case, it will be welcomed on this side of the chamber, and we look forward to the launch of the consultation next week.

"Check against delivery"—I believe that those words often adorn press copies of ministerial speeches. With a similar caveat—that we await further detail—there are several other proposals that I welcome. They include the help to mitigate welfare cuts and a stronger focus on the living wage. Who knows? Maybe Labour and the SNP will eventually even see eye to eye on legislation in that area. I also welcome the proposed fair work convention with an accompanying focus on gender equality and the creation of decent sustainable jobs. I know that that issue is particularly close to the heart of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy, and I hope that we can work with him to make progress in that area.

Other proposals that I welcome are votes for 16 and 17-year-olds, which the whole Parliament has now come together on; moves against human trafficking, in relation to which I pay tribute to the work of my colleague Jenny Marra; and a commitment to addressing the needs that have been outlined by Gordon Aikman in his campaign to support people who have motor neurone disease. Those are just some of the measures on which I fully expect Labour to be working constructively with the SNP over the next year or so.

On childcare, too, there are the makings of a common agenda. We seem to agree about the direction of travel on creating more accessible,

affordable and available childcare places, although the fact that we are moving at a slower pace than the rest of the UK leaves us with some concern.

It is when we move on to the broader issues to do with education that I begin to have some difficulty. There is an immediate and obvious contrast between the stated aims and aspirations that have been outlined by the Scottish Government and the budget decisions that have been taken by that same Government, which could actively hinder delivery. Labour would entirely support action to raise attainment, especially that which is focused on more deprived areas—including, for example, measures that are designed to widen access to higher education. Unfortunately, the reality is that across Scotland this Government's funding decisions mean that local authority after local authority is having to work out exactly where ministers want to cut education budgets. Last week alone, we heard that Highland Council, Falkirk Council and East Renfrewshire Council are struggling to maintain the priority that they wish to give education in the face of Scottish Government cuts.

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):

At yesterday's meeting of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee, local authorities were extremely positive about the removal of ring fencing of budgets under the Scottish Government. Local authorities have great flexibility in how they spend the resources that are allocated to them. Mr Macintosh, like many of his colleagues, calls for additional funding for local government. Where does he see disinvestment taking place to allow that additional funding?

Ken Macintosh: Not only do I not recognise the picture that Mr McDonald paints, the stark facts are that this Government spends its time arguing for full control over fiscal powers from the UK Government and yet it freezes the council tax at an unsustainable level. That represents an intellectual paradox, and I cannot believe that the SNP, and Mr McDonald in particular, cannot recognise that. The SNP, by not only cutting local authorities in the way that it has but refusing to give them any powers to raise additional resources themselves, has put a straitjacket on local government and given it no flexibility to address those issues.

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I am a bit confused. No local authority has to take the council tax freeze. It is voluntary, based on the funding from the Scottish Government.

Ken Macintosh: It is not quite panto season, but Ms Adamson delivered that with a straight face.

As I remember, local authorities were given an offer. I am not sure whether it was called blackmail—

Members: Oh!

Ken Macintosh: It is pantomime season.

Local authorities were given an offer: either take the deal that John Swinney offered—which included the council tax freeze—and get a decent increase, or do not take it and take a cut. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: You are in your last 30 seconds.

Ken Macintosh: Thank you. I feel like a local authority officer being faced with that generous offer from Mr Swinney: I have no choice whatever.

We are facing education cuts, council tax cuts and bed cuts. Delayed discharge is a priority that we will support, but the reality is that no money is going to councils to support that. We will try to work with the Scottish Government; I hope that it puts its money where its mouth is.

14:41

Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): I apologise for any part I may have played in the confusion regarding my place in the debate yesterday.

The debate, like those on the programme's predecessors, is important as we continue our progress—I hope that it is joint progress—in the direction in which we wish to travel, towards the vision that we have for our country.

I will not rehearse the well-trailed arguments that we had last year and this year, save to repeat a quotation from the introduction of last year's programme. Beyond peradventure, we know that

"taking decisions in Scotland works for individuals, families and communities."—[Official Report, 3 September 2013; c 21871.]

No matter how many impairments we face, this is the route that we should travel.

The programme should be, and is, about taking decisions with participation. It is about participation by individuals and communities and it is about empowerment of those communities. It is about ownership and the attendant responsibility. It is about fairness across society and it is about—fundamentally—maximisation of the happiness of the individuals in our communities.

Henry Ford said:

"Nobody can really guarantee the future. The best we can do is size up the chances, calculate the risks involved, estimate our ability to deal with them and then make our plans with confidence."

The fundamentals that underpin this programme for government—participation, empowerment, ownership and fairness—will make us more confident about handling whatever the future throws at us.

The programme will increase participation in the general economy. Childcare releases greater opportunity for work; the proposal to increase free childcare from 16 hours a week to 30 hours a week for three-year-olds and four-year-olds and disadvantaged two-year-olds will not just create participation—particularly for women—in the workplace, but will establish a long-term benefit to the community through the shared communication and experience that the children who receive that childcare will have.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): Will Chic Brodie give way?

Chic Brodie: Forgive me, but I will carry on, if I may.

Participation in the workplace goes beyond involvement. Success in achieving a high-wage and high-productivity economy is built on innovation and an improved research and development environment. It requires—in fact, it demands—expansion of the principle of participation in the workplace. The fair work convention, which we spoke of last week, will improve dialogue among employers, Government, public sector bodies, trade unions and employees, in a marriage between capital and labour, and is absolutely critical to securing Scotland's highly sought place in the global economy.

Participation in the workplace and elsewhere in the Scottish economy requires more than involvement; it requires and it demands ownership. Whether it is part-equity ownership in industry and commerce or quasi-equity ownership in the public sector, employee involvement is absolutely critical.

Community ownership of things such as energy activities is important, but more important is the ownership of land. David Lloyd George once famously said that

"the land belongs to the people",

and so it should—not because it is some fanciful dream but because of harsh economic facts. I welcome plans to improve and, I hope, accelerate proposals in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill with the intention of acquiring 1 million acres of land for public ownership by 2020. That is a sound proposition.

Ken Macintosh: Does Mr Brodie envisage the extension of compulsory purchase powers?

Chic Brodie: I am sorry. I missed that.

Ken Macintosh: Would Mr Brodie support the extension of compulsory purchase powers?

Chic Brodie: Compulsory purchase powers should be applied if and where necessary, but ultimately the plan that I hope we will follow in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill will embrace the appropriate processes.

Avoidance of, and even a reduction in, land and property speculation can only benefit businesses and housing for communities over the longer term and, resulting from that, our economy.

I have summarily addressed the keystones of participation and ownership, but I also want to mention fairness and happiness. Fairness is not just about determination of the living wage, even although that is very important to us. It is also about firing the ambitions, the entrepreneurship, the innovation and the internationalisation of Scotland's people, and it is about the employment and income that flows from all that. We need to develop a tax and social structure that establishes, secures and builds on fairness and individual happiness. That should be the basis of a rapid reduction in the monstrous income gap that currently besmirches our society. If we do not address that chasm, it will eventually devour all of us, financially and socially.

The Presiding Officer: You have 30 seconds.

Chic Brodie: Lastly, fairness demands, rightly, that we eschew our past and current culture and that we foster not only gender equality, as has been mentioned, but fair treatment and representation of all, irrespective of race, social circumstances and age. Once that is sorted, the merit that will come from that will be the defining feature of our society.

Let us have a programme that takes us a further step towards that participative, owning, fair and meritorious Scotland. It was Chekhov who said—

The Presiding Officer: Chekhov is very interesting, but your time is up. [*Laughter.*]

14:47

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): I welcome many of the measures and proposals that the First Minister announced in yesterday's legislative programme, not least because several of them are in response to Labour campaigns on, for example, the living wage, 50:50 representation, childcare and access to higher education. That said, I believe that in some areas the Government needs to go further, and I note that the programme itself says very little about other areas such as housing.

I want to start, however, with an area of complete consensus. On, I think, page 41 of the

budget document, it says that the Scottish Government

"will continue to build on Scotland's position ... at the cutting edge of developments in marine energy."

I was devastated to hear on Monday that the world-leading Pelamis Wave Power in my constituency had gone into administration and, yesterday, that 40 of its 56 highly skilled employees had been sacked. I am meeting Fergus Ewing to discuss the issue tomorrow morning, but I hope that the Scottish Government will do everything it can to ensure that the work of Pelamis goes on and that all of those highly skilled employees continue to develop the marine renewables technology that we so desperately need.

There are many other areas of consensus, one of which is trafficking, and I must pay tribute to my colleague Jenny Marra's superb work on that. We also welcome the 50:50 proposals and the proposals to legislate on specific domestic abuse and revenge porn offences. However, as far as this area of policy is concerned, the Scottish Government needs to look again to some of the detail of the stalking legislation, which has featured recently because of the publicity given to Janice Galloway's circumstances. In response to a question that I lodged, I was told that the Scottish Government is considering a change in the law in relation to non-harassment orders, and I hope that that—and, indeed, any other action that is needed to protect the victims not only of stalking but of other forms of violence against women—will be taken forward.

Although I welcome the childcare proposals in general, the Government needs to diversify its approach to childcare. We, of course, want more nursery provision for three and four-year-olds, although we need to ensure that everyone gets two years. However, the Government also needs to examine the key issues of flexibility and affordability, which are the big issues that Kezia Dugdale has flagged up in all the extensive work that she has done on childcare.

I welcome the proposals on public health, particularly in relation to e-cigarettes. I support e-cigarettes. They are a useful and important tool for many people who are trying to stop smoking. However, I also support a ban on their sale to people under the age of 18, and I hope that the Government will also consider limiting the sale of e-cigarettes to tobacco-registered outlets.

I welcome the other proposals on health, but I would like to flag up the fact that, in its 2007 manifesto, the SNP said that it would bring in no-fault compensation for the national health service. The current system is expensive and slow and we have had working groups considering the issue of

no-fault compensation for some time. I hope that that process will have an outcome, but it does not look like we will get one during this session of Parliament, which is disappointing.

Another omission relates to private housing. Again, in response to the great work of James Kelly, there was a consultation on the issue recently, but we have heard nothing about it. The announcement contained not one word about private rented housing, yet, last week, for example, we learned that Edinburgh is the second city in the UK in terms of the percentage of a private renter's income that is spent on rent, so there is clearly a need for policies on rent capping and on longer tenancies, which are a complementary issue. I am disappointed that we heard nothing about that in the legislative programme announcement.

A further omission was that there was no mention of a bill on lobbying. People can take different views on lobbying, and I do not want to go into the pros and cons of my colleague Neil Findlay's legislation, but it is the procedure of the Parliament that a bill that is introduced by a member can be taken over by the Government, and for the member, at that point, to leave the matter to the Government. It is quite wrong for the Government to say that it would take over Neil Findlay's bill but then to do nothing about it. The Standards and Public Appointments Committee should consider that issue.

Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): As Malcolm Chisholm should know, as he was here for part of the debate on the issue, the Standards and Public Appointments Committee is considering the matter and is taking great care over it. Until that committee has completed its inquiry, it would be inappropriate to make a decision on the matter.

Malcolm Chisholm: I am afraid that that misses the point that I was making about procedure. The procedure is not being followed, and that is totally unfair to my colleague Neil Findlay.

I am looking forward to the passage of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill, which is one of the most interesting bills that is before us. However, I noted that, in its submission to the consultation on the bill, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations said:

"The transfer of assets to communities should not be driven by public sector cost saving exercises. The basis for asset transfers should be that communities are able to better utilise a public sector asset for their own purposes."

A current example of that in my constituency concerns a situation in which the Granton Improvement Society is trying to take over some land from EDI, which is an arm's-length body of the City of Edinburgh Council. At the moment, the

decision is for EDI, whose board has said no to the society. I hope that it changes its mind or that, when it is passed, the bill forces it to change its mind.

14:53

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): The First Minister has set out 12 bills that will take us all forward in crucial ways. In the context of social justice, she has committed £100 million to help mitigate the damage that is caused by Westminster welfare cuts; she is leading by example in pushing forward the application of a living wage of £7.85 an hour from next April; and she has set out moves forward on violence against women, with the pilot of Clare's law and, in particular, on the issue of revenge porn.

I have been campaigning for some time on the issue of revenge porn—the distribution of intimate images without the consent of those pictured—and I am especially pleased to hear that the Government is committing to giving careful and full consideration to making it a criminal offence. Scotland could lead on the topic, and I am pleased that it is a component of the legislative plans. I agree with Malcolm Chisholm that dealing with the issue might give us an opportunity to consider how we might improve the stalking laws, after they have been in place for a while.

Of equal importance is the prospect of the introduction of a human trafficking and exploitation bill. Colleagues know that that is another area that I have repeatedly campaigned on, bringing it to the Equal Opportunities Committee in the previous session. It remains outside the comprehension of many people because it is so shocking. The notion of groups of young men, boys, women and girls locked in dirty rooms to serve men, held prisoner and made to work is beyond the understanding of most of us. The danger is that we sideline it because we find it so hard to believe that it is happening but—believe me—it is. I commend the short film "Nefarious: Merchant of Souls" to members to aid their understanding of how difficult the subject is. That we have shown ourselves to be tough and determined to obliterate the abuse is testament to our fundamental commitment to equality, fairness and essential human rights—rights that the Tories would prefer that we abandoned.

There is to be new guidance on support for those with motor neurone disease. Members know that I have campaigned for seven years and taken many individual local authorities to task on the issue of care charging. The plans to legislate on that if local authorities are not going to end that practice must be commended. I also commend Gordon Aikman and pay tribute to him for raising

the topic to the top of the agenda. We also welcome the new guidance on domestic abuse, which should impact positively on the lives of many Scots.

The Scottish Government already has an impressive record, as voters have clearly recognised, which is why the SNP now has a membership of more than 93,000—more than the Lib Dems and the UK Independence Party combined right across the UK. Scots have recognised the hollow promises of the famous vow, and we have seen just how hollow it was today. Within a few hours, the Westminster Government disengaged from what it had committed to in order to buy a no vote, after threatening pensioners, delivering dishonest messages about what a yes vote would mean and telling those on benefits that they would be left with little or nothing. On the streets during the campaign, we heard evidence of those false statements over and over again. One elderly lady told me, “They told me I wouldn’t get my pension on Friday if I voted yes.” I am confident that, if there was another referendum tomorrow, we would have a different result. However, we are where we are now and we must move forward unless, or until, the sovereign people of Scotland demand something different.

James Kelly: Will the member give way?

Christina McKelvie: Maybe James Kelly is going to give us something different.

James Kelly: I remind Ms McKelvie that the referendum is over. Scotland voted no by a majority of 400,000 and we all need to move on. The delivery of part of the vow today is part of that.

Christina McKelvie: Yes, Scotland voted for a vow that was empty and hollow. Labour members are holding hands with their Tory pals across the chamber once again to justify the fact that they turned their backs on the Scottish people.

We have limited control over what we can do now for ourselves but, within that control, our First Minister’s legislative programme is clear and committed to the protection of our most vulnerable citizens. Do Labour members remember them? They know that they have been forgotten. It is disappointing to see the very limited offer from Smith. Where are equalities, the minimum wage and tax and revenues? They are all reserved to Westminster.

In spite of the predictable disappointment of the Smith report, we must now up our game and work even harder to meet the demands of the 1.6 million people who voted for independence and those who voted no on the basis of the vow.

Jenny Marra: Will the member take an intervention?

Christina McKelvie: The truth really hurts, doesn’t it? Rightly, those people will not be content with the limited controls that Smith is allowing us to operate.

Jenny Marra: Will the member take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer: Ms Marra, the member is not giving way. Sit down.

Christina McKelvie: Less than 30 per cent of our taxes will be set in Scotland and only 20 per cent of the welfare budget will be under our control, yet, from the recent polls, we know that 75 per cent of Scots—the ones that Labour members turned their backs on—want the Parliament to have total control over welfare policy. Our powers do not match the promises, and they certainly do not match the aspirations of the Scottish people.

We have a duty and a responsibility not to sit and laugh at the sovereign people of Scotland—all of them, yeses and nos—and the Government’s programme is a clear statement of its commitment to the common values of prosperity, fairness and equality.

Jenny Marra: Will the member take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer: The member has 10 more seconds.

Christina McKelvie: The lack of ambition and imagination—in fact, the lack of anything—from the pro-union parties is not the settled will of the Scottish people and those parties will feel the full force of it when the people realise that they have reneged on the vow.

14:59

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Let me be positive, Presiding Officer. We particularly welcome two aspects of yesterday’s Scottish Government announcement that related to education and young people: the growing issue of how best to support children with additional support needs and the Government’s intention to focus fully on addressing the attainment gap. Those are critical issues in education, particularly as they bring specific challenges to some of our most disadvantaged children.

The statistics speak for themselves. In a Conservative-led debate a few weeks back, we all agreed that the current state of affairs is simply not good enough, so we very much welcome those two proposals.

I am not entirely persuaded of the need for new attainment officers in every local authority, as the directors of education are the right people to have a handle on the attainment situation.

Mark McDonald: Will the member give way?

Liz Smith: I will not give way just now, if the member does not mind.

The Scottish Government needs to explain exactly what the role of those officers will be and how the funding stream will be provided. I would also be interested to know what criteria will be used when measuring outcomes.

The First Minister was wrong yesterday when she offered the view:

"Against every main measurement, Scottish school education is getting better."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 2014; c 24.]

That is not factually true. If she cares to read essays by people such as Keir Bloomer and Lindsay Paterson—I know that the Scottish Government has great respect for them both—she will see that they have praised where praise is due but they have also set out where we are not doing so well and where we have fallen back. Just as the previous education secretary was wrong when he argued a year ago that Scotland does not have any failing schools, the First Minister needs to be careful to present an absolutely accurate picture.

Mark McDonald: Will the member give way?

Liz Smith: I will not, if the member does not mind.

Improvement is not all about money. We have had several robust debates in the chamber about what we need to do about the problem, and that is set against a particularly challenging economic environment for councils, which Ken Macintosh mentioned. Councils have been discussing a possible increase in class sizes, a reduction in the school day and some pupils starting school aged six instead of five—all to save money. Those are serious issues. The Conservatives unashamedly say that the situation only heightens the need for radical school reform and a radical look at how councils manage their schools. If we do not believe that they are the right people to do that, we need to have a debate about that. We need to make schools accountable to those who matter most: pupils, parents and teachers.

On the theme of choice, we very much welcome Sir Ian Wood's proposals to bring more diversity into education. My colleague Mary Scanlon will talk about that in her speech. The Government's concentration on literacy is also right and we warmly welcome that.

It is undoubtedly good to hear about the Scottish Government's proposals to expand childcare. We very much support that approach. To pick up Malcolm Chisholm's point, we need to look at the flexibility and affordability of the policy. However, we will not be able to do anything about the social

justice element of the policy if we are not prepared to take strong action about the birth date discrimination. As Ruth Davidson said yesterday when she tackled the First Minister on the issue, it is absolutely wrong that, because of a child's birth date, they are not provided with the same access to nursery provision as those who are born at other times in the year. I say to the First Minister—I wrote to her last week about this—that the Conservatives will keep on going on the issue until we get some progress.

I turn very quickly to further and higher education. One has to wonder why university governance is back as a priority. Notwithstanding the fact that the Parliament thoroughly reviewed university governance in the context of the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013, that an amended code of governance has been agreed following the excellent work carried out by Lord Smith of Kelvin—who has his hands full in other ways today—and that the Scottish Government continues to be unable to produce any proof whatsoever that universities are not running well because of a problem of governance, the Government puts university governance as a priority in the new education bill. I do not think that many people in the sector understand that, particularly when there are far more pressing issues such as college places

I have heard many times from the Scottish Government that we should not worry too much about the college situation because the full-time equivalent places have kept up extremely well. They have—that is absolutely true. However, that is not the statistic that we should be dealing with. Yesterday, the First Minister spoke—very eloquently, I have to say—about the need for greater flexibility in the workforce and a job market that is increasingly responsive to the needs of young people. That is exactly the point about college places. There must be greatest concern about the places that best serve some of the disadvantaged in society and women—part-time places. To target university governance, where no problem exists, at the same time as ignoring some of the college issues is unacceptable.

The Government is undeniably left-wing and undeniably keen to extend its powers so, although we will support some aspects of the programme—the measures to expand childcare, address additional support needs, tackle the attainment gap, improve literacy and eradicate human trafficking—we will not stand by and allow the state to increasingly undermine the rights and freedoms of individuals, families and communities. On that principle, the Government can expect fierce opposition from the Conservatives.

15:05

Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): To underline the fact that we have a radical Government, radical land reform is rightly at the centre of the social justice debate.

"The Land of Scotland and the Common Good: Report of the Land Reform Review Group" sets the tone for the wide range of land reform policies that are contained in the SNP programme. We can transform our nation's fortunes through optimum use of our most basic natural resource. Land reform will deliver participation, prosperity and fairness but, above all, we must diversify ownership to create social and environmental sustainability.

Inequalities in Scotland are summed up by the most concentrated pattern of land ownership in Europe. Land reform is based on the public interest and has overwhelming support in the Parliament. First, we need to know who owns Scotland. Next, we need to build local capacity to own the land and use it sustainably. Crucially, the proposed land reform commission could facilitate the best transfer of public or private land to a new set of non-traditional owners.

A good example of the new hope in land ownership received unjustifiably mixed coverage this week. The community buyout of the Isle of Gigha in 2002 has transformed the island, which has a growing population and a variety of new commercial activities to complement farming and tourism. Nevertheless, the BBC hinted this week at financial trouble for the Gigha Heritage Trust, which took over the island for about £4 million in 2002, saying that it was almost £3 million in the red.

The trust replied that it

"has invested in the housing and other developments on the island some of which has been borrowed, some granted from supporting organisations and some raised from the island's own businesses and efforts ... In addition to improving our housing stock, £1m was paid back to lenders within a year of the original purchase of the island; over £800,000 has been raised through Trust's renewables companies; and the value of the island has increased to over £7m."

It has also recently carried out a strategic review with the support of Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

A typically hostile press has focused on a grumpy farmer, alleged divisions among islanders and implied incompetence among community leaders, not on their successes. The islanders are due to take part in a vote of confidence in the chairwoman of the trust this week.

That stands in stark contrast to the conduct of the private estates that sprawl across our landscape. We never know how much in the red

they are and the media rarely asks. Also, the families who live on large estates such as those owned by the 432 individuals and trusts that control half of rural Scotland are never asked their opinions about the future of the land.

Lairds avoid taxes through skilful accountants. James Hunter and company suggested to the Scottish Affairs Committee at Westminster that huge landholders offset losses on land through tax accounting via non-landed enterprises.

All those powers are still reserved and not on offer by the Smith commission.

Liz Smith: Does Mr Gibson acknowledge that, nonetheless, many of those private landowners are doing a highly successful job when it comes to Scotland's economy?

Rob Gibson: As Andy Wightman said in *The National* newspaper today:

"these ideas ... will be opposed every bit of the way by powerful vested interests."

There is a powerful vested interest. In some cases, the lairds have had 1,000 years to build their domains, so it will take community bodies such as those in Gigha, Eigg, South Uist and Knoydart a few more than 10 years to sort out the mess that the lairds often left behind.

The North Harris Trust has successfully built new homes, and it runs the deer shooting and creates renewable energy income, as Fiona Mackenzie has charted in her recent book "Places of Possibility". That sums up the intent of the Government's land reform package.

The review of local government finance can take land value tax seriously and look at many other possibilities. Like many members, I want tenant farming reform to be included in the proposed land reform bill, and I want real powers to be given to the land commission to chart the how as well as the what of sustainable land ownership.

We could measure the success of land reform against the number of members that Scottish Land & Estates has. At present, it has 2,000 members. In 10 years' time, perhaps it should have a membership of 20,000, which should comprise a vibrant mix of communities, smaller landholders and reduced-scale sporting estates. Why not? As the land leaguers used to say, the land is before us. I commend the ambition and common sense in the Scottish Government's plans.

15:11

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): It would be remiss of me not to start with a mention of the recommendations of the Smith commission, which were unveiled just a few hours ago. Let us be clear: it is a bold package of new powers to

give the Scottish Parliament the muscle that it needs to build a fairer society, with opportunity for all.

Scottish Liberal Democrats have championed home rule for decades, so today is exciting for us. We are getting £20 billion in tax powers and £3 billion to build a Scottish welfare system. The Smith commission package delivers on the vow and more—it is vow max.

John Mason: Will the member give way?

Alison McInnes: I want to make some headway.

It has been achieved through unprecedented cross-party talks, which have involved all of us working together meaningfully and leaving behind the politics of division and grievance. That must continue. There must be a constructive relationship between both of Scotland's Governments.

In this Parliament, over the past two years the SNP has relied on its majority. Time and again, it has failed to listen to reasoned, principled opposition and has bulldozed policies through regardless, so I welcome the First Minister's indication that that is going to change, and that whenever parties believe that they have a good idea it will be listened to.

With that consensus in mind, I will start on a positive note. There are many principles in the programme for government that Scottish Liberal Democrats share and many areas in which I think the Government will find ready support, including votes for 16 and 17-year-olds and land reform, to name a couple. I also whole-heartedly welcome the desire to make progress towards a new law on revenge pornography, and I look forward to the introduction of a bill on human trafficking and exploitation.

The remainder of my remarks will focus on areas in which there is less consensus. The previous Cabinet Secretary for Justice took the Government down a path that many of us are uncomfortable with. At this crossroads, I lay down a challenge to the First Minister to change direction. She and the new Cabinet Secretary for Justice have an opportunity to change direction and to be more liberal. They can carry a consensus in areas in which there is common ground; in areas in which there is political discord, they should at least be willing to listen. I hope that they are listening today, because I want changes to be made in a few key areas.

I want a halt to be called to the overused and detrimental police tactic of non-statutory stop and searches. Used correctly, stop and search is a legitimate tool to prevent and detect crime, but Scots are seven times more likely to be subjected

to the tactic than are people in England and Wales. Individuals are searched when there are no grounds whatever to suspect them. Last week, we found out that more than 8,000 searches had been carried out by armed officers on routine duties. Who believes that that is not a heavy-handed tactic?

The Human Rights Commission, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, charities and more share our concerns about the unregulated and unaccountable nature of non-statutory stop and search. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of unjustified intrusions and purposeless interactions that are not based on any evidence or intelligence. Even the Scottish Police Authority has concluded that there is no robust evidence that the searches prevent crime.

Therefore, I ask the Government to back my efforts to amend the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill to ensure that all stop and searches are regulated, are based on suspicion of wrongdoing and are rooted in law. I want the powers of the chief constable to be set out. We must move away from a system that has allowed armed officers to routinely patrol our communities without that ever being the subject of public debate or parliamentary scrutiny.

The need to define roles and boundaries has been exposed time and again. The operational independence argument has been used to stifle legitimate debate not just on armed police but on the removal of valued local services. It is a barrier to due scrutiny and good governance. Only yesterday, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities wrote to the chief constable and the SPA to stress the need for local scrutiny and

"early, meaningful dialogue on national policies".

We need to move away from a one-dimensional view of policing. The number of bobbies on the beat and crime figures do not trump all these other concerns. The police must operate within a framework set by this Parliament and the national force cannot be allowed to shirk transparency, accountability and community engagement any longer. With transparency and local community empowerment in mind, I hope that the Scottish Government will support the changes that I seek.

We will, of course, return to the Government's flawed and ill-conceived plans to scrap corroboration. I am sure that we all look forward to the publication of the review and that there will be a good amount of debate following that. I say again, though, that I hope that this minister will be more open to listening than his predecessor was.

I also hope that the Cabinet Secretary for Justice can bring renewed focus to the need to reduce the prison population and to improve the criminal justice system and, in particular, our

prisons. Health figures out this week showed that complaints were up in our national health service, due to the inclusion of the prison population. The main areas of concern were mental health services and rehabilitation services. We must make progress on that.

I hope that the Government will also be willing to look at increasing the use of community disposals and will improve the situation for female offenders. By progressing the recommendations of the Angiolini commission, we can ensure that we have facilities that are suitable for the existing prison population.

I echo what Willie Rennie said yesterday: where we agree, we will be glad to support this Government's legislation; when we disagree, we will always work constructively to improve it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that the debate is once again oversubscribed, so if members could take less than six minutes, that would be helpful.

15:16

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): I am sure that many Liberals out there are scratching their heads, thinking, "Home rule? What we've got from the Smith commission is nothing like home rule." Alison McInnes may be a Liberal Democrat, but she is not the sort of Liberal that once fought for home rule.

I associate myself with everything that Rob Gibson said about land reform; indeed, I was going to speak about it, but I stepped back a little given some of the estates in my constituency. I am not sure whether the law of treason is still on the statute book but perhaps I should move away from royal Deeside just for a moment.

There is so much to be welcomed in the proposed bills. The First Minister spoke yesterday about fairness, prosperity and participation. We have just been through the most amazing participation of a lifetime—participation that, perhaps, politics has never witnessed before—with the engagement of so many people in all our communities. The engagement that came across more than others was that of young people. I am glad that there is cross-party support for the franchise for 16 and 17-year-olds. It is just a pity that our 16 and 17-year-olds in Scotland will not be able to vote in the general election.

At a hustings at Our Dynamic Earth, along with Dame Anne Begg, I met a group of people with disabilities who felt that their voice was not being heard in the referendum. During the hustings, they made it clear that politics needed to move aside and that their voice needed to be listened to.

That is why I am quite excited about the proposed bills. I sincerely hope that the cabinet secretaries with the appropriate portfolios can look at trying to move forward on the aspirations of people with disabilities. It is all very well going down the route of gender equality, which I support; but something needs to be done—and I am perhaps getting into dangerous waters here, because I am not a great fan of quotas—to ensure that we have a sense of equality in our society.

I sincerely hope that Paul Grice is not fearing for his job as chief executive of the Parliament, because we need some good men at the top as well as good women. However, the thing about equality is that we need to try to ensure equality for all, and people with disabilities have asked me to give their voice an airing in the Parliament today.

We are looking at increasing our apprenticeship programme from 25,000 to 30,000, and people with disabilities want to be included in that and want part of the programme to take into account their specific needs. People with disabilities who can work and who want to work need the skills and the opportunity to do so. That is all that they are asking for—the opportunity to contribute to society. They do not want to be known as the scroungers and the people who are looking for handouts, because they are not. They want to participate fully in our society and feel that they belong and can actually deliver. That is where prosperity and fairness come in. Many people with disabilities give more in the workplace than their counterparts perhaps do, because they know that they have had to work hard to get there.

I remember being asked when I was first elected whether I would be a role model for people with disabilities. I was slightly hesitant about that and I said, "Well, yes, but maybe no." The reason was that I did not want to be seen as the blind MSP; I wanted to be seen as an MSP who just happens to be blind. That is the point about people with disabilities in the community and the workplace: they should be seen not for their disability but for their ability, talents and skills. We should look to find ways and opportunities to ensure that they have that focus in the job market. That is why I am excited about the proposed education bill. If we provide the appropriate support for people in their early education, that will probably give them opportunities to use their talents and skills.

I did not go to university and I do not have a degree. For me, university is not the goal that it is for many people who aspire to it. People should use their talent and skill and get the opportunities. If that means going to college to become a tradesperson, such as a plumber, an electrician, a slater or someone in construction, that is absolutely fine, because we do not need

graduates to do many of those jobs. It is nice for people who have a degree, but we do not necessarily need it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that I must ask you to draw to a close.

Dennis Robertson: Yes.

That is why Sir Ian Wood's report is exciting, but we need to be inclusive, fair and equal. My plea to the Government is this: look at the people in our communities who have disabilities and give them a chance.

15:23

Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Lab): I am pleased to speak in the debate. In six minutes, I cannot go through everything in "One Scotland: the Government's Programme for Scotland 2014-15", but I welcome the document, because I believe that we need to move beyond the constitution and start to have a discussion and debate about how we tackle the big issues out there, such as how we give everybody opportunity in life and how we tackle poverty and inequality.

I will mention two areas that it is good to see in the document and on which we need action and movement. Progress has been made on domestic violence in the past decade and more. Police authorities and community safety partnerships are doing a lot more work on that, which is to be commended, but that has not resulted in a fall in the numbers of domestic violence cases or of those who suffer from it. There is more to be done on that issue, so I welcome its inclusion in the programme. I am glad that the document mentions the pilots in Aberdeen and Ayrshire. I hope that we will see how they work and then pick up on that.

Christina McKelvie mentioned the proposals on human trafficking. The term "human trafficking" does not quite reflect what we are talking about, which is modern-day slavery, which appals people. I commend the Scottish Government for picking up on the issue.

It is right that I mention the council tax, because since I entered Parliament I have argued, as a member of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee, that we need to review how local government is funded. I welcome the proposed commission. We need to work with local authorities to consider a way forward that will properly fund local government. The reality is that anyone can cut taxes—there are countries that have low taxes, but they also have poor public services.

On the funding that is provided to mitigate the council tax freeze, many people in local government—including me, in the past—have argued that that is local government's money

anyway. Is Mr Swinney seriously suggesting that the moneys that go to mitigate the council tax freeze, which local authorities argue are not enough, are to come out? If that happened, Fife Council would have to raise £4 million or £5 million before it even started raising the council tax. The money will need to stay with local government, whatever new system of taxation comes in. I will take up the point with the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy another time.

Yesterday, Nicola Sturgeon talked about bedblocking, and she was right to raise the issue. Alex Neil is looking a bit more relaxed than he was last week and the week before, when he was health secretary. I have always said that regardless of the political colour of the Administration in this place, the reality is that there are major challenges in health and social care, to which the Government in Scotland—whoever is running it—must face up.

I was disappointed when the First Minister said that £15 million would be made available, made up of £5 million from the Scottish Government, £5 million from national health service boards and £5 million from local authorities. Regardless of whether we think that the local government settlement is reasonable, the fact is that local authorities the length and breadth of Scotland, whatever political Administration is running them, face major challenges and are having to cut services. How are they to come up with £5 million?

NHS Fife's acute budget overspends to the tune of £3 million or £4 million. The former health secretary told me that that will be reined in.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Alex Rowley: No, I have too many points to make in the six minutes that I have.

Last year, NHS Fife overspent on acute services by more than £8 million. The money has to be clawed back from somewhere, which is why we are not seeing the transfer of resources from the acute sector to community care and why we face such big problems.

Alex Neil talked about the transfer of powers from London to Edinburgh. We need to go further and consider the transfer of powers not just to Edinburgh but to local authorities. I sincerely believe that if we are to tackle poverty and inequality in Scotland, the Scottish Government must work in partnership with local government and community planning partners through an anti-poverty strategy that runs through every level of government.

A lot of good work is going on out there through the early years collaborative. We need to be

prepared to tackle the areas of highest deprivation and greatest inequality through partnership with the third sector and local government. Excellent work is going on in local authorities across Scotland, with the establishment of family centres, early intervention and the targeting of resources. If we are to tackle poverty, we must tackle the causes of poverty.

I am running out of time but I want to mention schools and education.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must conclude, please.

Alex Rowley: I am finishing, Presiding Officer.

We must be much more ambitious. We must have a new approach, which involves colleges and employers, so that, starting from the early years, we bring about a revolution in education—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry. I really need you to close.

Alex Rowley: Because the one thing on which I agree with Liz Smith is that we need to do much better than we are currently doing.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before we move on, I have to give members fair warning that I am afraid that I will have to cut them dead at six minutes if they cannot keep to their time.

15:29

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): There is absolutely no doubt that this programme for government will create more and better-paid jobs. It will create a strong and more sustainable economy; it will build a fairer Scotland; it will tackle inequality; and it will pass significant powers to our people and our communities.

However, I regret a part of the Government's programme—although I see that even that comment did not get my cabinet secretary's attention. What I regret is the sentence that refers to

"£104 million in 2015-16 to mitigate the welfare reforms being imposed by Westminster".

I regret that because it would have been so much better for the decisions about welfare to have been made here in Scotland, where our money could have been used for the benefit of people and not to undo wrongs from elsewhere.

I was hopeful that the Smith commission might have given us some hope in that direction, but I stand with the Scottish Trades Union Congress in being "underwhelmed".

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I thank the member for taking an intervention. I genuinely took hope from the Smith commission when it said that

it would give this Parliament the power to set its own benefits.

Clare Adamson: What we need is control of the whole welfare system, which is not coming to Scotland.

By any measure, whether promised by the Labour Party or delivered by Tories and Lib Dems, austerity is a failed policy. A chancellor who has staked the entire reputation of the UK Government on aggressive deficit reduction, regardless of the dreadful economic and social cost, has categorically failed. In some areas, borrowing is actually increasing.

The social costs of austerity Britain show that the policy is not working. I return to a New Scientist article from 2013 that I have quoted in the chamber before, which talks about the true cost of cuts. It states:

"the immediate consequences of austerity may give way to more enduring and insidious effects on health. It is plausible that protracted economic hardship will lead to increases in heart attacks, strokes and depression. Stress hormones are known to trigger or exacerbate these conditions, and it is hard to argue that those worrying about the security of their jobs, homes, families and finances are not experiencing high levels of stress."

It goes on to say that, in the political arena, the

"effects on health, on the other hand, have gone largely undiscussed."

There is an assumption that when austerity ends, the belt tightening goes away, house prices start to rise, the economy improves and health problems will not exist. However, people affected by those problems will undergo a genetic transformation. That will happen to some babies in the womb because of their mothers' stress hormones. It will be a generational problem that we in Scotland will have to face.

What is really worrying about austerity is that it is not just about the wealth of our nation; it is also detrimental to the health of our nation. That is why, although I regret the necessity of mitigating problems from elsewhere, I welcome the measure that the Government's work programme has designed to tackle poverty and health and social inequalities in our country.

The community empowerment measures are welcome. I look forward to the people and communities fund, which will have an additional £10 million to allocate next year. That will double the resource to deliver power to our communities. I also welcome the bill that will end historical poll tax debt collection.

I welcome the taking forward of our manifesto commitment to establish an independent commission to examine fairer alternatives to the current council tax system. The commission, which will be established in conjunction with local

authorities and COSLA, will start its work early next year to deliver an alternative. I listened carefully to Alex Rowley's concerns about the council tax. I am a bit more sympathetic to hearing those concerns from him than from the rest of the Labour members, who of course stood on a manifesto promise of a council tax freeze.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab): A fully funded one.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Clare Adamson: The council tax freeze has been attacked in the chamber by Labour, the Tories and, regrettably, yesterday by the Green Party. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Clare Adamson: Although I welcome the commitment to seek a fairer system, I must defend what has been an essential policy across my Central Scotland region. At the SNP conference, Alex Salmond talked of the £1,200 on average that hard-pressed, hard-working families had saved through the council tax freeze.

I feel that I have to give a bit of a history lesson here: the council tax was a tax that was out of control, having risen by nearly 50 per cent. It accounts for only 10.8 per cent of council revenues, but families were hard pressed by it.

I remind Labour members that, in the Labour heartland of North Lanarkshire, 83 per cent of families live in properties at band D or below, and £1,200 was an essential lifeline for them when they were hard pressed by the financial downturn and the current—*[Interruption.]* I cannot believe that I am hearing Labour members say that the 52,363 people in North Lanarkshire in band D properties did not deserve the council tax freeze. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Clare Adamson: That money was for really hard-pressed families. The idea that there are hordes of middle-class people running around rubbing their hands in glee at benefiting from that money is ridiculous—*[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please. We want to hear the member closing.

Clare Adamson: It is poor families—hard-pressed, struggling families—who have benefited from the council tax freeze, and it has been an absolute lifeline to them during this Government's time in office.

15:35

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): The Government's legislative programme shows that the SNP under Nicola Sturgeon is finally looking at

the business of governing our country. To have 12 bills across a range of issues shows much potential but, as always, the proof will be in what the Government intends to do, how much time and energy it will spend on driving change forward, and whether it will meet priorities with resource and budget commitments.

Educational attainment in my home city of Dundee is not nearly as high as it should be. The Government has said that it will put an attainment adviser in each local authority—great, but how will that be backed up? Will there be targets for improvement? How will those targets be met? What resource will the attainment adviser have at their disposal? That is the meat of change.

Just a few weeks ago in Dundee, early years practitioners, who were all trained in the Read Write Inc programme to give literacy support to primary 1 and 2 pupils, were removed from classrooms by the SNP and redeployed into nurseries to meet the Government's commitment on 600 hours of childcare. That step came at the expense of literacy, and it is that kind of detail that will truly be the proof of whether the First Minister's programme is transformative.

There is a commitment in the programme to implement the Wood commission's recommendations. The Government has still not formally responded to the Wood commission—I hope that that might happen in the new year, because we need a lot of detail on how that will work.

I attended a seminar last week at Dundee and Angus College on implementing Wood's proposals across our region. Colleges, local businesses and schools are all thinking now about how Wood will work. I feel that the Government is falling slightly behind. It needs to respond to the recommendations and show leadership on how it expects Wood's recommendations to be implemented, or it risks losing momentum on the important issue of youth employment. I hope that the response will be published soon.

Central to Wood is the restoration of vocational education, but that must be matched by action and budget. As Liz Smith said, cutting college places by 140,000 robs young people of opportunities. John Swinney's flat cash settlement for colleges this year goes no way towards alleviating the situation. I hope that when the Deputy First Minister sums up the debate, he will be able to tell us how the commitment to implement Wood's proposals will be supported by the budget for colleges. He knows—I have told him in this chamber—that of the more than 11,000 people who applied to Dundee and Angus College this autumn, 6,000 were unable to get a place. What of the Government's youth guarantee for all those youngsters?

Bob Doris: Will the member take an intervention?

Jenny Marra: No, thank you. I am sorry, but I have a lot to get through.

The fair work convention is a great opportunity. The First Minister has committed herself to it in the programme, but Annabelle Ewing and Nicola Sturgeon should be clear that they will act on its outcomes. Perhaps they should make a vow, because the vows are being delivered.

Too many recommendations lie dusty on the shelf. Very little from the transformative Christie commission, for instance, has been acted on by the Government, despite its warm words at the time.

There were 30 recommendations in the working together review that was put together by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Trades Union Congress, but we still have no commitment from the Scottish Government on how many of those recommendations it will implement. I hope that we can make progress on that soon, and I know that the STUC is watching the situation carefully.

I was very pleased yesterday to see a proposed human trafficking and exploitation bill on the Government's agenda. It will be the first ever human rights bill to come before the Scottish Parliament, so its introduction will be a poignant moment.

Agencies estimate that there were 55 victims of human trafficking in Scotland last year. However, we, along with the agencies and the people on the front line who work with victims, know that that is just the tip of the iceberg. Trafficking victims are in our communities, urban and rural. They are brought to this country—many on the promise of a better life—and are held and exploited. Many are sexually exploited, and many are held for forced labour at no or little pay in awful living conditions.

If I tell members that my office has had reports of teenage girls being trafficked back and forth across Scotland for sexual exploitation, they will know how important the proposed legislation is. I look forward to the introduction of the bill, which most importantly should contain a legal right for victims to get the protection that they need—a proposal that has the support of more than 50,000 people.

I wish the First Minister well with her programme for government. Her talk of consensus is nice, but she has a majority in the Parliament and a lot of support. She should do something bold to make Scotland a better place—that will be her legacy.

15:41

Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP):

There is much to be welcomed in the Government's programme. It contains several bills that are not only of wide national interest but will clearly have a genuine, demonstrable impact on individuals, particularly those who most need help.

I was pleased that the Scottish Parliament pioneered the inaugural annual carers parliament in 2012, and I am glad to see that carers' needs remain a priority for the Government. Although the vast army of unpaid carers undoubtedly save health and social services a substantial amount of money every year, giving carers a say, on top of financial support and respite care, should be a priority, and I am glad that that will be recognised in legislation.

Like many members in the chamber today, I was fortunate to attend the dinner at Prestonfield House hotel last week. The clear highlight for me was not, I have to say, the two victory speeches from the First Minister, but Gordon Aikman's speech acknowledging the judges' award, in which he spoke on behalf of motor neurone disease sufferers and others.

I am glad that the First Minister recognised the issue of social care charging in a meaningful way in her speech yesterday, and I am hopeful that the Parliament can work on the issue together.

I welcome the continuing commitment to widening access to higher education and the increase in funding for the impact for access fund. I represent the University of St Andrews, and I recognise its commitment to widening access, but I also recognise that we still have some considerable way to go in that respect.

On participation, I am pleased that there is consensus on extending the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds, and I hope that the necessary legislation can be introduced as quickly as possible to enable young people to vote in 2016.

Some legislation in the programme for government will have an impact on those who have no say in the political process but who arguably need our help more than anybody else. I speak, of course, of the proposed human trafficking bill, to which Jenny Marra has just referred.

The introduction of the bill will be a significant step in the right direction, and will require and deserve the full support of members on all sides of the chamber. I commend Jenny Marra on her early involvement in the issue. I recall attending the launch of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's report on human trafficking in Scotland back in late 2011, when the Labour peer Baroness Kennedy stressed the potential for

Scotland to be a leader in tackling human trafficking, so I am pleased that we have got to where we are today.

Last month, along with Jenny Marra and Christina McKelvie, I was fortunate to attend a summit that was held in the Parliament and attended by representatives of prosecuting authorities not only from England and Wales and Northern Ireland but from the Republic of Ireland, which was a first. Collaboration across borders will more effectively help to combat the scourge of human trafficking.

One thing that came out strongly from that summit was the value of the European arrest warrant, so I am pleased that the argument in that respect appears to have been won down south, notwithstanding the best efforts of the Tory right. It is important that the proposed legislation will ensure that victims of trafficking are properly supported through what can be a very stressful judicial system. Accordingly, I welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to enhancing the rights of victims, and I hope that that plays a central part in the bill.

I also welcome the Government's commitment to tackling another scourge: revenge porn, to which Alex Neil referred.

The year 1964 was a significant one. Just over 50 years ago, *The Sun* emerged as a newspaper, in its pre-Murdoch phase, from the ashes of the *Daily Herald*, and a general election took place in October 1964 from which Labour emerged with a small majority, although Teddy Taylor managed to win Glasgow Cathcart for the Tories. A few months before then, the Succession (Scotland) Act 1964 was passed. It remains the definitive piece of legislation on wills and estates in Scotland.

Society in Scotland has changed significantly since then, as the Scottish Law Commission recognised in its report on the 1964 act in 2009. Some of the SLC's proposals remain significantly controversial. Although I welcome the Government's commitment to legislate on a number of technical aspects, such as closing a number of jurisdictional gaps and, in particular, clarifying the effect on a will of divorce, dissolution or annulment, or the birth of a child, I hope that before too long we will as a Parliament take forward legislation to bring our succession law up to date and make it fit for purpose in the 21st century.

The proposed fatal accident inquiries bill is also a positive step forward, and I am hopeful that it will implement Lord Cullen's remaining recommendations and modernise the way in which fatal accident inquiries are held in Scotland. Further, a community justice bill will obviously

need careful consideration, building on the need to ensure a balance of outcomes nationally and locally.

An issue that did not feature very heavily in yesterday's debate but which I believe merits further discussion is the introduction of a Clare's law. I am certain that many of us will watch the progress of the six-month trial in Ayrshire and Aberdeen with some interest, and I echo Sandra White's comments that, hopefully, the pilot scheme can lead to something more substantial throughout the rest of the country.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Final minute.

Roderick Campbell: The introduction of proposals to protect victims of domestic violence is also to be welcomed. Like the proposed action on human trafficking, it is evidence of a Government and a Parliament prioritising the protection of those who need it most.

Jenny Marra and others on the Opposition benches have referred to the spirit of consensus. I hope that the Opposition parties are able to live up to that spirit and co-operate with the Scottish Government wherever possible, but I recognise that some of the bills in the programme for government are controversial, not least among the Conservatives in relation to land reform, on which I welcome the debate.

15:47

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I welcome the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, to their posts, but I welcome more the tone adopted by the First Minister so far. It is a pity that it has not quite reached the back benches, but we live in hope. I hope for the Parliament's sake that that tone will continue so that we have a respectful and democratic debating chamber and not a place in which Opposition MSPs raise serious issues week after week but are then ridiculed and humiliated on the basis of their party's position in the latest polls, accused of scaremongering and talking down Scotland, the NHS and public services—that is finished with, "Well, things are much worse in England"—and told how much out of favour their party is in comparison with the SNP. That is not the Scotland that we want.

An example of what I mean is that, week after week, along with many others, I sat here listening to Jackie Baillie raising genuine concerns about the Vale of Leven hospital, yet everything that I have just said applied to those occasions. Far be it from me to speak in support of a Labour member, but we have all been there. Even the local newspaper raised concerns about the Vale of Leven. Now that Lord MacLean has reported, he is

suddenly being listened to. I hope that with the new First Minister there will be a bit of respect.

Bob Doris: Will the member take an intervention?

Mary Scanlon: No, certainly not.

I hope that we do not have to bring in Lord MacLean or other judges for the democratic views of people to be listened to.

Bob Doris: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member said that she is not giving way.

Mary Scanlon: I have never liked bullies. I might start submitting questions again for First Minister's questions, given the businesslike and professional approach of the First Minister so far.

It is only right to acknowledge the work of all parties on the Smith commission, who have achieved full agreement with no footnotes of dissent. The Scottish Conservatives' Strathclyde commission and my party leader played their part. Ruth Davidson always favoured devolution of air passenger duty, and she stuck her neck out. I am proud to say that it was the Tories who published in May the most far-reaching, thoroughly thought-through and radical plans for further devolution in this Parliament. Now we have the next step, and I look forward to more to come.

I welcome the devolution of power to the islands as well as the appointment of Derek Mackay—a minister who is widely respected by councils, and particularly island councils, across Scotland. I also welcome the work of island leaders, such as Gary Robinson and Malcolm Bell in Shetland, as well as those in the Western Isles and Orkney.

If the SNP Government is truly to be a listening Government, it needs to start listening to patients, including those with mental health issues. The Parliament has not achieved the progress that we all hoped for in passing the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Bill in 2003, which had nearly 3,000 amendments at stage 2. When John Finnie was in the SNP, he and I met two managers at the psychiatric hospital in Inverness. All that I can say is that, when we left, I turned to John and said, "If that's how the managers talk to elected members of Parliament, God help the patients." We have a long way to go.

The SNP, as it has said, is unlikely to listen to lairds and landowners. That is its right, but I only hope that it will listen to gamekeepers. The gamekeepers and the stalkers know what it is to live off the land and to live in the country. They know how much their livelihoods, local villages, local schools and the sustainability of small communities depend on the effective management

of estates. As the daughter of a farm labourer, I am hardly going to be number 1 in the queue to support the lairds. I am probably far closer to the gamekeepers.

Additional funds have been allocated to tackle bedblocking in accident and emergency departments, but that is not the full answer. Alex Neil knew that. The Government needs to understand why we have queues in A and E. There are queues, and thousands and thousands more people are going to A and E because they cannot see their doctor. The Government should not just put the money into A and E. Let us try to understand the problems before looking for a solution.

On bedblocking, Shona Robison said this morning, "When we have health and social care integrated, all will be well." It will not.

Bob Doris: Will the member take an intervention?

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

Mary Scanlon: NHS Highland and Highland Council have had integrated care for two years and we still have bedblocking. Care homes are embargoed because of poor Care Inspectorate reports. I visited a new care home in Ross-shire last week and was told that it gets three inquiries a day for people to go there. To eradicate bedblocking, we must understand the main issues.

The living wage and an increase in childcare hours are also significant policies in the programme for government, with statutory guidance on how the living wage will be taken into account in public contracts. I hope that, when the Government looks at public contracts for councils and care homes, it will look at what childcare staff, home carers and care homes are paid to provide its policies.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please draw to a close.

Mary Scanlon: I will close. I know that Mark McDonald thinks that all the care home providers and nurseries are languishing on high profits, but I believe that we need to look at how we are funding them—there is huge variety in funding—before we start criticising them.

15:53

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): I have a lot to get through, so I will not bother with the fact that Mary Scanlon has taken what I have said out of context. Frankly, I could deal with most of her speech as being quite gratuitously out of context.

The programme for government has social justice running through its core and at its very heart. It is built on the principles that we want to establish and it sees fairness and prosperity as two sides of the same coin. To redistribute wealth, we need to create wealth in the first place, and the Government is acutely aware of that.

The programme for government builds on the progressive policy approaches that the Government has taken in other areas, such as through the cancellation of the right to buy. That has enabled councils to build houses again after many decades in which council houses were sold off at discounts, which made building new council houses uneconomic. Regrettably, the Labour Party did absolutely nothing about that during the time that it spent in office at Westminster and in Scotland. It introduced pressured area status, but it did not allow for the removal of the right to buy. It took an SNP Government to deliver that.

I will look at two other policies. One is the land and buildings transaction tax, which redresses things for those who are trying to get on to the property ladder for the first time, because we accept that there has to be a balance between renting and purchasing. The other is the living wage policy, which I am pleased that the Government is to take further. I welcome the additional funding for the Poverty Alliance to bring forward the accreditation programme.

I welcome the establishment of the commission on local government finance, which was recommended by the Local Government and Regeneration Committee. I was pleased to hear Alex Rowley welcome that today, although it did not seem to be met with quite such a strong welcome from Labour front benchers yesterday, who seemed not to want to be involved in constructive discussions about local government finance. I hope that they will revisit that approach.

As the parent of a child with additional support needs and as a campaigner on the issue, I am excited about the prospect of new rights for children with additional support needs in the forthcoming education legislation. I will be very interested to see what those rights are, what they entail and how they will be delivered. Although I am not a member of the committee that will scrutinise that legislation, I will take a keen interest in a section of the legislation and I will be interested to hear what external bodies have to say.

Through the Scottish strategy for autism and “The keys to life”, which is the learning disability strategy—another important piece of work—the Government has taken a strong approach to additional support needs. Enshrining some of that work and those approaches in rights through

legislation will be exciting, and I look forward to seeing it happen.

I look forward to the work on attainment and literacy. I was struck by Liz Smith’s speech. Recently she stated in the chamber that there are failing schools in Scotland. It is open to her to take that position, although I disagree with it. However, I do not see how she can hold that position and be against the establishment of attainment officers in local authorities. Surely if her view is that there are failing schools she should welcome support being put in.

I believe that that support is necessary, although I disagree with Liz Smith’s diagnosis. There are issues in some of our most deprived communities that the attainment officers will need to take a closer look at. To leave the burden solely with directors of education would run the risk of losing some of the hands-on approach that could be taken through the appointment of attainment officers.

Liz Smith: I did not say that I was entirely against attainment officers; I said that I needed to be persuaded and that I was looking for more details about the role that they would have in relation to directors of education and about how the attainment improvement would be measured.

Mark McDonald: I am happy to take that as Liz Smith’s position and I hope that she will be persuaded.

The establishment of attainment officers will be coupled with the drive on literacy and numeracy, which will focus on deprived communities. Some of the schools involved are in my constituency and I look forward to examining the detail closely. At the outset, both proposals carry substantial merit and should be welcomed.

The legislative proposals regarding domestic abuse are extremely welcome. I am very pleased about the piloting of Clare’s law in Aberdeen. I will be interested to see how it progresses and I hope that it will be rolled out across Scotland.

Beyond that, we must have a stronger focus on addressing domestic abuse. In this day and age it cannot be right that far too many individuals still fall victim to domestic abuse. I put it on record that, as well as the physical element of domestic abuse, we must acknowledge the psychological abuse that can take place, which can be just as damaging and can cause great harm to individuals who find themselves on the receiving end of it. I understand that psychological abuse might be more difficult to prove than physical abuse, but I hope that the legislation will take cognisance of it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I apologise that I can offer the last two speakers only five and a half minutes each.

15:59

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): As members have pointed out, the constitutional debate has dominated chamber time for the past three years, and we must now focus on helping people and the communities that we represent.

I welcome much of Nicola Sturgeon's statement yesterday and what is contained in the legislative programme. Action on domestic violence and human trafficking, which Jenny Marra highlighted, is particularly welcome. I also welcome Nicola Sturgeon's plea for constructive suggestions from Opposition parties about what we can work on together. I am certainly happy to take her up on her offer.

However, that will not stop us challenging the Government to deliver action. The programme for government clearly omits things that my constituents and communities want. For example, as James Kelly and Malcolm Chisholm made clear, we would like the serious issues in the private rented sector to be addressed. Such action is needed because, according to the Government's private rented sector statistics that were released earlier this month, average rents in parts of Scotland have risen by a staggering 40 per cent in four years, which is well above inflation. I know from speaking to constituents that many people are forced to spend half their monthly pay on private rents, so hundreds of thousands of those tenants will be disappointed that the Government has not chosen to create a system that works better.

Moreover, as Alison Johnstone pointed out yesterday, the Government continues to ignore the issue of better bus regulation. It should support my colleague Iain Gray to ensure that the public are at the heart of our public transport system and that efforts are made to stop bus passengers paying more and getting less.

I will focus on education. To be fair, the First Minister put considerable emphasis on that in her statement. No one doubts the importance of education in improving our children's life chances but, equally, no one should doubt the huge challenges that we face in our education system.

Like Liz Smith, I dispute the First Minister's assertion yesterday that "every main measurement" shows that our education system is improving. As Liz Smith made clear, that is simply not true. There have been marginal improvements in a number of areas, and so there should be—we would expect that as a minimum, given that the Government has been in power for seven and a half years—but the reality is that, in areas such as numeracy, standards are falling. Government statistics published this year show a marked drop in the proportion of primary school children who

are performing well or very well in numeracy and no improvement at secondary 2 level. I would have thought that our children's ability to count would be counted as a "main measurement" of educational achievement.

It is not just numeracy that we need to improve on. As my colleague Kezia Dugdale pointed out at First Minister's question time, statistics from Save the Children show that one in five children from poor families leave primary school unable to read well, and that level is four times higher than that for pupils from better-off households. There are many different ideas about how best to improve attainment, and we should debate them fully, but it is clear that literacy, numeracy and the early years are key.

Fiona McLeod: Will the member give way?

Neil Bibby: I am sorry—I am afraid that I do not have time.

As for early years, the Government still lags behind the UK on childcare for two-year-olds but, as Labour has made clear, we want a childcare system that not only has additional availability but is affordable, flexible and of high quality.

The proposals for the education bill include the promotion of Gaelic. As I have family in the Western Isles, I am a keen supporter of Gaelic and acknowledge its importance, particularly to communities there. As for the education bill more generally, it will be for local government and teaching unions to assess the workability of proposals that affect the education system locally, given the concerns about a workload crisis, particularly among teachers.

I absolutely support the aspiration to widen access to higher education, and there is a need for more children from deprived backgrounds to have the opportunity to go to university. After all, 3,500 fewer people from the most deprived areas are entering university now than in 2007, so I welcome the impact for access fund and the ambition to widen access that has been expressed. Yesterday, the First Minister talked about that in the context of a child born today, but I hope that we do not have to wait 18 years for serious progress on widening access and I look forward to seeing the clear milestones that have been promised.

I hope that the Government will listen to Labour's call to revisit the decision to cut bursaries for the poorest students. If social justice is meant to be a mainstay of the Scottish Government's agenda, it will revisit that. It will also look again at its approach to colleges and further education. As has been mentioned, the Government has slashed part-time courses, but they are vital to getting people back into work and enabling them to gain further qualifications.

We will work with university staff and students, and it is important that their views are taken on board in relation to the higher education governance bill. I know that the consultation on that ends in January. We have to listen to all the stakeholders in regard to that bill.

16:05

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): In the time that I have, I will comment on the one-year programme for government but, if time allows, I will also talk about the way in which the programme is a vision for Scotland that reaches towards 2020 and beyond.

I am delighted that the Scottish Government has included primary legislation to hold fatal accident inquiries into overseas deaths. During the Cullen review of fatal accident inquiry legislation, that was called for by me and campaigner Julie Love. She is one of my constituents, who started a charity called Death Abroad—You're Not Alone.

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Bob Doris: I am sorry—I do not have the time.

I sound three notes of caution in relation to FAs into overseas deaths. The Lord Advocate has to have criteria by which to decide to use discretionary powers for a fatal accident inquiry, so we have to look at things such as the family statements of bereaved individuals, post mortems and local police reports. We need to know what criteria the Lord Advocate will use.

On the human trafficking bill, I pay tribute to members across the chamber who have sought to deliver on the issue. I just hosted an event in relation to allegations of forced organ harvesting in China—in fact, I do not have to use the word “allegations”; I could probably have dispensed with that. The issue concerns the trafficking of organs of prisoners of conscience—particularly members of Falun Gong. I wonder whether there is scope for beefing up the human trafficking bill to criminalise those who are involved in trading illegally harvested organs to the UK and Scotland in particular. I know that the bill is not designed as a vehicle for that, but it might give us an opportunity to shine a light on the matter and raise the issue of what Scotland and the UK can do.

I am delighted that the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill is on-going. I draw attention to what I call the urban right to buy, which is vital. It will be important to think about what we mean by neglected and disused land or properties. That might involve much greater use of compulsory purchase powers in the public and private sectors. Local authorities in particular have to show a planned vision for community assets

rather than waiting until they become neglected, with the result that they pass on to the community a liability rather than an asset.

I am delighted that community planning partnerships will get more powers over community justice disposals and that £100 million will be used for that. We have to ensure that all the stakeholders in community planning partnerships, including the communities, are directly involved in that, so that they can shape what community justice will look like for those who have perpetrated crimes in those communities.

I support the new empowering communities fund. The people and communities fund was excellent. It was quite often filtered through housing associations, which do a tremendous job. However, it is important that local organisations and individuals can now apply to the new fund—which has been expanded by £10 million—as that will put more money into the hands of individuals and groups.

There is much to be welcomed in relation to equality and social justice. I am delighted that the Scottish welfare fund will be placed on a statutory footing. That shows the Scottish Government's commitment to helping the most vulnerable people in society, as does the extension of the living wage policy and the provision of an additional £200,000 to enable the Poverty Alliance to more than double the number of businesses that are delivering the living wage to their employees.

I ask the Government to consider how we can promote the living wage in the very smallest businesses in our communities, such as shops and other businesses that employ one or two people, for which paying the living wage is a huge percentage of their business costs. They should, of course, pay the living wage, but how do we help to promote that?

James Kelly: Will the member give way?

Bob Doris: I am sorry—I do not have time.

I have given some ideas about how we can improve the business of government, but I want to talk about the vision thing. I have time only to run through a number of initiatives. They are not just a cluster of policies. In relation to young people, we see the family nurse partnership, which starts before a woman has her child. We see the radical expansion of childcare from 16 hours to 30 hours a week, which I very much welcome. We see free school meals for pupils in primaries 1 to 3, a huge literacy and numeracy drive in primaries 1 to 3 and the appointment of attainment officers by Education Scotland in every local authority to drive up attainment across the board.

We see 30,000 apprenticeships for young people leaving school, many more of which are

being taken by women, and huge success in the outcomes for young people as a result of that policy. I very much welcome that commitment. We see a new youth employment fund of £16.6 million to deal with segregation in workplaces—including the segregation of women, disabled people and ethnic minorities—for young people as they enter the employment market. That is vital. We also see a wider access fund for universities and minimum income guarantees for the poorest students.

If we set those things beside our commitments on equality measures and the living wage, we see a common thread of equality and justice running through the entire programme for government. Of course, we could do much more in relation to the minimum wage and tax credits—particularly for women—as well as national insurance and tax thresholds to make it an even fairer programme for government, but we would need the powers to achieve that.

16:10

Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (Ind):

Yesterday, the First Minister gave some detail and an overview of her Government's programme for the next year. Her ambitions for participation, prosperity and fairness are all easily endorsed by the Indie-Green group members.

On democracy, we are delighted that there is a commitment to further encourage the political engagement that became overwhelming during the referendum campaign, and we endorse the Government's proposal that more public discussions be held around the country in order to understand local problems better and to assist communities in taking charge of finding solutions and making results possible.

That chimes with the creation of a commission to find a fair alternative to the council tax, which was never fair, relevant or understood, and has come to the end of its time. The criticism of the Scottish Government for maintaining the freeze on the council tax is wholly unfounded. It has been stated that the council tax will remain frozen until a much fairer tax can be found, which is welcome.

All of the programme speaks of the Government being at once more inclusive and prepared to devolve power, where communities are ready to take responsibility. The reinvention of the islands working group is more evidence of local empowerment being taken seriously, with the chance that there are issues whose time has come. Land reform is 400 years overdue. These ambitions could create a Scotland that has massive appeal and is full of potential.

Nevertheless, it is important that we recognise that, in all the inclusivity and wanting to cover the whole of Scotland—wanting to be a Government

that is not remote, but is close, fair and willing to work with Opposition parties or whoever has the best ideas—some issues remain absent from the First Minister's programme. An example is dealt with in Neil Findlay's proposed lobbying bill. The Government declared that it would take that matter to its heart and look at it, but I do not know where it is—it has become lost in recent months.

As my colleague Alison Johnstone mentioned yesterday, there are other notable gaps. Climate change is now a reality and a dramatic result of our society's having ignored the obvious signs for too long. The Scottish Government has been revered for the targets that it has set, but the years pass without our meeting them. That needs attention, and we do no good by ignoring it any longer.

The big issues that are missing from the programme are housing and fuel poverty. I ask the Government to continue apace and to increase the retrofit and insulation programmes that it has started, which have benefited so many people. We need to step up that work. Energy efficiency and conservation are as important as energy production. The Scottish Parliament could lead by example in that regard, even in relation to this building.

Housing is key. People leave my region and others all over Scotland for various reasons; mostly, they leave because they have nowhere to live. Similarly, people who want to live in an area perhaps cannot do so because there is nowhere to live. That issue is at the heart of all the other Scottish Government ambitions.

I welcome all the statements that have been made about business in Scotland, which have given a good steer to businesses. We have seen help being given to thousands of small businesses. We must remember that we have more small businesses than any other part of the United Kingdom and that they collectively employ more people than the larger businesses. They need to be kept on board. This Government has been seen to be fair and helpful, and to respect their work.

I welcome the fair work convention. However, I am sorry that, for all that the Smith commission has declared, one of its great faults is its having omitted to give the Scottish Government the right to set a minimum wage. That is fundamental to the development of the prosperity that we might otherwise have seen in this country. We might have given up many other Smith commission proposals for the power to help people in poverty.

16:16

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): As Willie Rennie and Alison McInnes said, there is in the

programme much on which we can broadly agree. I welcome the spirit of cross-party co-operation, about which I hope the Government is serious.

Working constructively is important in achieving common goals. I welcome the First Minister's announcement of £5 million that has been match funded up to £15 million to tackle the problem of delayed discharges. However, it is equally important that we stand up and hold the Government to account. To put the size of the problem into context, from July to September this year, more than 154,500 bed days were occupied by delayed-discharge patients, which is up from about 126,500 during the same period last year. In the October 2014 census, 321 patients were delayed for over four weeks despite being clinically ready to leave hospital, which is up from 156 over the same period last year.

Bob Doris: Will Jim Hume give way?

Jim Hume: I do not have time. I apologise to Bob Doris.

Almost three quarters of bed days that were occupied by delayed discharges were by patients aged 75 and over. That comes at a time when boarding is reported to have soared to 3,000 patients, geriatric beds have been cut by a third since 2010 and emergency admissions for older people are at their highest for a decade. With all that in mind, we must look carefully at the Scottish Government's plans to integrate health and social care.

Although the Scottish Lib Dems support moves to treat more people in their own settings, ministers are only bottlenecking our hospitals by cutting beds without first increasing community care. A long-lasting policy focus is needed to tackle the issue in a meaningful way, and although I am pleased that the First Minister has earmarked delayed discharges as a Government priority, a specific long-term action plan needs to be put in place to deal with bed shortages and workforce issues, beyond the measures that are contained in the accident and emergency plan that was published last year.

As Willie Rennie and Mary Scanlon passionately said, we know that one in four people is likely to suffer from mental health problems at some point in their life. Figures that have been published recently show that one in five patients faces waiting more than 18 weeks to start treatment for psychological therapies. That is not good enough. Only 81.3 per cent of patients were treated within 18 weeks, which falls way below the Scottish Government's health improvement, efficiency and governance, access and treatment—HEAT—target of 90 per cent of patients being treated within 18 weeks, by December.

RCN Scotland highlighted a 17 per cent fall in the number of staffed mental health beds across Scotland since 2010. It also found that the NHS in Scotland lost 64 mental health nurses. RCN Scotland, SAMH and other charities have warned about the lack of specialist nurses, beds and support in the community for mental health services. As one person in four will experience a mental health problem in their life, our NHS should reflect that.

There are problems for our young people, who face long waits to begin treatment at mental health services; too many wait months to access treatment. It is indefensible that that should happen to a person at such an important time in their life. There are 883 fewer mental health beds than there were in 2009, and the average waiting time is eight months. Scotland deserves better. Eight months is an unacceptable waiting time for a young person at such an important time in their life. We would not expect a child to limp on with a broken leg for that long, so why should we allow a young person to continue with untreated mental health problems? Getting the right combination of public mental health services, anti-stigma measures, timely access to therapy and reliable crisis and emergency care will be part of tackling delays in our mental health services.

I am proud that, as part of the UK coalition Government, the Lib Dems have had written into the law that, for the first time ever, mental health and physical health will receive equal recognition. Scottish Lib Dems will urge the new Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport to enshrine in law parity for treatment of mental ill health and physical ill health. That step would put fairness at the heart of the new First Minister's legislative programme.

Yesterday, Willie Rennie pressed the First Minister about my proposal for a bill to ban smoking in cars when children are present. I launched that proposal last spring and consulted on it last summer. It received not only cross-party support but all-party support. During that consultation, it received overwhelming support, with even the tobacco industry stating that adults should not smoke in the enclosed environment of a car with children present.

We know from the evidence that as many as 60,000 children are exposed to second-hand smoke in cars, not every year but every week, in Scotland. I realise that the Government has decided to consult on its own tobacco measures, including on people smoking in cars when children are present, but its consultation does not finish until early next year.

We can act more quickly—my bill is ready to go now and it does not have to wait for the long process of the Government's much wider public

health bill to progress. In the spirit of consensual government that the First Minister has mentioned so much and with—to use her words—

“a sense of shared endeavour”,—[*Official Report*, 26 November 2014; c 19.]

I ask the Deputy First Minister to confirm in his closing speech that the Government will support my bill now to protect the vulnerable young lungs that are still being exposed to damaging second-hand smoke in cars.

16:22

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): We waited about two and a half months longer than we normally have to wait for a programme for government. We had a vacuum of two and a half months, so most of us expected something bold, innovative and radical that would be worth the wait. However, I listened carefully to the First Minister's speech yesterday and have listened to the debate since then and it has all felt a bit flat.

To be fair to them, the SNP members have done their best over the course of two days to talk up the programme for government, but at the end of the day, they have dressed it up as something more than it is.

Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP): Does Gavin Brown suggest that giving the vote to 16 and 17-year-olds is not worth it and “a bit flat”?

Gavin Brown: I notice that Stuart McMillan did not challenge the point that the overall programme for government is a bit flat and not something that the country would get hugely excited about. However, to take on his point, there are elements of the programme that we support, as Ruth Davidson mentioned in her response to it yesterday. She clearly pledged support for votes for 16 and 17-year-olds and we support it. However, it was not huge news in the programme for government that was announced yesterday.

We also clearly articulated that we are in favour of Clare's law. Again, that is something on which Ruth Davidson has pressed the First Minister at First Minister's question time.

We support the bill to combat human trafficking and we support the proposed measures to combat domestic abuse. There are a number of areas in which we positively endorse the Government's proposals, there are a couple of bills that I suspect we will happily support without massive enthusiasm and there are one or two that we will definitely argue against, including the proposed land reform bill. Murdo Fraser articulated our position on that pretty strongly.

Let us consider some of the key issues that need to be tackled. As a number of members have said, it is extremely important that we start to think

about utilising the powers that we have. We all know that the SNP wants independence, but the next election, which will be in March or April of 2016, is still some way off. There is an enormous amount of work to be done with the powers that we have. A lot could be done with those powers, whether in health, education, justice or the economy.

In its response to the programme for government, my party has focused pretty heavily on education, which is an area that we are passionate about and on which we published a collection of essays just a few weeks ago. Education is an area in which the Government could do more. I will start with the discrimination against children who are born in certain months of the year, which Liz Smith raised. It is a serious issue, on which Liz Smith, Reform Scotland and others have made intelligent arguments.

All members must agree that the ages of three and four are critical times in any person's life. At that age, children absorb information and develop day by day. People's experiences at that stage of life probably have an impact for the rest of their lives. Therefore, all other things being equal, someone who gets six terms of pre-school education must have greater prospects than someone who gets five terms of pre-school education, and someone who gets five terms of pre-school education must have greater prospects than someone who gets only four terms of pre-school education. At that age, the difference between six terms of pre-school education and four terms must have an impact.

Fiona McLeod: Will Gavin Brown take an intervention?

Gavin Brown: I will in a moment.

Although there are a number of ways of dealing with that, the Government should first acknowledge that it is an issue. Let us work together to do something to resolve it, because the case for action has been argued intelligently. Potentially, it is a major issue.

Fiona McLeod: As the mother of a November child—24 years ago—I am acutely aware that there is a huge difference between the development of a two-and-a-half-year-old and the development of a three-year-old. Going to nursery at the age of three enables children to get the most benefit out of their four terms of pre-school education. Getting six terms of it would not give children the benefit that Mr Brown seeks.

Gavin Brown: We may have to agree to disagree on that point. I am convinced that someone who gets six terms of pre-school education will, on the balance of probabilities, be in a better position than someone who gets four terms.

It is important that more action is taken on colleges. Full-time courses are not the only thing that matters. Of course full-time courses matter, but part-time courses matter, too. A number of members have articulately pointed out the sheer number of people who rely on part-time courses. There is a huge constituency of our electorate who cannot do full-time courses and who rely on part-time courses as a way of improving their lives and their prospects. It is quite wrong to look after full-time places to the detriment of part-time places.

We welcome the additional nursery hours; I think that all parties do. However, I caution that it is extremely important that the Government delivers. When the SNP came into power in 2007, it had made the pledge to provide 600 hours of early learning and childcare—it was in a document entitled “First Steps”. That was one of the first things that the SNP Government said it would do, but it has taken us seven years to get to that position. Although we welcome the announcement, it is crucial that the provision is delivered on the ground.

I turn to the Government’s response on the economy. Once again, a huge amount of lip service has been paid to the economy in the Government’s document, but when we start to look for the pages on the economy and business, we find that it is pretty thin. The small business bonus scheme has been reannounced. We welcome that commitment; it was our policy, too. We worked with the Government to ensure that it was implemented. However, it is not a fresh initiative. There is very little that is fresh in the programme for government.

There was one new announcement. I am glad that John Swinney is responding on behalf of the Government, because the big idea that was announced yesterday, with a straight face, was the establishment of a Scottish business development bank.

When it was first announced in March 2013, we welcomed the Scottish business development bank. When it was reannounced in September 2013, we welcomed it again. When it was scrapped in March this year, we were saddened by the fact that it was being scrapped and we took the Government to task on it. When it was reannounced in August as part of the independence package, and we were told that it could happen only if we were independent, we welcomed the announcement, but because we did not want independence, we were told that it could not happen. For the fourth time, I welcome the Scottish business development bank and say, on behalf of my party, that I hope that this is fourth time lucky. We hope that the Government delivers this time around.

16:31

James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to close this afternoon’s debate on behalf of the Labour Party. I start off on a consensual note—

Members: Wah-hey!

James Kelly: Yes—I do consensus.

I start off by congratulating the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, and the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney. I welcome them to their positions and wish them well.

We heard much rhetoric yesterday from Nicola Sturgeon. The key to whether that rhetoric becomes reality is whether the Government understands the situation that is happening on the ground in Scotland’s communities. If it does, it may be able to introduce policies to deliver change.

As many members have noted, we face a real challenge in the education sector, particularly as a result of the axing of 140,000 college places since 2007. On health, we need only travel from Bearsden to Shettleston—for every mile we travel, life expectancy decreases by a year—to see the real issues that must be tackled in our communities. On low pay, 400,000 people are not on the living wage, 64 per cent of whom are women.

There are substantial issues that the Government—

Alex Neil: Will the member take an intervention?

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

James Kelly: I will take Alex Neil first.

Alex Neil: Will the member join me in urging councils such as North Lanarkshire Council finally to settle the many thousands of equal pay claims that, so far, it has totally resisted and spent a fortune on lawyers’ fees fighting?

James Kelly: On the issue of tackling low pay, we want to see leadership from the SNP Government. The ranks of the SNP group have voted against the living wage five times—

Kevin Stewart: Will the member give way?

James Kelly: Let me make progress.

The SNP group has shunned the opportunity to give a pay rise to those who are not on the living wage, 64 per cent of whom are women. It has voted that down five times.

I welcome some aspects of the programme for government. First, I acknowledge the Government’s intention to introduce legislation to

tackle human trafficking, which is an issue that Jenny Marra has done so much to support, and a fatal accident inquiries bill, which Patricia Ferguson has supported.

I regret that there was nothing in the statement on progress on the lobbying legislation that Neil Findlay has sponsored. It will be to the detriment of the Parliament if we do not have such legislation to bring about more transparency.

I welcome the extension of the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds, which has been welcomed across the board.

On land reform, Claire Baker welcomed the proposed legislation while Murdo Fraser expressed concerns. Labour was at the forefront in calling for the reinstigation of the land reform review group, and we look forward to the publication next week of the policy intent in the area, including the examination of the review group's 62 proposals. The objectives of land reform and extending the community ownership of land are worth while. If the Government sets out its stall properly, we can work together with it on that.

I have a couple of points on the council tax consultation and review. The first is on the timescale. Tomorrow, it will be 10 weeks since the referendum. If the Smith commission can get through an enormous amount of work and produce its substantial report in 10 weeks, that makes me wonder why the council tax consultation will not be set up until early in the new year and will not report until next autumn, almost a full year from now. It strikes me that the issue has not just been kicked into the long grass; it has almost been lobbed all the way into the woods.

Mark McDonald: Will the member give way?

James Kelly: Surely Mr McDonald must be concerned about that.

Mark McDonald: The important thing with that commission is to ensure that it gets things right. I wonder whether Mr Kelly heard his colleague Alex Rowley welcoming the establishment of the commission. Will Mr Kelly commit the Labour Party to fully engaging with the commission? Yesterday, it seemed that there was equivocation on the Labour Party front bench.

James Kelly: We welcome the opportunity to engage with the commission and to look at the funding of local government. The reality is that, when the cuts have come down from Westminster, local government has been penalised. Thousands of local council workers have been piled on to the dole as a result of cuts that have been passed down by the SNP Government. We therefore welcome the opportunity to consider how local councils are funded. Currently, they can raise only

20 per cent of their funding, which restricts their flexibility in mitigating the cuts and the pain that are handed down by the SNP Government.

On health, I welcome Jackie Baillie's suggestion that we need a review of the NHS, because it is clear that the NHS is in crisis. It is failing to meet waiting time targets, including the four-hour A and E target and cancer waiting time targets. Just last night, I got an email from a constituent who turned up at a hospital to have a cancer tumour removed only to find that the hospital could not take him because there were not enough beds. It gives me no pleasure to have to tell the Parliament that, and I am sure that everyone regrets it. That is an example of the crisis situations that the NHS faces. We need a proper review of what is happening in the NHS, which would allow us to make progress on the issues.

The debate started this afternoon with a speech from Mr Neil, but I was disappointed that there was little in it on housing. In fact, he got so excited and carried away reading out all the new areas in his portfolio that he did not concentrate on the issues that matter to people.

There is no doubt that housing is in crisis in Scotland. Statistics that were released earlier this week show a 22 per cent—

Kevin Stewart: Will the member give way?

James Kelly: No, no, I need to make progress—

Kevin Stewart: How many council houses did you build? Wasn't the number six?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Stewart!

James Kelly: There has been a 22 per cent reduction in social housing, at a time when 155,000 people are on housing waiting lists. More than 4,000 children will be homeless as we approach Christmas, which is an absolute scandal in modern Scotland.

There is growth in the private rented sector, because people cannot get on to the housing ladder. That compounds the problem. Figures that are out this week show that private rents in Scotland are running at an average of £537 per month and are rising faster than rents in the rest of the UK. However, there was nothing in Nicola Sturgeon's statement about action to tackle the problem.

The Labour Party proposed to cap rent increases and extend tenancies, which would have helped tenants in the private rented sector, but SNP members voted the measure down. A consultation is going on, but there is no sign of legislation, with the result that people who live in private rented accommodation are suffering. They must endure extortionate rent rises, and some of

them are living in squalid accommodation. That is unacceptable, and it is time that the Government acted.

The First Minister announced a new education bill and the appointment of attainment advisers. There are problems to do with access and attainment. Kids in the poorest districts of Glasgow have only a one in 10 chance of reaching university. The opportunity to widen access is constrained by some of the education cuts that Liz Smith and Ken Macintyre spoke about—

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): Ken Macintyre?

James Kelly: Okay, Ken Macintosh.

The situation has moved on since the start of the debate yesterday, in that we now have the report of the Smith commission—a promise made and a promise delivered. As Lord Smith said, the changes will make the Parliament more powerful, more accountable and more autonomous.

I urge the Scottish Government to try to be as radical on social justice as the Smith commission has been on more powers for the Scottish Parliament—[*Interruption.*] The constitutional discussion is over—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can we have order in Mr Kelly's final 30 seconds?

James Kelly: A legislative programme is in place. We have the Smith commission proposals for more powers. The job of all of us is to take action to bridge the inequality gap, secure wider access in education, avert the crisis in the NHS and tackle low pay, so that we can make progress towards a better Scotland. It is time for this Government to step up and get on with the job that the public is paying it to do.

16:43

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy (John Swinney): I thank Mr Kelly and other members for their words about my appointment as the Deputy First Minister of Scotland.

Members might have noticed a bit of surprise on my face when it became apparent at about 4 o'clock that we were moving to the winding-up speeches and, as the Parliament would expect of a finance minister, I began to calculate how long I would have to speak. I had not quite thought that I would have as long as the 17 minutes that lies ahead of me. At the time, one of my friends in the Conservative Party, Liz Smith, passed me a little note, which said that my speaking time was the result of the privilege of being Deputy First

Minister—a cheering thought; I thank Ms Smith very much for that.

Liz Smith went on to say in her note that Conservatives would intervene several times. On a day when promises made by politicians are under great scrutiny, I hope that that is a promise that the Conservatives will keep.

Liz Smith: I will intervene on Mr Swinney straight away. Was he concerned about having extra time to speak because he does not have terribly much to say about the Government's programme?

John Swinney: We will see whether I manage to fill the time, irrespective of Conservative interventions. We will just see how I get on.

I was a bit perplexed—actually, I was delighted—by what Roderick Campbell said. He described 1964 as a significant year. I thought that he was about to say that it was the year in which the Deputy First Minister was born on to this earth, but in fact he said that it was the last time a succession bill affecting Scotland was put to Parliament. That was an interesting mix-up.

I want to address a few points that colleagues made. Malcolm Chisholm raised a number of specific issues that I would like to address. First, on Pelamis, I assure him—as I hope Mr Ewing assured the chamber on Tuesday in response to questions from Alison Johnstone and a number of colleagues—that the Government regrets very much what has happened at Pelamis. It has not been for the lack of public sector investment in the development of wave technology—far from it. Pelamis has found itself facing difficulties with its sustainability. I give the chamber the commitment that Mr Ewing gave to Parliament on Tuesday, which is that we will do everything we can to establish wave energy Scotland to ensure that the achievements of Pelamis, of which there have been many in the years of its investment, can be sustained and can bring benefit to the wider renewable energy debate in Scotland.

Mr Chisholm also asked about progress on private rented tenancies. There is a consultation on reform of those tenancies and the Minister for Housing and Welfare will bring forward legislation before the end of this parliamentary session to address those issues.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): The verbal commitment that I believe has been given is that the legislation would have time to pass during this session, not just that it would be introduced during this session. I will be speaking tonight at a public meeting with the National Union of Students and Shelter Scotland about this very issue. If I am asked whether I am confident that the Government will introduce the legislation in time for it to pass during this session, what should I say?

John Swinney: I think that Mr Harvie would be able to say that it was his belief that the Government will do that. That is what it will endeavour to do in the remainder of this parliamentary session.

Mr Chisholm also asked about changes in the law in respect of stalking. In the light of a recent court case, the Government is considering possible changes to the law concerning the use of non-harassment orders.

Other colleagues have raised the question of Mr Findlay's bill on lobbying. The Government's position is set out at paragraph 226 of the programme for government document, which gives the commitment by the Government that, through the Parliament's standing orders, we will initiate legislation before the end of the parliamentary session, but we want to await the outcome of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's inquiry into lobbying before we determine the best way forward. At a time when the Government is being prodded to ensure that we properly respect the deliberations of parliamentary committees, it is only reasonable that the Government fulfils that commitment in the way that I have expressed it.

The final specific point that Mr Chisholm raised that I want to address is on community empowerment. Mr Chisholm gave us an example of a case in his constituency—the Granton Improvement Society, if I picked him up correctly—which was about access to a public building. As we have prepared the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill, which is designed to remove barriers to communities acquiring public sector assets and being able to use them in a completely different way to secure better outcomes in communities, it has become apparent that one of the obstacles to that might be the rules that I preside over in the Scottish Public Finance Manual, which require public assets to be disposed of at market value. We have now changed the manual to make it more practical and tangible for public servants to be able to consider whether a better and more effective use of a public building might be found by coming to an agreement with a community organisation that can deliver different and better outcomes for people in that community, rather than the public purse getting market value for the facility. We have undertaken that reform to make it easier for community organisations to thrive.

Jenny Marra: The Scottish Government recently concluded its consultation on dogs and microchipping. Many of us in the chamber expected a dogs bill to come forward in this legislative programme, given some of the horrific attacks in my home city of Dundee and across the country. Did the Government consider a dogs bill

in this programme and can we expect one to come forward?

John Swinney: Obviously, the issues that arise out of the consultation have to be considered properly and fully. That consideration has not yet come to a conclusion, but the Government will update Parliament on its thinking in due course.

I will make a couple of points on health issues that Mary Scanlon raised in the debate. Mary Scanlon made what I fully acknowledge were heartfelt comments about the terrible situation in relation to C difficile in the Vale of Leven hospital. If I followed her argument, she was suggesting that the Government did not wake up to the issue until Lord MacLean reported. I do not think that that is in any way a fair characterisation of what the Government has done.

When the incidence of C diff in the Vale of Leven hospital became apparent, the Government started a programme that, over time, has reduced the incidence of C diff by more than 75 per cent. Of course, the health secretary made clear to Parliament on Tuesday that Lord MacLean's report and recommendations have given the Government substantive points to take forward to address some of those questions. We have made clear that the Government has accepted and is taking forward Lord MacLean's recommendation about the closure of wards if the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate believes that to be justified.

In the wider debate about the improvement in quality in our hospitals, the hospital standardised mortality rate has fallen by 16 per cent, which is a testament to the patient safety programmes that the NHS has taken forward.

Mrs Scanlon also made the point that there were issues about access to A and E services. Only this week, the Government launched media campaigns in concert with the NHS to encourage members of the public to think carefully during the winter period—when A and E departments get busier than they are at other times of year—about whether a visit to an A and E department is required or whether there could be alternative options for them.

To strengthen access to general practitioner appointments, the Government has just put in place new resources to support the primary care sector, in particular general practices, and those resources will become apparent as we proceed through this and the next financial year.

A couple of local government issues have been raised. First—I may be in danger of ruining Mr Rowley's reputation—I commend Alex Rowley for yet another thoughtful and substantive speech to Parliament. I said to Mr Rowley when I appeared in front of the Local Government and

Regeneration Committee yesterday that I could not share with him at that stage in the day the announcements that were going to be made on the review of local government finance but that I hoped that he and the committee would not be disappointed by what the First Minister announced that afternoon.

The review of local government finance is designed to be inclusive. It is a recommendation of the local government committee and I thank Mr Stewart and his colleagues for that recommendation. We have decided to take forward the review in collaboration with our local authority partners to ensure that COSLA is firmly involved in the establishment of the local authority review of finance, as it clearly has an immensely significant interest in all this. To make sure that there can be wide participation from all political parties in the process, the Government will carry out the review in an open and inclusive way.

James Kelly: Why will it take nearly a year to get to the conclusion of the review? I accept that the issues have to be considered properly, but if these issues are so important, why does it have to take a year?

John Swinney: My recollection is that the Burt review, which took place somewhere around 2005 or 2006, had an even longer timescale. I assure Mr Kelly that I have spent a large part of my life looking at local government finance—perhaps too much of my life—and there are tremendously complex issues that have to be wrestled with.

I listened to Mr Kelly's point about the fact that the Smith commission had done its work in a matter of weeks. I do not think that there is a queue of people outside Parliament recommending the timescale of the Smith commission as the ideal for a consultative process. Having said that, we need to give proper consideration to all the issues and I hope that members of all political parties will be willing to take part in the review process.

The most disgraceful comment of the afternoon was Ken Macintosh's characterisation of my approach to negotiation with local authorities as "blackmail". The use of that word was unworthy of him, and of the negotiated settlements—I stress the word "negotiated"—that I have always managed to agree with the leadership of local government. I am delighted that, once again, we have an agreed negotiated local authority settlement. It stands in stark contrast to the settlements that my predecessors put in place, as I do not remember those ever being negotiated; they certainly never had much settlement about them as a consequence.

Ken Macintosh: Can I just clarify something?

John Swinney: Of course.

Ken Macintosh: I do not think that Mr Swinney was asking council colleagues to swim with the fishes. He simply gave them two options. One option was to sign up and agree to the council tax freeze in return for a more generous deal. The other was not to sign up in return for a much less generous deal.

John Swinney: That is a negotiated settlement, in my book.

Alex Rowley made a point that is relevant not only to the debate on local government but to the debate on health, to which I referred a moment ago. It relates to the question of—

Malcolm Chisholm: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

John Swinney: If Mr Chisholm will allow me to develop my point first, I will give way to him afterwards.

Alex Rowley's point was on the relationship between the public sector reform work that we are undertaking on health and social care integration and the need to tackle the issues that we face with regard to delayed discharge. The point that I made to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee yesterday, which Mr Rowley would have heard, was that the need to ensure that we have in place sensible, co-ordinated collaborative arrangements to meet the needs of individuals in our society is central to the resolution of the health and social care challenge that we face. My colleagues the health secretary and the social justice secretary are concentrating on ensuring that the Government works collaboratively with health boards and local authorities to resolve those issues, but they will be resolved only in a spirit of partnership and in the fashion that Mr Rowley described.

Malcolm Chisholm: I had a thought that was triggered by Mr Swinney's use of the phrase "negotiated settlement". The Smith commission was a negotiated settlement. Why did Mr Swinney sign the agreement yesterday and rubbish it today?

John Swinney: I will say a bit more about that later if I have time, because I am running out of time—

Members: Oh!

John Swinney: My goodness—well, I had better move on to the Smith commission now, as I do not want to disappoint any members.

I went into the Smith commission explaining to the public that I accepted that the commission would not deliver independence for Scotland. By the very act of going in the door, I compromised—
[Interruption.]

John Swinney: I hear Neil Findlay's voice. Is he remotely interested in what I have to say, or has he just come to the chamber for the usual 5 o'clock pub brawl in which he likes to get involved?

I went into the Smith commission recognising that it would not be able to deliver Scottish independence, so we compromised from the very beginning to go in the room. We tried to encourage a process in which the Smith commission listened to the views of people outside the commission, which it did—Jackie Baillie was absolutely right to say that.

The commission members listened carefully, and then ignored the views of the Scottish Trades Union Congress on the issue of devolving equalities legislation and the minimum wage, just as it ignored the request from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations for the ability to resolve many of the issues in our welfare system. The Smith commission listened, but it did not take heed of the issues that concern many groups in our society.

What I said this morning was crystal clear: I welcomed the additional powers, as did the First Minister at question time today. Why would that be a surprise to anybody? I voted as a member of the House of Commons for the Scotland Act 1998, which did not bring independence but delivered more power for Scotland. I voted for the legislative consent motion that brought the Scotland Act 2012 into being, because I believed that we should accept more powers in the Parliament.

Labour members should not insult the intelligence of groups around the country that want more powers by saying that the Smith commission somehow fulfils all the ambitions of the people of Scotland. The commission clearly did not do so based on what it announced this morning.

We participated in the Smith commission in good faith to secure the best outcome that we could for the people of Scotland. We have achieved as much as we could. However, to echo the words of one of the contributors to this debate, a process of constitutional debate is being undertaken in Scotland today that affects the social and economic choices that we can make as a country. This Government wants to be able to take the boldest social and economic choices that we can, and we can do that only with the full powers of independence.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of four Parliamentary Bureau motions. Members should be aware that a revised section A, setting out a revision to today's business, has been issued and copies are available at the back of the chamber. It includes two additional Parliamentary Bureau motions on committee membership and substitution on committees. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motions S4M-11689 and S4M-11738, on committee membership, and S4M-11690 and S4M-11739, on substitution on committees.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that—

Alison Johnstone be appointed to replace Patrick Harvie as a member of the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee and

Patrick Harvie be appointed to replace Alison Johnstone as a member of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Patrick Harvie be appointed to replace Alison Johnstone as the Scottish Green Party substitute on the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee and

Alison Johnstone be appointed to replace Patrick Harvie as the Scottish Green Party substitute on the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Nigel Don be appointed to replace Willie Coffey as a member of the Public Audit Committee;

David Torrance be appointed to replace Bruce Crawford as a member of the Public Audit Committee;

Gil Paterson be appointed to replace James Dornan as a member of the Public Audit Committee;

Dave Thompson be appointed to replace Richard Lyle as a member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee;

Mark McDonald be appointed to replace Jamie Hepburn as a member of the Finance Committee;

Adam Ingram be appointed to replace Clare Adamson as a member of the European and External Relations Committee;

Sandra White be appointed to replace Marco Biagi as a member of the Equal Opportunities Committee;

Kenny MacAskill be appointed to replace Chic Brodie as a member of the Public Petitions Committee;

John Mason be appointed to replace Mike MacKenzie as a member of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee;

Gordon MacDonald be appointed to replace Mike MacKenzie as a member of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee;

Richard Lyle be appointed to replace Marco Biagi as a member of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee;

Mike MacKenzie be appointed to replace Gil Paterson as a member of the Health and Sport Committee;

Dennis Robertson be appointed to replace Aileen McLeod as a member of the Health and Sport Committee;

Gil Paterson be appointed to replace Sandra White as a member of the Justice Committee;

Willie Coffey be appointed to replace Mark McDonald as a member of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee;

Clare Adamson be appointed to replace Stuart McMillan as a member of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee;

Michael Russell be appointed to replace Nigel Don as a member of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee;

James Dornan be appointed to replace Gordon MacDonald as a member of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee;

Mike MacKenzie be appointed to replace Maureen Watt as a member of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee;

Christina McKelvie be appointed to replace Annabelle Ewing as a member of the Welfare Reform Committee;

Joan McAlpine be appointed to replace Linda Fabiani as a member of the Welfare Reform Committee;

Clare Adamson be appointed to replace Jamie Hepburn as a member of the Welfare Reform Committee;

Mark McDonald be appointed to replace Annabelle Ewing as a member of the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee; and

Chic Brodie be appointed to replace Clare Adamson as a member of the Education and Culture Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Sandra White be appointed to replace David Torrance as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Public Audit Committee;

Fiona McLeod be appointed to replace Annabelle Ewing as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Finance Committee;

Kenny MacAskill be appointed to replace David Torrance as the Scottish National Party substitute on the European and External Relations Committee;

David Torrance be appointed to replace Bob Doris as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Equal Opportunities Committee;

Bruce Crawford be appointed to replace Stewart Maxwell as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee;

James Dornan be appointed to replace Joan McAlpine as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Education and Culture Committee;

Graeme Dey be appointed to replace Dennis Robertson as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Health and Sport Committee;

Michael Russell be appointed to replace Maureen Watt as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Justice Committee;

Christian Allard be appointed to replace Roderick Campbell as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee; and

Linda Fabiani be appointed to replace Gil Paterson as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee.—[*Joe FitzPatrick*.]

The Presiding Officer: The questions on the motions will be put at decision Time.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that motion S4M-11689, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Motion agreed,

That the Parliament agrees that—

Alison Johnstone be appointed to replace Patrick Harvie as a member of the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee and

Patrick Harvie be appointed to replace Alison Johnstone as a member of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-11690, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on substitution on committees, be agreed to.

Motion agreed,

That the Parliament agrees that—

Patrick Harvie be appointed to replace Alison Johnstone as the Scottish Green Party substitute on the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee and

Alison Johnstone be appointed to replace Patrick Harvie as the Scottish Green Party substitute on the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-11738, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Motion agreed,

That the Parliament agrees that—

Nigel Don be appointed to replace Willie Coffey as a member of the Public Audit Committee;

David Torrance be appointed to replace Bruce Crawford as a member of the Public Audit Committee;

Gil Paterson be appointed to replace James Dornan as a member of the Public Audit Committee;

Dave Thompson be appointed to replace Richard Lyle as a member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee;

Mark McDonald be appointed to replace Jamie Hepburn as a member of the Finance Committee;

Adam Ingram be appointed to replace Clare Adamson as a member of the European and External Relations Committee;

Sandra White be appointed to replace Marco Biagi as a member of the Equal Opportunities Committee;

Kenny MacAskill be appointed to replace Chic Brodie as a member of the Public Petitions Committee;

John Mason be appointed to replace Mike MacKenzie as a member of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee;

Gordon MacDonald be appointed to replace Mike MacKenzie as a member of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee;

Richard Lyle be appointed to replace Marco Biagi as a member of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee;

Mike MacKenzie be appointed to replace Gil Paterson as a member of the Health and Sport Committee;

Dennis Robertson be appointed to replace Aileen McLeod as a member of the Health and Sport Committee;

Gil Paterson be appointed to replace Sandra White as a member of the Justice Committee;

Willie Coffey be appointed to replace Mark McDonald as a member of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee;

Clare Adamson be appointed to replace Stuart McMillan as a member of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee;

Michael Russell be appointed to replace Nigel Don as a member of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee;

James Dornan be appointed to replace Gordon MacDonald as a member of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee;

Mike MacKenzie be appointed to replace Maureen Watt as a member of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee;

Christina McKelvie be appointed to replace Annabelle Ewing as a member of the Welfare Reform Committee;

Joan McAlpine be appointed to replace Linda Fabiani as a member of the Welfare Reform Committee;

Clare Adamson be appointed to replace Jamie Hepburn as a member of the Welfare Reform Committee;

Mark McDonald be appointed to replace Annabelle Ewing as a member of the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee; and

Chic Brodie be appointed to replace Clare Adamson as a member of the Education and Culture Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-11739, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on substitution on committees, be agreed to.

Motion agreed,

That the Parliament agrees that—

Sandra White be appointed to replace David Torrance as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Public Audit Committee;

Fiona McLeod be appointed to replace Annabelle Ewing as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Finance Committee;

Kenny MacAskill be appointed to replace David Torrance as the Scottish National Party substitute on the European and External Relations Committee;

David Torrance be appointed to replace Bob Doris as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Equal Opportunities Committee;

Bruce Crawford be appointed to replace Stewart Maxwell as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee;

James Dornan be appointed to replace Joan McAlpine as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Education and Culture Committee;

Graeme Dey be appointed to replace Dennis Robertson as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Health and Sport Committee;

Michael Russell be appointed to replace Maureen Watt as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Justice Committee;

Christian Allard be appointed to replace Roderick Campbell as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee; and

Linda Fabiani be appointed to replace Gil Paterson as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee.

Meeting closed at 17:01.

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