



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 25 March 2015

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website - [www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk) or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

---

Wednesday 25 March 2015

## CONTENTS

	Col.
<b>PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME</b> .....	1
<b>FAIR WORK, SKILLS AND TRAINING</b> .....	1
Low Pay .....	1
National Advisory Group on Developing the Young Workforce .....	2
Academic and Vocational Education (Parity of Esteem) .....	3
Civil Engineering (Opportunities for Young People) .....	4
Modern Apprenticeships (Kirkcaldy) .....	5
Investors in Young People Scheme .....	6
Young People not in Education, Employment or Training .....	7
Care Industry (Training and Apprenticeship Provision) .....	8
Living Wage (Accredited Employers) .....	9
<b>SOCIAL JUSTICE, COMMUNITIES AND PENSIONERS' RIGHTS</b> .....	10
"Severe Poverty in Scotland" .....	10
Pension Credit (Members of Religious Orders) .....	11
Primary Healthcare Facilities (Residential Development) .....	12
Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights (Budget Priorities) .....	13
Social Care Charges Abolition (Fife Council) .....	13
Streamlined Planning Process .....	14
Home Energy Efficiency Loans .....	15
Poverty .....	15
Housing Completions .....	17
<b>ENERGY FUTURE</b> .....	18
<i>Statement—[Fergus Ewing].</i>	
The Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing) .....	18
<b>ECONOMY</b> .....	29
<i>Motion moved—[Jackie Baillie].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[John Swinney].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Gavin Brown].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Willie Rennie].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Patrick Harvie].</i>	
Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab) .....	29
The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy (John Swinney) .....	35
Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con) .....	39
Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD) .....	41
Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green) .....	44
Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP) .....	46
Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Lab) .....	48
John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP) .....	49
Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab) .....	52
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) .....	53
Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP) .....	55
James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab) .....	57
Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP) .....	58
Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP) .....	60
Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab) .....	61
Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP) .....	63
Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP) .....	65
Patrick Harvie .....	66
Willie Rennie .....	68
Gavin Brown .....	71
The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights (Alex Neil) .....	73
Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab) .....	76
<b>BUSINESS MOTIONS</b> .....	81

*Motions moved—[Joe FitzPatrick]—and agreed to.*

**PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTIONS** ..... 83

*Motions moved—[Joe FitzPatrick].*

**DECISION TIME** ..... 84

**EARTH HOUR 2015** ..... 95

*Motion debated—[Graeme Dey].*

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP) ..... 95

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab) ..... 98

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP) ..... 100

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con) ..... 101

Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab) ..... 102

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP) ..... 104

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab) ..... 105

Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP) ..... 107

The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Aileen McLeod) ..... 109

---

# Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 25 March 2015

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

## Portfolio Question Time

### Fair Work, Skills and Training

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** Good afternoon. The first item of business is portfolio question time. In order to get in as many people as possible, I would prefer short and succinct questions, and answers to match.

#### Low Pay

**1. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to tackle low pay. (S4O-04154)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training (Roseanna Cunningham):** As Jackie Baillie will know by now, the Scottish Government has taken considerable measures in respect of its own pay policy, and Government employees are now all paid the living wage. Indeed, there was an extra support put in place for those who were earning less than £21,000 per annum.

The Scottish Government fully supports the living wage campaign, and we recognise the real difference that the living wage can make to the people of Scotland. I may say that this Government is the first and only Government in the United Kingdom to include the living wage in its pay policy.

We have funded the Poverty Alliance to increase the number of employers across all sectors in Scotland that are paying the living wage, and as of today we have surpassed the target that we had set ourselves of 150 living wage-accredited employers in Scotland. We have made further commitments in our programme for government, including to introduce a Scottish business pledge to make it clear that we want companies to commit, among other things, to paying the living wage and to fair work.

**Jackie Baillie:** The cabinet secretary will be aware that Scottish Labour set up a low pay commission last week, because we are on a mission to abolish low pay and end exploitative zero-hours contracts. We also want to pay people the living wage in public sector contracts and more widely—something that the Scottish National Party voted against five times in this chamber.

The current Government promised a living wage summit, way back in September 2014. When will it happen?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** A living wage summit is planned to take place before the recess. We also have the fair work convention, which will likely meet for the first time in April. It will include discussions about the living wage, but we will go further than that.

I am glad that I can welcome the Labour Party to the ranks of those who are now actively campaigning for the living wage. It is working hard to play catch-up with the Government, but we welcome all hands to the deck, so I am grateful to hear that commitment.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** Forty-three thousand workers are engaged in public sector contracts but receive less than £7.85 an hour. What is the cabinet secretary with responsibility for fair work doing about that?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** We are working within European Union law to tackle the issue of the living wage—*[Interruption.]* I hear the jeering that suggests that the Labour Party is not particularly interested in abiding by the law. Every single place where public bodies are being encouraged to promote the living wage quite clearly states that EU law will nevertheless take precedence in certain contracts. We are working extremely hard to work through that in terms of procurement policy.

We are also working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on improving the quality of care in Scotland, which means looking at the issue of fair work and the living wage in a sector that has traditionally not been particularly well remunerated. We are doing so, and we are doing it within the law. It does not matter how many times Labour members try to make an issue of that; the fact of the matter is that we are bound by the law, as they would be in government.

#### National Advisory Group on Developing the Young Workforce

**2. Cameron Buchanan (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the work of the national advisory group on developing the young workforce. (S4O-04155)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training (Roseanna Cunningham):** I chaired an excellent inaugural meeting of the developing the young workforce national advisory group last month. Its members heard from Sir Ian Wood about the ambitions set out in his report, “Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland’s Youth Employment Strategy”, and from one another about their personal commitment to

supporting young people into fulfilling jobs. We are now working with members to support their role in promoting what developing the young workforce can offer young people, teachers and employers.

**Cameron Buchanan:** I thank the cabinet secretary for her response. In December last year, the cabinet secretary called for an apprentices' minimum wage of more than £3 an hour. She will undoubtedly want to welcome the rise introduced by the UK Government to £3.30. What does the cabinet secretary plan to do to arrest the 34 per cent decline in science, technology, engineering and mathematics college places since her Government came into office, considering the importance of those places to our economy?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I am already on record as welcoming the increases that were made last week in the minimum wage. They do not go far enough, especially in respect of apprentices, which I have also made absolutely clear.

On college STEM places, the Government is working very hard with colleges, schools and employers to ensure that there is a big focus on STEM apprentices. Indeed, the Minister for Youth and Women's Employment and I visit many employers who are actively looking to recruit. Just last week—perhaps the week before—we met training providers on the issue as well.

We have to move things along, but we are working hard to do so.

#### **Academic and Vocational Education (Parity of Esteem)**

**3. Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to achieve parity of esteem between academic and vocational education, as recommended by the commission for developing Scotland's young workforce. (S4O-04156)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training (Roseanna Cunningham):** The ambition of "Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy" is rooted in our vision that whether a young person's route to work is academic or vocational as traditionally defined is not significant. Our strategy sets out activity based on a rich variety of high-quality learning opportunities that are linked to skills needs and employer demands and taken up by informed young people who make smart decisions about the best route to obtain fulfilling jobs.

**Alison Johnstone:** It is really important that people value vocational subjects and the jobs that they lead to. However, the national minimum wage does not: the minimum wage for apprentices remains astonishingly low and sends entirely the wrong message to young people.

The minister clearly agrees that raising the minimum wage for apprentices is a vital part of achieving parity of esteem and that, although the recent rise is welcome, £3.30 an hour—less than half the standard minimum wage—is nowhere near a living wage. Will she continue to push the United Kingdom Government on that issue and write to ask for a living wage for our apprentices?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** We continue to push the UK Government on that. Indeed, as it happens, I did so as recently as last week. Under its own pay policy, the Scottish Government pays all its apprentices at the living wage rate.

Alison Johnstone might not be aware that a living wage accreditation does not include apprentice pay but, when we talk to employers about living wage accreditation, we always encourage them to include apprentices in it. Indeed, this morning, the company that I visited, which has just become an accredited living wage employer, extended the policy to all its apprentices. We want all employers in Scotland to follow that example.

#### **Civil Engineering (Opportunities for Young People)**

**4. Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to open up opportunities for young people to work in civil engineering. (S4O-04157)

**The Minister for Youth and Women's Employment (Annabelle Ewing):** Skills Development Scotland has been working with the Construction Industry Training Board to develop a foundation apprenticeship pathfinder for civil engineering technicians, which is to start in August 2015. Delivered in conjunction with West Lothian College, the pathfinder will allow young people to undertake relevant work-based learning during their senior phase of school.

In addition, Skills Development Scotland will shortly publish a skills investment plan for the construction sector that will set out a range of actions to attract and retain a skilled workforce to support the continuing growth of the sector.

**Mary Fee:** Attracting young women into the industry is a problem. That has been repeated to me when I have met civil engineering companies. Will the minister tell the chamber how many women have entered civil engineering apprenticeships in the past 12 months and what specific work will be undertaken to ensure take-up of young women in such apprenticeships?

**Annabelle Ewing:** I do not have to hand the figure for the number of females entering civil engineering apprenticeships in the past 12 months. I am happy to write to Mary Fee on that.

Mary Fee asked what we are doing to encourage more women into civil engineering apprenticeships. I point out to her that the foundation apprenticeship pathfinder programme that I mentioned aims to tackle the gender imbalance in the sector and encourage more young women into engineering careers. We hope that 50 per cent of the 32 young people who will begin that two-year foundation apprenticeship in secondary 5 will be female.

In addition, a key focus of the shortly-to-be-announced skills investment plan for the construction sector will be not only to attract young people towards opportunities in the sector but to address underrepresentation across the construction workforce.

Finally, the member may be interested to know that, this very Monday, I attended an excellent event that was hosted in Glasgow City Council chambers in conjunction with Network Rail. Some 82 young women from secondary schools across Glasgow participated in the engineering your future event. It was a very successful event, and I hope that such events can engender enthusiasm for young women to look to the construction sector as a career.

#### **Modern Apprenticeships (Kirkcaldy)**

**5. David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how many modern apprenticeships it supports in the Kirkcaldy parliamentary constituency. (S4O-04158)

**The Minister for Youth and Women's Employment (Annabelle Ewing):** The Scottish Government supports any apprentice aged 16 to 24 who is following an approved modern apprenticeship framework and those aged 25 and above in selected key, growth and enabling sectors.

Our national skills body, Skills Development Scotland, collects data based not on parliamentary constituency but rather on local authority area. I can therefore tell the member that, in 2013-14, there were 1,927 modern apprenticeship starts in Fife.

In the first three quarters of 2014-15, there were 1,252 modern apprenticeship starts in Fife. As at the end of December 2014, a total of 2,704 apprentices were in training in Fife.

**David Torrance:** I thank the minister for her answer. Would the minister agree that small local businesses can play an integral part in the development of apprenticeship schemes while simultaneously ensuring that they pay the living wage to their employees? Would the minister or the cabinet secretary agree to visit one such small local business within my constituency?

**Annabelle Ewing:** I absolutely agree with David Torrance that small businesses can benefit tremendously from employing a modern apprentice and I am aware that there are many such businesses across Fife—and Scotland as a whole—that are providing those fantastic opportunities for young people to earn a wage by working towards an industry-recognised qualification.

Of course, the cabinet secretary has already said today that, as a Government, we fully support the living wage campaign and encourage all employers across Scotland—regardless of size, sector or location—to pay at least the living wage. I am very pleased indeed to hear about the company to which David Torrance refers in his Kirkcaldy constituency and I would be delighted to take up his offer to visit that company to discuss its experience of the modern apprenticeship programme and to see how we can use that positive experience to encourage other small companies to get involved. I will have my private office contact David Torrance with a view to setting up such a visit.

#### **Investors in Young People Scheme**

**6. Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress is being made with the investors in young people scheme. (S4O-04159)

**The Minister for Youth and Women's Employment (Annabelle Ewing):** The latest figures from Investors in People Scotland indicate that, since its launch, ILYP accreditation has been awarded to 93 employers across Scotland and about 190 are in discussions or working with Investors in People Scotland towards accreditation. As the member for Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley, Willie Coffey may be particularly interested to learn that 10 of those accreditations involve employers located in Ayrshire. Among the employers are ANCHO Ltd in Irvine and the Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce.

**Willie Coffey:** I thank the minister for that answer. With that positive news and the recently announced funding of £6.5 million to improve youth employment, is the minister confident that we will continue to see good progress in the area of youth employment, particularly in my constituency of Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley?

**Annabelle Ewing:** This Government is determined to do all that we can to ensure that we continue to progress in making more opportunities available to our young people. From recent market statistics, we can see a continuing trend and that levels of youth unemployment are at their lowest for some five years. In relation to levels of youth employment—and, indeed, levels of youth

inactivity—we outperform the rest of the United Kingdom.

As regards the specific investors in young people scheme, I believe that it has a role in encouraging employers to develop young people. Many of the employers who have themselves achieved accreditation are reported to be actively engaged in encouraging other employers to follow their example. That is one measure that can help and this Government is pursuing many other measures to ensure that we give our young people all the opportunities that they can expect in order to make their way in life in the world of work.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 7, in the name of Roderick Campbell, has not been lodged. Although we have an explanation, I regret to say that it is not satisfactory.

### **Young People not in Education, Employment or Training**

**8. Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it gives to 16 to 25-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training. (S4O-04161)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training (Roseanna Cunningham):** Under this Government, we now have the highest number of young people successfully moving to a positive destination from school. Youth unemployment rates are at a five-year low, but we are more ambitious and do not wish to settle for a return to pre-recession levels.

We recognise that periods of unemployment or inactivity for a young person can have a significant impact on their future life chances, which is why tackling youth unemployment and increasing young people's participation in learning, training and employment remain a priority.

With our national and local partners, we will continue to deliver programmes that are based on the principles of early intervention, such as the opportunities for all commitment, the youth employment Scotland fund and community jobs Scotland, and to focus on expanding our modern apprenticeship programme.

**Anne McTaggart:** What specific measures can be implemented to reduce the percentage of young people in Glasgow who are leaving school and not pursuing additional education, employment or training?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** That is a good issue to raise. There must be a partnership between colleges, schools and parents, as well as employers, and that is part and parcel of our approach in regional areas. There is a Glasgow invest in young people group, with which I hope that Anne McTaggart will engage. The group was

set up about a month ago, and I think that it would be helpful if she spoke to its members directly.

The important thing is to get people talking in the early years of secondary school about where they intend to go, rather than having them just fall out of school with no real constructive approach to what they are doing. We are focusing as much of our effort in that area as we possibly can.

We have a very good record in Scotland on inactivity rates and low unemployment rates as opposed to the rest of the United Kingdom, but we still have a lot to do, and a lot more can be done.

### **Care Industry (Training and Apprenticeship Provision)**

**9. Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to increase training and apprenticeship provision in the care industry. (S4O-04162)

**The Minister for Youth and Women's Employment (Annabelle Ewing):** This Government has committed to increase our target for modern apprenticeship starts from 25,000 each year to 30,000 by 2020. Increasing the overall number of starts will offer more choice to people who are considering a career in the care industry in particular and the wider economy in general. The availability of modern apprenticeship opportunities is, of course, reliant on demand from employers.

In recognition of the importance of the sector to the economy—from care in early years through to free personal care for the elderly—funding will be available from April 2015 through Skills Development Scotland for apprentices aged 25 and above who are following the health and social care modern apprenticeship framework.

**Chic Brodie:** The integration of health and social care and future demographics will result in a demand for high-quality and high-performance outcomes from the care sector. What recent discussions have the Government and its agencies had with training providers in the sector with those eventual outcomes in mind?

**Annabelle Ewing:** A key to the success of the MA programme is that it responds to employer demands. As such, it is important that the programme meets the needs and standards of the sector. There are now seven individual apprenticeship frameworks in health and social care, which have been developed by the Scottish Social Services Council. They provide clear work-based routes for the sector from Scottish credit and qualifications framework levels 6 to 10, and include the recently approved professional apprenticeship in care services leadership and management at SCQF level 10, which provides a



progression route for employees in this important area.

In line with the recommendations from the commission on developing Scotland's young workforce, Skills Development Scotland is undertaking research to identify future demand to support the expansion of the modern apprenticeship programme.

The Scottish Social Services Council and employers, together with training providers operating in the care sector, were consulted on the work. The SSSC was also surveyed in relation to demand to inform any contracting strategy for 2015-16, and SDS has met with it recently to discuss MA quality assurance.

Additionally, Chic Brodie may be interested to note that SDS attends the national health service modern apprenticeship network, which aims to promote modern apprenticeships in the sector and to encourage health boards to recruit modern apprentices.

#### **Living Wage (Accredited Employers)**

**10. Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress it has made toward achieving its target of at least 150 living wage accredited employers in Scotland, as set out in the programme for government. (S4O-04163)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training (Roseanna Cunningham):** As Bob Doris now knows from my earlier answer, we reached the target today. This morning, I visited CMS Window Systems in Cumbernauld, which is the 150th living wage accredited employer in Scotland. The company already has a strong record on recruitment and youth employment and it is setting a strong example to other employers and showing that ensuring that staff are paid fairly is no barrier to business growth.

I will now work with the Poverty Alliance to set even more stretching targets for accreditation, and I look forward to seeing many more organisations committing to pay the living wage in the future.

**Bob Doris:** That is fantastic news. However, I am going to contact the Poverty Alliance to draw to its attention the fact that no large supermarket chain or small convenience store has yet been accredited as a living wage employer. In Glasgow region, the sector employs more than 3,000 workers, and some of the lowest-paid workers are likely to work in the sector. Will the cabinet secretary support my representations to the Poverty Alliance to ask it to engage with the sector to support it to work towards paying at least the living wage to all staff and to work constructively with organisations such as the Scottish Grocers Federation in doing so?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The short answer to that is yes. We work constantly with the Poverty Alliance and with sectors where there are significant challenges in achieving living wage status, simply because they start from such a low base. Many more employers pay the living wage than are accredited. The Government wants to ensure that people understand that accreditation is the gold star that they can get for paying the living wage.

### **Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights**

#### **"Severe Poverty in Scotland"**

**1. Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the content of the report "Severe Poverty in Scotland" in relation to severe or extreme poverty among children. (S4O-04164)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights (Alex Neil):** Last week, we published "Severe Poverty in Scotland", which showed that, in 2012-13, 710,000 people were living in severe or extreme poverty after housing costs. That comprised half a million working-age adults, 150,000 children and 60,000 pensioners. That is a disgrace but, as I said last week, it is an inevitable result of the United Kingdom Government's failed austerity agenda and welfare cuts, which are slashing incomes for some of our poorest households.

We know that employment significantly reduces the risk of severe and extreme poverty, but in-work poverty nevertheless remains a problem. That is why we are committed to supporting people into fairly paid work and why we are doing what we can to mitigate the impact of welfare reform. That includes investing about £296 million from 2013-14 to 2015-16 to limit the damage of the cuts and the changes. However, we cannot fully mitigate all the effects.

**Gil Paterson:** Given the growing weight of evidence, including the reports commissioned from Sheffield Hallam University by the Welfare Reform Committee entitled "Hitting the poorest places hardest—The local and regional impact of welfare reform" and "The Cumulative Impact of Welfare Reform on Households in Scotland", and given the continuing austerity following George Osborne's budget, which Ed Balls has said that he would not reverse—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Ask a question.

**Gil Paterson:** Does the cabinet secretary share my concern that the budget will have a devastating impact on vulnerable people in Scotland and will only push more people, particularly children, into poverty?

**Alex Neil:** Yes. We have long voiced concerns that the UK Government's austerity agenda is hitting the most vulnerable people hardest. The cumulative impact of Westminster's welfare reforms alone could result in the Scottish welfare bill being cut by around £6 billion over the six years to 2016, yet George Osborne would go further, as would Ed Balls.

The Scottish Government is doing what it can with the resources and powers that it has to help those who are affected. As I said, that includes investing about £296 million over a two-year period to limit the damage from the UK Government reforms. We cannot fully mitigate the effects of welfare changes, but we are doing our best. The best mitigation would be to transfer all the welfare powers to the Scottish Parliament.

### **Pension Credit (Members of Religious Orders)**

**2. Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what meetings it has had with representatives of religious organisations who are denied pension credit as they are fully maintained by their order. (S4O-04165)

**The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):** The Government is aware of the issues in relation to pension credit and those who are fully maintained by their religious order. As the member will be aware, all aspects of the state pension and pension credit are reserved to the United Kingdom Government, and concerns about eligibility or other issues need to be taken up with UK ministers.

**Stewart Maxwell:** I have a letter dated 20 February 2014 from the then Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, John Swinney, which says:

"In order to understand the specific issue you have raised"—

that refers to previous correspondence from me—

"I have asked my officials to arrange to meet with representatives of the groups affected, to discuss their concerns and the potential next steps".

I did not hear in the minister's answer what meetings have taken place between Scottish Government officials and the orders affected, but perhaps she can help me on this. Everyone in the UK between the ages of 65 and 80 is entitled to receive pension credit, apart from two classes of people: prisoners and members of religious orders who are fully maintained by their order. In practice, that means that only a very small number of people are affected by what is in my opinion a particular loophole.

Does the minister believe that it is correct and fair that people who reach the pension age of 65 or 66 are entitled to no support from the state

between that age and the age of 80 because they have joined an enclosed religious order? Does she believe that the UK Government should tackle the matter? Will she take the matter up with the UK Government as a matter of urgency?

**Margaret Burgess:** I am certainly willing to take up the matter with the UK Government and to address the issues. We have had contact before with the UK Government about how it intends to address them. We recognise that there is a problem. I am certainly willing to take up the matter—I give that commitment today. I will raise it with the UK Government and I will pass on the response to the member.

### **Primary Healthcare Facilities (Residential Development)**

**3. Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what guidance it has issued to planning authorities regarding the provision or expansion of primary healthcare facilities as a consequence of residential development. (S4O-04166)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights (Alex Neil):** We have issued general guidance to planning authorities on the use of planning obligations to support development delivery. We will publish guidance on planning for infrastructure, including healthcare facilities, later this year.

**Mark McDonald:** Concerns have been raised with me that, when large-scale developments are proposed, there is often no prior consultation between developers, health boards and primary care providers such as general practices about the implications of those developments for existing facilities or about the space requirements in the developments for the construction of new facilities. Often, not enough space is allocated for sufficient facilities to be developed.

Is the cabinet secretary aware of that? Will he look to build that into the work that he is doing ahead of the guidance that he hopes to publish in due course?

**Alex Neil:** I am aware of the problem. I was aware of it previously, when I was the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, as well as now, as the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights. We are looking at how we can deal with it.

At present, there are no such specific requirements for prior discussion and consultation with health boards and general practices during the pre-application process, but my view is that, as key agencies, health boards should be actively engaged in the preparation of strategic and local development plans. Early engagement is essential if the impact of development on healthcare

facilities is to be properly planned and, where appropriate, dealing with that should be paid for through the use of planning obligations.

### **Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights (Budget Priorities)**

**4. Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what the budget priorities are for the social justice, communities and pensioners' rights portfolio in 2015-16. (S4O-04167)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights (Alex Neil):** The budget priorities for the social justice, communities and pensioners' rights portfolio in 2015-16 include work to tackle poverty and inequality, to progress equality, to deliver more and better housing and to take forward delivery of new social security powers for Scotland.

**Gavin Brown:** What is the budget for the pensioners' rights part of the portfolio?

**Alex Neil:** I am happy to give a breakdown of the entire budget. Included in pensioners' rights is part of the equalities budget, which is £20 million next year.

**Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** Does the cabinet secretary share Labour's support for the Scotland against the care tax campaign, which has been campaigning against the 12 per cent rise in care charges that was imposed across Scotland last year? If so, what priority will he give to addressing the campaign in his budget?

**Alex Neil:** That matter is the subject of discussion involving my colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport and other Cabinet colleagues. We accept that there is an issue to be addressed. If I may say so, the worst area in that regard has been Glasgow, where the Labour-controlled Glasgow City Council has jacked up care charges to an astronomical level.

### **Social Care Charges Abolition (Fife Council)**

**5. Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the impact on poverty of Fife Council's decision to abolish social care charges. (S4O-04168)

**The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):** Local authorities have autonomy to set or waive charges for non-residential social care, within the context of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities' charging guidance. The Scottish Government has not conducted any assessment of the impact of Fife Council's decision on charging for social care. However, as part of our programme for

government, we outlined a commitment to ensuring that all new and revised Scottish Government policies will be subject to a poverty impact assessment.

**Jayne Baxter:** Labour-led Fife Council last year abolished housing support charges for its own sheltered housing tenants. As of yesterday, housing association sheltered housing tenants in Fife—some 101 people, at present—will no longer pay housing support charges.

Fife Council is managing to do that despite the on-going cuts that it must make. What is the cabinet secretary's position on the possibility of other councils following Fife Council's lead and reversing those charges on one of the most vulnerable groups in society?

**Margaret Burgess:** As I said to Jayne Baxter in my previous answer, local authorities have the autonomy to set or to waive charges for non-residential social care, including housing support charges. The Scottish Government is in continual dialogue with COSLA about charges—about uniformity of charges and when they should be applied. That consultation continues.

If there are to be charges, we all want to ensure that they are affordable and that the services that are provided are of a high quality and are the services that are required. As the cabinet secretary said a few moments ago, all those issues are under discussion.

### **Streamlined Planning Process**

**6. Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to ensure that the planning process is as streamlined as possible. (S4O-04169)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights (Alex Neil):** We continue to work in partnership with our stakeholders to deliver a range of co-ordinated actions to streamline planning. That includes the planning performance framework, e-planning, improvement projects and legislation.

**Richard Lyle:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that, in order to ensure that we continue to see a diverse range of projects going through the planning process across all our communities, the process should be streamlined and easy to participate in, and should encourage continued development of communities, which I am sure we all want?

**Alex Neil:** I totally agree with Richard Lyle. As he knows, we have made a number of reforms to the planning process in recent years. However, I believe that further reform of some aspects may be necessary in order to achieve a better and more streamlined planning system. We are

working with stakeholders on a series of ideas and recommendations that they have made to us.

### Home Energy Efficiency Loans

**7. Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it will spend the £14 million announced in the budget for low-cost home energy efficiency loans. (S4O-04170)

**The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):** The interest-free loan scheme will be used to provide financial assistance to private sector households looking to install energy efficiency measures through the provision of a Government-backed loan. It will support our efforts to tackle fuel poverty, improve the energy efficiency of our housing stock, reduce carbon emissions and support the green economy. That funding is part of our record £114 million funding commitment in 2015-16, and it forms part of our £0.5 billion allocation to fuel poverty and energy efficiency programmes since 2009. Details of the loan scheme will be announced shortly.

**Rob Gibson:** I very much welcome that improvement for household energy efficiency. I will see how it rolls out. Because it has an important role to play in our efforts to address fuel poverty and climate-change emissions, can the minister tell me what plans the Scottish Government has to build in the future on that welcome investment to ensure that even more people are taken out of fuel poverty?

**Margaret Burgess:** We intend to evaluate the effectiveness of the loan scheme in tackling fuel poverty and in improving the energy efficiency of housing stock. In due course we will consider whether such schemes have a long-term role to play.

Our commitment to tackling fuel poverty and improving energy efficiency is there and will remain. It is evident from the more than £0.5 billion that we have allocated to those aims since 2009, and it is further emphasised by our record £114 million budget for loans in this financial year.

Consideration of any future schemes will take account of broader priorities on sustainability and fuel poverty, and of the context of the future spending review.

### Poverty

**8. Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to tackle poverty. (S4O-04171)

**The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):** We are committed to tackling the long-term drivers of poverty through early intervention and prevention. That is why

“building a fairer Scotland and tackling inequality”

was one of three key themes of the programme for government.

As part of that programme, we are further promoting the living wage across all sectors and delivering on our commitment to providing 600 hours of free childcare for three and four-year-olds and eligible two-year-olds.

In addition, we are providing 25,000 modern apprenticeship places every year and are investing about £296 million from 2013-14 to 2015-16 to help those who are affected by the UK Government's welfare reforms.

We have also made commitments to ensuring that all new and revised Scottish Government policies will be the subject of a poverty impact assessment, and to appointing an independent adviser on poverty, and inequality to advise on any further actions that are needed to tackle poverty and to hold the Government to account on its performance.

**Iain Gray:** The minister is correct: yesterday, the Scottish Government's “Wealth and Assets in Scotland 2006-2012” survey report emphasised how extreme inequality is in our country, and in response, it announced that it would appoint an independent adviser on poverty and inequality to raise awareness of the realities of living in poverty.

Does not the minister think that those who live in poverty are well aware of the realities and that what they need is more support? Yesterday, Labour announced plans for a £175 million Scottish anti-poverty fund in the next session of Parliament—over and above the measures that have been elaborated by the minister. Will the minister support that measure?

**Margaret Burgess:** The Scottish Government is tackling the drivers of poverty and working to prevent poverty; it is simply not going to move mitigation from one budget to another, thereby just mitigating it another way. We want to address poverty and deal with the drivers of poverty—not just to mitigate it. [*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Margaret Burgess:** That is what our plans are and that is why the First Minister announced in the programme for government that there will be a poverty adviser to look across all Government policy in order to ensure that poverty is considered and addressed in everything that the Government does, across all portfolios.

I say to Ken Macintosh—I am sorry; I meant Iain Gray—that we are dealing with it: we are tackling poverty and will continue to tackle it, rather than just jumping on something that came up yesterday that suggests that we could mitigate one way or

another. We want to do more than mitigate poverty: we want to address it.

### Housing Completions

**9. Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to increase the number of housing completions. (S4O-04172)

**The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):** The Scottish Government has set a five-year target to deliver 30,000 affordable homes, and has backed that up with plans to spend over £1.7 billion over the parliamentary session.

We are continuing to work creatively with our partners to use innovative ways to deliver more affordable homes. We are supporting a wide range of action to boost the supply of housing, working in partnership with Homes for Scotland and industry to support private sector recovery and growth.

**Annabel Goldie:** I thank the minister for her response. However, the reality is that 10,000 fewer houses were completed in 2014 than in 2007, when this Government came to power. There is another downside, which is that residential development is often concentrated in traditional communities such as my own, which places impossible pressure on infrastructure. In theory it is sustainable development, but in practice it is anything but.

What plans does the Scottish Government have for a housing policy that is based on diffusion, in order to spread more development among more communities and so mitigate the current oppressive overload on infrastructure in some communities?

**Margaret Burgess:** The local authorities are the strategic housing providers and their plans show where they are looking at housing and how it should be spread out in their areas. The local authorities are responsible for saying what kind of houses are required and where they will be built.

Further to what Annabel Goldie has just said, we completed 901 more homes in the year ending September 2014 than we did in the year ending September 2013. We are building more homes per head of population across all sectors and tenures in Scotland than the rest of the UK is building. That should be welcomed.

## Energy Future

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is a statement by Fergus Ewing on Scotland's energy future: achieving security of supply and a balanced energy mix. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

Before I call the minister, I say to members that we are extremely tight for time all afternoon.

14:40

**The Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** I would like to update the chamber on recent developments relating to Longannet and their implications for the future of Scotland's electricity system.

On Monday, National Grid announced its decision to award a contract for additional voltage support services in 2016-17 to SSE's Peterhead power station. I welcome the support for Peterhead. I understand that SSE is now progressing investment that will allow the station to operate more efficiently and flexibly. Peterhead is key to efforts to prove the viability of carbon capture and storage, which is a technology that has the potential to unlock future low-carbon thermal generation in Scotland.

For Longannet, however, National Grid's decision is negative. Scottish Power has stated that "in all likelihood" it will be forced to close Longannet prematurely in 2016. The consequences of that would be profound for direct and indirect employment, for Scottish coal production, for hopes of restoring former opencast sites and, ultimately, for the balance and resilience of Scotland's electricity supply.

Let me be clear. Although the decision is one for the company to make, we in the Scottish Government are determined to continue to explore any options that may avert the premature closure of Longannet. We believe that the decision that has been taken by National Grid and endorsed by the outgoing United Kingdom Government is flawed and fails to take account of serious flaws in the UK electricity supply system.

My foremost thoughts are for the 270 direct employees at Longannet and those affected in the related supply chain. This is a deeply worrying time for all those whose livelihoods depend most heavily on Longannet. I met the leader and deputy leader of Fife Council on 4 March, and I spoke again with Councillor David Ross earlier this week. We have agreed to work on a joint response. We will co-chair a meeting to co-ordinate our efforts and will invite input from Scottish Power,

workforce representatives and other key stakeholders.

The Scottish Government-led partnership action for continuing employment—PACE—has contacted Scottish Power to outline the support that is on offer to affected employees. In addition, I will meet representatives of the Scottish Trades Union Congress and the Longannet unions on Thursday. The Government and all our partners will strain every sinew to secure the best possible outcomes for all those affected and to mitigate the local and national economic impact if closure cannot be averted.

The expected closure of Longannet will be felt throughout the supply chain, particularly in the coal sector. The Scottish coal industry has put forward proposals to the UK Government for restoration coal, which would introduce a carbon price support exemption for opencast coal sites. As well as addressing the environmental liabilities that are associated with unrestored opencast, restoration coal has the potential to reduce Longannet's running costs. The UK and Scottish Governments are committed to further joint work to implement that proposal, and I have written to the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Priti Patel, to urge swift action.

I turn to the consequences of National Grid's decision for the balance and resilience of Scotland's energy supply. A balanced mix of clean thermal generation progressively fitted with CCS operating alongside renewables is and always has been this Government's objective. Scotland's comparative advantage in the generation of renewable electricity is huge—it has 90 per cent of the UK's hydro capacity, 25 per cent of the European Union's offshore wind and tidal power potential and 10 per cent of its wave power potential. Renewables now supply almost half of Scotland's electricity consumption. To ignore that massive resource and squander the economic opportunity of a lifetime would be utterly reckless.

Some members believe that the development of renewables has harmed the prospects of thermal stations. Those arguments are false. They might have carried some credibility if we were in a situation of healthy oversupply, but spare capacity in the Great Britain system will fall to as low as 2 per cent by next winter. The fact that we are even debating Longannet's future at exactly the point when the UK authorities have allowed energy security to dwindle so severely is a national scandal.

The Scottish Government has pushed National Grid to explain in detail the consequences of Longannet's closure for Scotland's energy security and black-start planning. We have still to receive the full details despite two letters from the First Minister to the Prime Minister.

I welcome National Grid's recent commitment to publish a dedicated capacity assessment for Scotland, but surely we should have had that assessment many years ago.

We must also reflect on how we got to this point. The UK authorities have created an environment in which it is increasingly difficult to operate thermal plant in Scotland. Scotland exported 28 per cent of the power that we generated in 2013 and we want to continue to deliver large amounts of electricity across these islands, but our ability to do so is undermined by a UK framework that penalises Scottish generators and discourages investment.

The location-based transmission charging methodology that was introduced to Scotland in 2005 under a Labour UK Government is the single biggest and most pressing issue. There are, of course, other factors that affect the profitability of all coal-fired generation across Britain, but no other factor uniquely disadvantages Longannet. With 12 per cent of GB electricity generation, Scottish generators pay 35 per cent of the charges. Longannet alone pays over £40 million annually to connect to the grid, whereas similar stations in England and Wales pay much less or may even be paid to connect.

We are told that locational grid charging is designed to discourage the siting of energy generation away from major population centres, but it penalises Longannet, which is, of course, close to the city of Edinburgh and all of central Scotland. Longannet is charged £17.15 per kilowatt whereas generators in Cornwall are paid £5.80 per kilowatt. In Somerset, where Hinkley C will connect, generators are paid £3.94 per kilowatt.

We are coming to the nub of the problem. Scotland has an established policy towards its electricity generation that recognises the need to maintain a balanced mix of generation, but our efforts are frustrated by the UK Government's unwillingness to address Scottish issues properly. For example, the UK capacity market takes no account of location or the flexibility that is provided by pumped storage. We no longer have a say over the revenue support for renewables under the contracts for difference scheme, even for Scotland-based projects. Our ability to meet our renewables ambitions is severely restricted by the lack of clear and consistent commitments by the UK Government under the levy control framework, and the UK Government has refused to address industry concerns regarding depression rates under the hydro feed-in tariff.

We have made some progress on securing a commitment for support for renewables on the Scottish islands, but there is no firm resolution yet. Transmission charging is inhibiting the

construction of the new high-efficiency gas station at Cockenzie, which I consented in 2011, and is also restricting the output at Peterhead.

It is clear that, on a wide range of issues, we remain at the mercy of decisions that are taken in Westminster over which the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government have no control. I am Scotland's energy minister, but energy policy remains largely a reserved matter. That lack of power over key decisions on energy policy should concern all political parties in Scotland and should prompt some deeper reflection on the future of our energy system.

There will be opportunities to review the energy policy landscape post-May, but our immediate priority—ideally supported by a show of unity across the chamber—must be to avert the premature closure of Longannet.

**The Presiding Officer:** The minister will now take questions on his statement. I intend to allow approximately 20 minutes for questions, after which we will move to the next item of business.

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

The minister says he would like cross-party support for his immediate priority, which is

“to avert the premature closure of Longannet.”

Unfortunately, he has not told us how he intends to achieve that end. If plan A was to lobby National Grid to award its voltage control contract for 2016-17 to Longannet rather than to Peterhead, it has clearly failed.

What is the minister's plan B? Mr Ewing has talked about the impact of locational charging on the transmission system. He will, of course, know that Peterhead is further north than Longannet and that it also faces higher transmission charges. He and Iberdrola, which owns Scottish Power, have known for years about transmission charges. Iberdrola clearly decided some time ago not to make the investment required for Longannet to conform to European regulatory requirements to stay open beyond 2020. That is a commercial decision that Iberdrola is entitled to make, but the minister knew about that too.

Although the minister might want to make wider points in the chamber today, the Longannet workforce wants to hear whether there is a plan B, what it is and when he will share any such strategy with those who are most directly affected by the decision. The minister has had years to work with other stakeholders to prepare for when unabated coal generation at Longannet would no longer be possible, albeit that that time has now been brought forward. Can he tell us today what the

plans are so that the Longannet workforce is not left in the dark any longer?

**Fergus Ewing:** The Scottish Government is determined to explore every opportunity to avert the premature closure of Longannet. We are pleased that, to that end, we will work alongside the union Prospect, which has urged all politicians to support that aim and carry out that work. Garry Graham of Prospect said that Prospect will ask all Scottish politicians and politicians north and south of the border to work together to ensure that there is a future for Longannet.

I have worked with Councillor David Ross, the leader of Fife Council, on many matters. He has said that he still believes that Longannet has a long-term sustainable future. If the workforce representatives and the local authority believe that we should work together across the Parliament to achieve that objective, I hope that the Labour Party will join that campaign.

Mr Macdonald asked a reasonable question about what plan B is. It is to persuade National Grid, which is in charge of systems operations, as those who heard its recent evidence to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee well know, to use its extensive powers and enormous budget of something of the order of £1 billion to make the relatively modest commitment to Longannet that would be required to tackle the higher transmission costs with which it is burdened. I hope that we will gain the clear support of the Labour Party for that campaign.

Moreover, after May, with an incoming Administration at Westminster, we will have an opportunity to take a different approach to safeguarding the security of energy supply in these islands. A wide range of experts and commentators have informed our view and given the Scottish Government evidence that they believe that National Grid's assumptions about security of supply in the UK are extremely optimistic. For example, its winter statement assumes that 90 per cent of some thermal generation stations will continue to operate. Many of those who operate stations do not share that optimism. Moreover, another imminent factor is that tech will be given up by many companies in the coming weeks. That means that it is correct for National Grid to do a reappraisal.

When I met Mike Calviou in London last Thursday, he confirmed that it is perfectly possible for other, alternative arrangements to be made. There is not a shadow of a doubt that it is perfectly possible for Longannet to continue to do an excellent job for Scotland for several years yet. What is in doubt is whether there is a clear cross-party consensus and the political will to set our common weight behind that task.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I thank the minister for advance sight of his statement. As a Fife representative, I am very aware of the impact that Longannet's early closure would have on the local economy. Our first priority must be to support those whose jobs are at risk, and I welcome the measures that were set out today in the minister's statement.

However, we know from Scottish Power that transmission charges were not the only issue forcing the closure of Longannet. As Lewis Macdonald said, the Peterhead station pays higher charges than Longannet, but there is no proposal to close it. Despite the minister's assertions, it is beyond doubt that the overprovision of electricity supply in Scotland today has contributed to higher charges.

The current locational transmission system protects consumers, particularly in the north of Scotland, from higher bills, while consumers in London and the south-east pay more. What exactly is the Scottish Government proposing as an alternative and how much more will Scottish consumers pay as a result?

Does this whole episode not expose once again the utter failure of SNP energy policy? It is anti-fracking, it is anti-nuclear and it is obsessed with wind power, and as a result we face the loss of 55 per cent of our generating capacity in eight years. Energy-rich Scotland will be importing power from England in order to keep the lights on. In the face of all that evidence, surely it is time for a new approach to energy from this Government.

**Fergus Ewing:** Mr Fraser said that he is based in Fife. Perhaps that is why he seems to be unaware that people who live further north in Scotland pay higher electricity bills, not lower ones, as he suggested. That will come—

**Murdo Fraser:** You would put them up. Do your homework, Fergus.

**The Presiding Officer:** Mr Fraser.

**Fergus Ewing:** That will come as a surprise to those who, like us, are working hard to reduce the burden of extra costs on the north of Scotland. In case Mr Fraser does not know it, I add that that burden exists substantially because the distribution system cost is around £112 per head—far more than the cost of the transmission system. If he checks his facts on that, he might just arrive at better conclusions.

I am disappointed by Mr Fraser. On 17 February, his view, as quoted on BBC Radio Scotland's "Newsdrive", with regard to transmission charges and the £40 million penalty for operating in Scotland, was that the system

"does discriminate against Longannet, and that's a matter of concern for me."

Moreover, I am disappointed for a second reason. Mr Fraser is never slow to challenge the Scottish Government when he feels that any other costs that face business are higher north of the border than to the south. However, for some strange reason, when it comes to electricity generation—even when the facts clearly demonstrate that Longannet, despite the Conservatives' shaking heads, faces transmission charges of £40 million whereas coal-fired generating stations down in England are paid to contribute to the grid—the Conservatives say nothing about it. Could that be because their bosses, who are based in London, do not allow them to stand up for Scotland? Is that it?

Perhaps Mr Fraser might want to reflect on public opinion in Scotland. Some 71 per cent support wind, while nearly 10 per cent support the Conservative Party.

**The Presiding Officer:** We have very little time this afternoon, so I ask that the remaining questions are brief.

**Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP):** Successive UK Governments—the policy makers of the UK electricity market—and National Grid pose a twin threat to energy producers and consumers, including my constituents and others all over Scotland, with a double whammy of dearer grid access charges and dearer electricity for consumers the further north they live in the UK.

Is the minister aware of the continuing concerns in the European Union about discrimination against energy producers by National Grid, which has led to the potential early closure and huge job losses at Longannet, and which also holds back the development of renewables in our part of the United Kingdom?

**Fergus Ewing:** Yes, I am. The member mentions Europe. When Commissioner Oettinger visited Scotland, he said that, with our success in renewables and with increasing interconnection such as that associated with NorthConnect and the Irish-Scottish links on energy study—ISLES—project, we would have the capacity to be a European reserve for electricity. It appears that we have support from Brussels. What we now need is a little bit of positive support from London.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I say to the minister that we are absolutely happy to work together and do everything in our power to sustain high-quality jobs, but we need to see a plan. However, despite a four-minute answer, I am no clearer about the minister's proposal. Transmission charges are not the issue, and simply blaming that issue alone is no substitute for having a plan. I therefore ask the minister again: what is his plan?



**Fergus Ewing:** The issue has of course arisen because of the higher costs. Scottish Power has set that out extremely clearly. Incidentally—this should be a matter of record—Scottish Power has invested £348 million in its plant. There have been attacks on that company from the Labour Party. I think that those attacks are outrageous. It is a matter of record that the company has invested substantially to deal with tackling emissions and in support of its plant, and it continues so to do.

As I have already stated—perhaps Jackie Baillie was not ingesting what I said—when I met National Grid in London last week, it said that it is perfectly possible that other arrangements can be made. That was the view of Mike Calviou of National Grid—just as the contract was issued this week.

Moreover, if the margin of 2 per cent is as parlous as many experts who advise us believe it to be, National Grid will have to put in place other measures in order to protect security of supply. Sir John Armitt, who advises the Labour Party, said:

“We are very close to being in a crisis when it comes to energy.”

I have many more experts to quote, but it appears that the Labour Party does not agree even with its own experts who give it advice.

**Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP):** This is a bad decision. I welcome the minister’s comment about the cost-reduction proposal in relation to restoration coal. If the cost-reduction proposal is rejected, what might be the unemployment impact of the proposed closure of Longannet on its supply chain, particularly with regard to the production of the raw material of coal in Ayrshire, and how can we enhance job opportunities through an accelerated balanced mix of energy supply sources?

**Fergus Ewing:** I am working with members of the Labour Party and the Conservative Party in order to pursue the opportunities that Chic Brodie rightly describes. The work that we have done on the opencast mining task force—which met most recently on 16 March—is designed to achieve that end. We want restoration coal and we want Longannet to continue to be a market for that coal. We believe that the proposal will allow restoration of the mines in Scotland, which is a terrific objective and one that we share.

To answer Mr Brodie’s question, what we need is full support from Labour and the Conservatives for our aim of averting the premature closure of Longannet, along with the support of the Liberal Democrats, from whom we are perhaps about to hear.

**Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

When I represented west Fife in the House of Commons, I repeatedly made the case for the plant to receive extra Government support for CCS and other low-emission measures, so the announcement of the closure of the plant was a sad day for me. However, once the finances for CCS failed to stack up, it was clear that it was not a matter of if but of when.

The priorities must now be to look after the workforce and give them certainty, but also to have constructive discussions with the UK Government and the energy network about the sustainable energy mix in Scotland.

One other issue has not been raised, so I will raise it now. Are there consequences for the Stirling-Alloa-Kinross railway line, which was built to supply Longannet power station?

**Fergus Ewing:** I am sure that Keith Brown will respond to the specific point about the railway line. Plainly, a lot of money has been invested in the railway line on the basis of Longannet’s requirements, although, of course, there are also passenger services to Alloa.

I hope that, following my statement and answers, we can all pledge to do what we can to avert Longannet’s premature closure. I thought that that was an objective around which we could unite. It would be extremely sad for Scotland and for the huge number of people who believe that Longannet has done, as it has, a great job for Scotland—a job that will continue to be necessary for several more years—if Longannet did not enjoy cross-party support, at least from the major parties.

**The Presiding Officer:** We have less than five minutes in which to get through a number of speakers. I ask that members keep their questions brief.

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** The minister mentioned in his statement those who are affected in the related supply chain. What assessment has he made of the impact of Longannet’s closure on the coal supply chain and, particularly, of the impact on Hunterston terminal, the Clydeport facility that operates coal handling, which is located in my constituency?

**Fergus Ewing:** The impact would be substantial. For example, the estimated yield of restoration coal would be 5 million tonnes in aggregate. That yield would serve to sustain the supply chain in the member’s constituency and other parts of Scotland.

There is work to be done to consider what the impacts of Longannet’s closure would be. We will

work closely with the existing task forces and the council to that end. However, we would far prefer to avert the closure if we possibly can, and our efforts are directed towards that objective.

**Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab):** Longannet is in my constituency, so this week's announcement has been a bitter blow for my constituents. I, too, want every option to be explored to keep Longannet open. Given that 270 jobs are directly at threat and that up to 1,000 more jobs are at risk throughout the supply chain and independent businesses in the local economy, will the minister back my call and that made by Councillor David Ross, the leader of Fife Council, for a task force to be set up immediately to develop an action plan to protect the local community, to build up its resilience, to promote regeneration and to ensure that Kincardine and west Fife are protected against the worst effects of the site's potential early closure?

**Fergus Ewing:** If I may say so, and with respect to the member, the best way to protect her constituents and others throughout the country is to prevent the premature closure of Longannet. Sadly, that objective does not appear to be getting explicit support from Labour, the Conservatives or the Liberal Democrats, and I do not think that we are in any doubt about what Patrick Harvie will say in a minute.

Of course, if it is necessary, we will appoint any force needed to tackle the consequences of closure. Indeed, I have agreed with Councillor Ross to co-chair a meeting bringing together all stakeholders. PACE is already in, and is consulting Scottish Power. However, were Longannet to close, there are still 12 months before that happens. Most task forces are appointed after a closure or redundancies. The task before us is to do everything that we possibly can to prevent that eventuality from occurring. Of course, we are working extremely closely with the council leadership and the executive officers in Fife. We will continue to explore with them everything possible that we can do in the interim.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I would be happy to see the Government pursue any work to explore alternative economic futures for the local area, which should have been the priority for years rather than kidding on people that coal has a long-term future in this country.

Will the minister acknowledge that, even once Longannet is gone, Scotland will be a net exporter of electricity due to the growth of renewables? Should that not be the focus of our energy policy? Should we not ensure that the economic priorities are for alternatives for the community?

**Fergus Ewing:** We are a net exporter. Last year, we exported 28 per cent of our electricity generated in Scotland.

We are, and have been, pursuing with Fife Council other opportunities for economic regeneration in Fife. Patrick Harvie's premise that we have not been doing that is complete nonsense. For example, just a couple of weeks ago I was honoured to conduct the opening ceremony of the new biomass plant at Markinch. It opened after about a decade of work and £300 million-worth of investment that we contributed to, and it also sustains the future of Tullis Russell. A few weeks ago, I also visited RAF Leuchars and St Andrews as well as tourism businesses in Fife.

Of course we continue to explore all avenues of economic regeneration, including the energy field and the oil and gas field that Mr Harvie disapproves of. I have to say that, in making this statement, I am disappointed that there has been no explicit support for keeping Longannet open for the next several years, which is something that people outwith the chamber strongly believe should happen.

**Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP):** I understand that last month the First Minister wrote to the Prime Minister to ask for a review of electricity supply and security of supply. Have we had a reply yet?

**Fergus Ewing:** Mr Don is correct. Following a meeting of the energy advisory board at which National Grid was present and was involved in discussions, the First Minister expressed severe concerns to the Prime Minister. However, he rejected those concerns, stating that he backed National Grid, and has therefore refused to intervene. Post May, however, the outgoing Government might be replaced by another one with a stronger Scottish voice in Westminster and an entirely different way of taking forward Scotland's needs.

**Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Lab):** Will the minister confirm that the current moratorium on fracking, which excludes underground coal gasification, was in no way connected to a future plan to diversify Longannet and convert it to a UCG plant when the original closure date of 2020 was reached? Will he also confirm that neither he nor Scottish Government officials have had any discussions with Ineos or other parties about the use of Longannet as a potential UCG facility?

**Fergus Ewing:** I can confirm that I have been in no discussions on those matters.

## Economy

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-12776, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on supporting Scotland's economy.

I call Jackie Baillie to speak to and move the motion. Ms Baillie, you have 14 minutes.

15:12

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** It has been a mere two weeks since we last debated the issue of supporting Scotland's economy, and I note that both of the debates that we have had on the subject have been brought forward by Scottish Labour, not the Scottish National Party. In that time, we have reflected on the publication of the Government's annual accounts for 2013-14 and not one but two papers from the Scottish Government on the benefits of improved economic performance. Of course, last week, we also had the United Kingdom budget. All provide insights into the choices that voters face in the upcoming general election, and I want to take each of them in turn.

Let me start with the record of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition in government. In the past five years, four out of five new jobs that have been created in Scotland have been low paid, with 84,000 workers trapped in zero-hours contracts. Under David Cameron, energy bills have increased by more than £300, while the number of families with children who cannot afford to heat their homes has risen to an all-time high. Since 2010, the average Scottish worker's annual wage has fallen by almost £1,600 in real terms and, unsurprisingly, the Tories have cut taxes for millionaires and have raised VAT—a regressive tax that hits the hardest-pressed families the most—to 20 per cent.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Will the member give way?

**Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** Will the member give way?

**Jackie Baillie:** I see that both the Tories and the Lib Dems have popped up. I will give way in a second.

Thanks to the Tories and Lib Dems, we have had 24 tax rises that have left families £1,127 per year worse off. I will now take an intervention from one of the coalition partners.

**Murdo Fraser:** If the position is as dismal as Jackie Baillie paints it, why do 40 per cent of the population prefer George Osborne as chancellor and only 21 per cent think that Ed Balls would do a better job?

**Jackie Baillie:** Obviously there is no accounting for taste. I disagree with the number that would prefer George Osborne—and unsurprisingly so, given that, under his watch, tax avoidance is now costing us £34 billion. We also saw more than 22,000 children in Scotland relying on food banks last year. I do not know what some members are laughing about; I think that that is pretty serious. In 2011, there was one Trussell Trust food bank in Scotland; now there are 48. Taken together, I think that that is a damning indictment of five years of Tory misrule.

Just yesterday, the Scottish Government published an analysis of inequality in our country, and it told us the stark reality of Scotland today. The wealthiest 10 per cent of households own 44 per cent of all of the wealth. In contrast, the least wealthy half of households in Scotland own just 9 per cent of total wealth. There is no doubt that, under the Tories, the rich are getting richer and the poor are even worse off than they were before. Inequality is increasing. That is not good for the economy and it is not good for the country. Those figures show that we simply cannot afford another five years of failed Tory austerity so that those at the top continue to thrive while working families across Scotland struggle to make ends meet. That is simply not fair, and only Labour is in a position to end Tory austerity.

What about the Tories' attempts to reduce the deficit?

**Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

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

**Jackie Baillie:** On the basis that Mark McDonald has an injured leg, I shall give way to him.

**Mark McDonald:** I am grateful to Jackie Baillie for her sympathy. I note her claim that only Labour offers an alternative, but given that the shadow chancellor stated, the day after the budget, that he would reverse absolutely nothing from George Osborne's budget, in what way is the Labour Party offering any sort of alternative to the austerity proposed by the Tories?

**Jackie Baillie:** There is a significant alternative. Labour has never supported Tory austerity plans. The Tory budget is so insignificant that it does not begin to address the problems that we have. The Tories have said that they would reduce the deficit, but they have quite simply failed to do even that. In 2010, the Tories said that they would balance the books by 2015 and that they would raise living standards for all. Living standards have fallen. Real wages are down. Prices are up. We are facing a significant cost-of-living crisis. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has confirmed that

living standards are lower now than when the Tories came into office. As for balancing the books, the Tory-Liberal Democrat Government is set to borrow more than £200 billion more than it planned to borrow in 2010.

**Willie Rennie:** Jackie Baillie has forgotten one very important fact, which is that it was her Government that left us with this mess to clear up in the first place. She has also forgotten that we have created 187,000 extra jobs. Does she have an answer to that?

**Jackie Baillie:** I simply say that it ill behoves a Liberal Democrat to talk about budgets, particularly when the Liberal Democrats promised, going into an election, to scrap tuition fees, and the minute they were in power changed their minds.

The Tory budget last week did very little to redistribute wealth in this country or to improve the lot of hard-working people and families. Perhaps most significant was what the Tories did not say. There was barely a mention of public services such as our national health service or schools. There was not a word on the cuts to come, and there are cuts to come. They will be deeper and more significant in the next two years than anything that we have seen in the previous five. That is what the independent Office for Budget Responsibility has told us.

Tory spending plans will mean £70 billion of cuts to public spending if the Tories win the election—more than double the amount admitted to by David Cameron and George Osborne. That would mean a real-terms cut of £2.7 billion a year to spending in Scotland by the end of the next Parliament.

We know that continuing Tory austerity undermines our NHS. We know that Tory austerity denies opportunities for our young people and that it denies security in old age. To end Tory austerity, we need to get rid of the Tories at the election or we will have another five years of the deepest and most savage cuts to our public services, the likes of which have not been seen since the 1930s—a time before we created the NHS and when kids left school at age 14.

Labour has a better plan. Our values and our vision are of an economy that works for all, a politics where everyone's voice is heard, and a society based on the common good. A Labour Government will raise the minimum wage to £8 an hour. We will ban exploitative zero-hours contracts. We will freeze energy bills so that they can only fall not rise, and we will have fair taxes in place of the regressive taxation of the Tories.

A Labour Government will increase the taxes of the wealthiest few to give working-class Scots a better shot at life. We will use the mansion tax on homes worth £2 million to fund 1,000 more nurses

in Scotland's NHS, and we will increase the top rate of tax to 50p to invest in the next generation.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** Will Jackie Baillie give way?

**Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con):** Will Jackie Baillie give way?

**Jackie Baillie:** No, I have taken lots of interventions already.

We will end tax avoidance by the hedge funds and the tax havens and bring an end to big companies doing sweetheart deals with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

The Tories will not support that because they oppose the redistribution of wealth, and Alex Salmond told us at the weekend that he agrees with the Tories. There we have it. The Scottish National Party will oppose tax rises even on the wealthiest few. So much for progressive politics from the SNP.

Let us examine what the SNP promises. It offers full fiscal autonomy, under which Scotland raises all its own taxes for all its own spending. That means scrapping the Barnett formula, which protects Scotland's public services, such as our NHS and our schools.

A fortnight ago, we knew that full fiscal autonomy would mean that Scotland had more than £6 billion less for public spending in 2014-15. That was based on what we knew about the structural gap as well as the falling oil price.

Since the UK budget and the revised OBR projections, we know that the situation is even worse. The independent Institute for Fiscal Studies tells us that the cost of full fiscal autonomy—the SNP's policy—is now a staggering £7.6 billion black hole at the heart of the Scottish budget each and every year. That is a bombshell of £1,400 for every person in Scotland. We would need either to have huge cuts to services or raise taxes by that amount. It is simply staggering.

Scrapping the Barnett formula, as the SNP wants to do, would mean cutting our NHS in half, scrapping every school in the country and cancelling the state pension in Scotland. It would have devastating consequences for all of us.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** This is getting surreal.

**Jackie Baillie:** Last week, we estimated that Scotland would lose at least 138,000 jobs based on a £6 billion black hole. That is a loss of one in every 16 Scottish jobs.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Oh dear!

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** Mr Stevenson!

**Jackie Baillie:** With a £7.6 billion black hole, that number just got bigger.

The SNP promises not just Tory austerity but austerity on steroids. It is a completely bizarre policy that would cost us all dearly. With the SNP's austerity max, cuts would be not a risk but a certainty.

**Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):** Will Jackie Baillie give way?

**Jackie Baillie:** No.

As Peter Jones put it in yesterday's *Scotsman*, "Dump fiscal autonomy—it's insanity". Peter Jones is not the only one saying that. The Scottish Trades Union Congress has strongly voiced its opposition, as have a number of leading economists and impartial experts who have warned of the consequences for our public services.

We were also treated to the First Minister's plan to reduce the deficit and increase spending. She promised £180 billion of investment across the UK and debt reduction in every year. The truth is that the SNP got that wrong and debt would increase. The Deputy First Minister read out the figures for us all to know the truth. The SNP had to revise its figures to show a decrease in investment so that debt would reduce but, even though it has been caught out, it returns to using the original figures, which are simply not true. We just cannot believe a word that we are told by the SNP finance minister.

However, the SNP tells us that we can grow our way out of the problem. In its two papers on the benefits of improved economic performance, it points to increases in factor productivity and investment and to exports going up by 50 per cent. The economics are fascinating; the assumptions are, to be frank, heroic. The SNP publishes two papers in six days and, suddenly, we have added £700 million to the bottom line.

That analysis is not rooted in reality but, even allowing for the SNP's figures, which are contested, there remains a huge gap in the nation's finances. Using the SNP's best figures, we would receive an additional £17 billion in 10 years. That sounds a lot but, with the Barnett formula, we would receive an extra £76 billion over 10 years, so where would the difference come from? The truth is that it would come from all of us in tax rises or deep and catastrophic cuts to services. It would also mean that there was absolutely no possibility of Scottish public finances being in any fit state to ease austerity. Under full fiscal autonomy, there could only ever be harsher and longer-lasting austerity.

As I said two weeks ago, no amount of name changing will help the SNP. Full fiscal autonomy

became full revenue retention but the policy itself remains entirely wrong-headed and the modelling is suspect. Do the assumptions include the block grant? I look forward to hearing from the finance secretary about that. Do the assumptions include Barnett? John Swinney knows that we cannot have both and there is dishonesty in the modelling.

It is truly astonishing that John Swinney is backing a policy of full fiscal autonomy that he knows is madness, lacks credibility and will hurt the country deeply.

Much of Labour's policy offer in recent weeks has come about because of the Barnett bonus. We would use the proceeds from the mansion tax to invest in our NHS and to invest in 1,000 extra nurses. We would use the money from pension tax relief to deliver a better future for 18 and 19-year-olds, keep tuition fees free and improve bursaries for the least well-off students.

We would back the living wage, making employment fairer—something that the SNP has voted against five times in this chamber. We would make sure that Scottish people succeed because we know that when Scottish people prosper, Scotland prospers too. None of that would happen with the SNP's policy of full fiscal autonomy and none of it would happen under the Tory austerity plans.

Scottish Labour has a better plan. Our values and vision are for a better future, so let us go out and change Scotland. This is not a time to gamble with the SNP. Let us make sure that we end Tory austerity and kick the Tories out of Government.

I move,

That the Parliament rejects the UK Government's plans for further austerity; believes that George Osborne's economic plan is based on extreme spending cuts and regressive taxation and will have a detrimental impact on the UK's economy; notes that the Office for Budget Responsibility has warned about yet further and more savage cuts in the next two years; further believes that the Scottish Government's plans for full fiscal autonomy within the UK would have instant and damaging consequences for Scotland's economy, with huge funding cuts to health, education and policing totalling £7.6 billion in additional cuts or tax rises, as confirmed by the Institute for Fiscal Studies; understands the necessity for progressive taxation to support hardworking families across the UK; believes that Labour's redistributive policy plans, which include a 50p top rate of tax for those earning over £150,000, a 10p starting rate of tax to save money for hard working families, the introduction of a mansion tax and banker's bonus tax, counter Conservative austerity, and believes that the only way to avert a £7.6 billion deficit would be to reject full fiscal autonomy within the UK in favour of keeping the Barnett bonus.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We are desperately short of time. I call the Deputy First Minister, who has up to 10 minutes.

15:27

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy (John Swinney):** I thought when Jackie Baillie started her speech that, on such a landmark occasion, when the Labour Party had decided to have a debate about Scotland's economy, we would have a comprehensive explanation of that party's alternative strategy to advance the issues about which it is concerned. I think that about 90 seconds out of the 14 minutes were about the Labour Party's plans; the rest of the speech was just the usual bile from Jackie Baillie, dished out to absolutely everybody, on the critique of the Labour Party.

I will try to be as helpful as I can be in finding common ground with Jackie Baillie in the debate. The one thing that I agree with her on is that the United Kingdom's austerity programme has failed, by any standard. The programme has delayed the UK's economic recovery, has done little to achieve the chancellor's original deficit targets and has disproportionately hit the poorest in our society.

Members are criticising me—I hear muttering from Conservative members—so let me share some of the issues. The Conservatives are aware that, in June 2010, the chancellor predicted that the UK would run a surplus on the structural current budget of £5 billion in this financial year. He now expects to run a structural current deficit of more than £45 billion this year. That evidence demonstrates that the public finances have not recovered in the fashion that he predicted in June 2010.

**Murdo Fraser:** Will Mr Swinney give the chancellor some credit for having created a situation in which we have, in the United Kingdom, the fastest-growing economy in the western world?

**John Swinney:** The thing about that analysis is that we have to look at all the years of the chancellor's term in office. Back in 2010, he predicted that we would experience in 2012 and 2013 the type of economic conditions that we are experiencing now. The current conditions are welcome—I put that on the record—but we should have been appreciating and experiencing them in 2012 and 2013.

At that time, we experienced nothing of the sort. We experienced the implications—as I told Parliament that we would—of the severe cuts that were made in 2010, which interrupted the first signs of economic recovery that were starting to appear when the Conservatives came to office. As a consequence, the chancellor has failed to meet his economic targets. He said that the structural budget should currently be in a £5 billion surplus—

**Gavin Brown:** Following Murdo Fraser's point, why, in the Deputy First Minister's view, is growth in the UK projected to be better, and the employment rate predicted to be higher, than in almost all the eurozone countries?

**John Swinney:** The answer is the same one as I gave Mr Fraser: we had two years in which we should have experienced faster growth, as the chancellor predicted that we would, but we experienced nothing of the sort. We are now beginning to see the emergence of that growth. If we compare the pattern of economic growth that we are experiencing now with the period that the chancellor's predictions covered, we find that his predictions for 2012 and 2013 were utterly flawed.

Last week, the chancellor had every opportunity to change his economic direction. However, despite the headroom that has been generated by the improvements in the economic outlook that I have just acknowledged, he chose to continue with the harmful austerity agenda. We were told last week that austerity would end one year earlier and that planned spending cuts had been scaled back, but the reality is that, the day before the budget, George Osborne planned £30 billion-worth of cuts, and the day after the budget, he was still planning £30 billion of cuts. Those are the damaging implications of the stewardship of the UK public finances, courtesy of George Osborne.

**Willie Rennie:** I hear what Mr Swinney says, but why does he think that the answer to record high levels of debt is even more debt?

**John Swinney:** I will address that issue in a moment—I plan to deal with such questions later in my speech.

Given that critique of austerity, what was remarkable was not just the chancellor's inflexibility last week but the fact that Labour's shadow chancellor Ed Balls explicitly approved of the chancellor's approach and said that he would not reverse any of the budget measures. Labour has embraced the chancellor's austerity agenda by signing up to the UK Government's fiscal mandate. As the chancellor confirmed in his speech last week, meeting the fiscal target would require £30 billion of spending cuts over 2016-17 and 2017-18.

I tell Labour members who are unsure about their position that the charter for budget responsibility, for which their colleagues in the House of Commons voted on 13 January, contained an implicit assumption. To meet the fiscal mandate and the supplementary debt target set out in the updated charter, the UK Government estimates that, on current forecasts, around £30 billion of discretionary consolidation is likely to be required over the following two years—2016-17 and 2017-18.

I think that the Labour Party—

**Jackie Baillie:** Will the cabinet secretary give way?

**John Swinney:** I will give way in a moment. Jackie Baillie has, as usual, made her clarion call for everybody to be honest and transparent. She should be honest and transparent and accept that Labour is as wedded to austerity as are the Conservatives.

**Jackie Baillie:** Perhaps the cabinet secretary disagrees with the Resolution Foundation, which suggested that Labour's plans for the next Parliament would see an extra £43 billion invested. Perhaps he disagrees with the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which says that there is

"not a huge amount of difference"

between the Labour and Scottish National Party spending plans. If he thinks that we in Labour support austerity, is it not the case that he does, too?

**John Swinney:** It is lovely to hear all those quotes, but I want Jackie Baillie to explain to Parliament why the Labour Party voted in favour—

**Jackie Baillie:** We did not.

**John Swinney:** Jackie Baillie has just said, "We did not." She obviously does not know what day of the week it is.

**Jackie Baillie:** Will the cabinet secretary take another intervention?

**John Swinney:** No. I have already given way—

**Jackie Baillie:** He does not want to hear it.

**John Swinney:** Well, okay—we will have it. Go on.

**Jackie Baillie:** Voting to balance the books is entirely different from voting for a package of cuts. We reject Tory austerity, and it is about time that John Swinney did, too.

**John Swinney:** The Labour Party voted for the charter for budget responsibility, which requires £30 billion of discretionary consolidation—in plain language for Jackie Baillie, that means cuts. She has just said that the Labour Party does not support cuts. Maybe I am now able to follow her argument. Maybe she is persuaded by the line of argument that the approach should involve

"sensible reductions in public spending".

Those are not my words; they are the words of the Labour motion that was put to the House of Commons on 4 March. The last time that I looked, the phrase

"sensible reductions in public spending"

meant cuts. Whichever way Jackie Baillie wants to have it, the Labour Party is just as wedded to austerity and cuts as the Conservative Party is.

I was rather surprised by Jackie Baillie's argument in criticising the fiscal approach that the First Minister has advanced. Jackie Baillie's argument was that investing in the economy, which is what we want to happen, is somehow a bad thing.

The point that I told Mr Rennie that I would come on to is that I believe that there is a moment in economic recovery when we have to invest to support, encourage and nurture growth, and the proposals that we have set out are designed to do that. They are designed to invest in the economy and create a climate in which we can undertake greater levels of economic activity, which will encourage and motivate greater participation in the economy. That will ensure that we have more taxpayers and, as a consequence, the public finances will become stronger. That is the thinking behind our stance. I would have thought that that might have attracted support from the Labour Party, but—who knows?—the result of the election might lead to that.

**Willie Rennie** *rose*—

**John Swinney:** I will give way.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You are in your last minute, Mr Swinney. You are not taking an intervention.

**John Swinney:** I am sorry—thank goodness someone is here to overrule me, Presiding Officer.

The Scottish Government is committed to taking forward a programme of investment in the economy. We believe that the UK Government should change its fiscal stance to enable us to do that more effectively by having the resources to invest in securing economic recovery and development in Scotland. We want to be able to do that through the power and effectiveness of a strong group of SNP MPs in the Westminster Parliament after the election. I look forward to seeing that result on 8 May.

I move amendment S4M-12776.4, to leave out from "further believes" to end and insert:

"condemns the Fiscal Mandate, endorsed by Labour, which will lead to a requirement for a further £30 billion of cuts over 2016-17 and 2017-18; further condemns the statement from the Shadow Chancellor that there is nothing he would reverse from the Chancellor's 2015 Budget statement; endorses the need for increased investment in public services; agrees that this can be achieved while reducing the deficit, and believes that full fiscal powers over the Scottish economy would enable Scotland to improve its sustainable economic performance and boost the revenues available for tackling inequality."

15:37

**Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con):** I commend the Labour Party for bringing the issue of the economy to the Parliament. To borrow the language of Sir Humphrey, it is courageous of Labour to wish to debate the economy. It does not want to do that at the UK level, but fair play to Scottish Labour—this is the third time that it has debated the economy, although I have to say that it has not got much better by the third time, and I am no clearer on what its alternative plan is. However, perhaps in closing, a rabbit or two will be pulled out of the Labour Party hat and we will hear what it intends to do.

Ultimately, the economy makes uncomfortable reading for the Labour Party and the SNP. Several years ago, they were loud in their chorus saying that the plan would not work and that what we were doing would not be effective at all. They said that we would have a deeper recession—I think that the Scottish Government's prediction was a double-dip recession—but that did not happen. Last week at the budget, we heard the headline figures on the economy, which are all positive and moving in the right direction and which are projected to get better and stronger for each year of the forecast period.

To counter Mr Swinney's point, when we compare the projections for the UK with those for our trading partners, including those in the rest of the European Union, we fare very well. To take growth as an example, in 2014, we had the highest growth in the G7. Our growth projections for 2015 were revised upwards last year by the Office for Budget Responsibility, whereas the OBR's projections for world growth were revised downwards. The eurozone will be lucky if its growth rate hits 1 per cent in 2015.

**Mike MacKenzie:** Will Mr Brown take an intervention?

**John Swinney:** Will Mr Brown give way?

**Gavin Brown:** I will give way to the cabinet secretary first.

**John Swinney:** I am grateful to Mr Brown. Does he acknowledge the strength of my point from the fact that gross domestic product per capita remains—as at the end of 2014—at nearly 2 per cent below pre-recession levels? The growth that the Chancellor of the Exchequer projected has not materialised, as a consequence of the decisions that were taken.

**Gavin Brown:** The projections of 2010 did not materialise in the way that the chancellor predicted, but what he did not know and what nobody else knew was that the entire continent of Europe would be on the precipice a year later. Of course growth was delayed by two years, because

there were six quarters of negative growth across Europe, with which we do almost half our trade. If the Scottish Government's finance secretary cares to read the reports of his own chief economist, he will see that that impact is acknowledged in almost every one of those reports, which I have read.

Of course that situation was going to have an impact. It would have had an impact whether we had gone with Labour spending plans or SNP spending plans or whether we had been independent. The eurozone crisis would have affected this economy regardless of the spending plans laid out.

**John Swinney:** Will Mr Brown give way?

**Gavin Brown:** The Deputy First Minister was generous in giving way, so I will give way to him again.

**John Swinney:** I am grateful to Mr Brown. Does that not make the case that we repeatedly made to the UK Government for an early change to the austerity agenda to invest in the economy?

**Gavin Brown:** No—it does not. Having taken the difficult decisions as we did and when we did, we now find ourselves in a far better position than our European neighbours. Growth is projected to be two and a half times that of most of our competitors. We have the highest employment rate that we have ever had in this country.

The unemployment rate is still too high but, at just over 5.5 per cent, it compares very favourably with the double-digit unemployment rates in France, Italy and many other European countries. The cabinet secretary's arguments would be fine if we were on the same page as the rest of Europe and if we were all doing well at the same time, but he has to accept and acknowledge that the UK Government's action has achieved something positive if we are doing well and are projected to do better, whereas the countries that we compete with are not projected to do the same.

**Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Gavin Brown:** I have taken a number of interventions, so I hope that Mr Robertson will forgive me for not giving way.

That situation has not happened by accident; it has happened because of the difficult decisions that were taken earlier. It has happened because the UK Government stuck to the path. It has happened because UK businesses and the people of this country stood firm, stepped up to the plate and created jobs. That is underpinned by the UK Government's competitive policies, whether that is on corporation tax, freezing fuel duty, raising the personal allowance or cutting national insurance.



What really grates among Conservative members is the SNP's assertion that, somehow, if we had fiscal autonomy, there would not be austerity—that, somehow, we would be able to get rid of austerity. That is blatantly untrue. I know that Mr Swinney knows that, because he judiciously looks at all the figures. He knows—based on the “Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland” figures from a couple of weeks ago, based on the figures that we are likely to see in GERS next year and based on the oil revenues that we are likely to see over the next five years or so—that, if we went for fiscal autonomy, there would have to be far deeper austerity than we have under the UK Government, whether it is Conservative or Labour.

I move amendment S4M-12776.3, to leave out from “rejects” to end and insert:

“welcomes the fact that the UK's economic growth was the highest among the G7 economies in 2014 and notes that the Office for Budget Responsibility has revised up its forecast for UK growth in 2015; welcomes the high employment situation across the UK and the deficit being reduced by over a half since 2010; believes that measures taken by the UK Government, such as cutting employer national insurance contributions and maintaining the lowest level of corporation tax in the G7, are providing considerable benefits to Scotland's businesses; believes that measures, such as raising the income tax personal allowance and freezing fuel duty, have helped household budgets; calls on the Scottish Government to publish an update to Outlook for Scotland's Public Finances to take into account changes to the projected public finances since its original publication in May 2014 and to reflect the current Scottish Government policy of seeking full fiscal autonomy, and further calls on the Scottish Government to publish an updated Oil and Gas Analytical Bulletin.”

15:43

**Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** I am grateful to the Labour Party for calling the debate, which gives all of us in Parliament an opportunity to shine a light on the different economic plans of the parties. For me, the debate should be about economic competence and fairness. We cannot have one without the other.

It is worth reminding Parliament that the Government said that Scotland would be on the verge of a “second oil boom”, with a blossoming oil fund, more jobs and ever-increasing tax receipts. Now we face a low oil price, at half what the Government confidently predicted it would be, jobs have been slashed and tax revenues have plummeted. In fact, it has been estimated that the shortfall on the Government's predictions is worth £155 million every day. It is worth reflecting on that, because it goes to the heart of the SNP's competence in managing the economy. The SNP said that we would be far better off with that oil boom; the reality is something different. The GERS figures show exactly that shortfall, which is worth about £800 for every single person in this country. That is the penalty that we would have

paid for independence or full fiscal autonomy. The Government's central economic argument for independence has been found wanting.

**Mark McDonald:** I am interested in Willie Rennie's point that economic competence can be determined as a result of predictions on oil price. At the time when the Scottish Government was predicting \$110 per barrel, the UK Government Department of Energy and Climate Change, which is led by Mr Rennie's colleague Edward Davey, was predicting \$120 per barrel. What does that say about the economic competence of the Liberal Democrats?

**Willie Rennie:** Mark McDonald is not comparing like with like. What that actually proves is that the economy cannot be run based simply on the big resource of oil. It is very volatile and has a big impact, making generous predictions about oil reveals how incompetent the SNP has been on oil and on the economy.

Despite the animosity that clearly exists between Jackie Baillie and John Swinney—in fact, between the whole Labour Party and SNP—there are many similarities between the two parties' plans. Members will have heard me say before that the nationalists and Labour have said that the UK economic plan would fail; that unemployment would rise, GDP would stagnate and employment would fall. However, now, thanks to the plan from the UK Government, we have falling unemployment and higher employment, and growth is back. Despite those facts, the SNP and Labour continue to say that the plan has failed, yet the latest figures show that employment in Scotland is at a record high—up 187,000 since 2010. Growth is back, as Gavin Brown said, and the UK is vying with the United States of America to be the best among the G7 countries.

As Labour did, the SNP said that the UK's economic plan would fail, just before the economy started to grow again. Also as Labour did, the SNP argued for lighter regulation of the banks, just before they went bust. Now, just like Labour, the SNP thinks that the answer to high levels of debt is ever more debt. The SNP and Labour were wrong on the banks, wrong on the economy and wrong on jobs, and now the SNP has the audacity to say that that is all in the past and that it is definitely right this time. It wants to borrow billions of pounds more when we should be eliminating the deficit and cutting debt. Its plans will put the economy at risk. We should not put our faith in parties that have been consistently wrong on the economy.

Even though we have over the past five years worked quite constructively with the Conservatives to get the economy back on track, we part company with them on their plans for the next five years. They want to do two things. First, as we do,

they want to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18, but they want to do so with no tax rises, whereas we are planning £6 billion worth of tax rises on banks and mansions. Unlike the Conservatives, we do not believe that public services can bear the full impact of the cuts.

Secondly, once we have eliminated the deficit, we want to invest in capital works for the good of the country. The Tories disagree. I have to say that the Conservatives seem to be hell-bent on an ideological mission to reduce the size of the state, which will damage public services and take the UK back to the 1960s.

**Gavin Brown:** Does Willie Rennie accept that his party does not want to eliminate the deficit but just wants a current-budget balance?

**Willie Rennie:** We agree with the Conservatives that we should eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. That is the plan that we have, that is the £30 billion reduction that we have in place, and that is where we agree with the Conservatives. We disagree on the mix of spending and taxes that will be required to achieve that.

We reject the volatile see-saw economics of the past—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Draw to a close, please.

**Willie Rennie:** —with Labour and the SNP borrowing too much, which risks the economy, and the Tories cutting too much, which threatens public services. Look at the progress we have made: we have cut taxes by £900 for workers, we have increased pensions by £900, we have got the economy back on track and we have expanded childcare for the families that need it most. That is how to balance fairness in society with getting the economy back on track. That is why people should stick with the Lib Dems.

I move amendment S4M-12776.1, to leave out from “the UK Government’s plans” to end and insert:

“a return to volatile see-saw economics, which has the potential to cause great economic damage and divert the UK economy from the employment and economic growth achieved; therefore notes with great concern the Conservatives’ ideological drive to reduce the size of the state, recklessly cutting public services on one hand, and Labour and SNP plans to borrow more, repeating the mistakes of the past and indebting future generations, on the other; believes that the SNP’s proposal to borrow £180 billion would put the hard-won economic recovery at great risk, and endorses the Liberal Democrats’ plans to balance the country’s books by 2018 and to use the benefits of the economic growth achieved by that plan to increase public expenditure in line with the economy, keeping Scotland and the UK on a steady path to prosperity.”

15:49

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I begin by acknowledging the point of agreement that I have with both the Government and the Labour party in rejecting the UK Government’s economic agenda of austerity. The rejection of that austerity agenda is a point of common ground for all the political parties in the Scottish Parliament that are not part of the UK Government coalition.

If I remember rightly, both Jackie Baillie and John Swinney described that as a “failed” agenda. I would take issue, to a certain extent, with that point, because in my view that agenda was not designed to serve the common good. In particular, from the Conservatives’ point of view, that agenda was designed to entrench an ideology and an economic model to which that political party is wedded. Given the political situation that has been engineered by the Conservatives, in which they see very little coherent opposition to the basic proposition of cuts coming from the main Opposition at Westminster, from their point of view ideologically they have succeeded, even if they have not achieved the benefit for the common good that most of us would wish for.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies said that spending cuts on the scale that is implied by the chancellor’s plans would lead to

“a fundamental reimagining of the role of the state”.

I think that that was their intention and purpose all along; on those terms, they have been catastrophically successful.

If we look at the alternatives that are before us, we see that there is a debate between the Labour Party, which wants a slower pace of cuts, but essentially the same broad policy, and the SNP which implies that increased borrowing from the UK Government, compared to what is currently planned, would allow some £180 billion extra of spending and investment over the coming session of Parliament. Neither should be seen as the only option. The Scottish Green Party amendment intends to begin a debate on an alternative.

Over the past few years we have seen, and in Europe we are still seeing, quantitative easing—the quite legitimate creation of money—through the use of central banks. In the UK in particular, to the amount of £375 billion, it has been used principally to rebalance the balance sheets of the financial services sector. Whether one takes the view that that has created a “benefit for bankers”, and whether we attach blame to “the bankers” as the great villains of the economic crash, it is certain that that money has not sent £375 billion of investment into the real economy and the priorities that would serve the common good.

Investing in priorities that would serve the common good is the alternative that the green new deal group, which includes Richard Murphy, Colin Hines and my colleague Caroline Lucas, has been advocating at UK level recently. In an exchange of letters between Caroline Lucas and Mark Carney, Caroline argues that the green new deal group's plan is designed fundamentally to transform a still-broken financial system and reduce the deficit, while transforming the UK's aging infrastructure to meet a range of environmental and social challenges. Many of the challenges are those that we have all, on paper, agreed to address—some of them unanimously—but we are not seeing the investment that is required to meet those challenges.

Some of us might have expected the Bank of England to take a slightly conservative approach and perhaps to dismiss the green QE programme as being unachievable. In fact, Mark Carney replied to say that

"It is possible that if the MPC did vote to increase its asset purchases in future"—

in other words, another round of QE—

"it could expand the range of assets it purchased."

In fact, the idea of a green QE programme is very realistic indeed and I hope that it is not completely out of kilter with the priorities of some of the other political parties.

In the past week or so, David Blanchflower has said:

"the next move in interest rates has to be either more quantitative easing, or a cut in interest rates, or both".

If more quantitative easing is even to be contemplated—if it is on the agenda at all—surely we must take the opportunity to inject it as real investment into the real economy and into the social, economic and environmental challenges that the country faces.

SNP members are knocking on doors around the country with optimistic faces, and are full of enthusiasm about the influence that they may have in a balanced UK Parliament after May.

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

**Patrick Harvie:** Whichever political parties have influence in a balanced UK Parliament after May should ensure that they use that influence for the right priorities and not for those that Fergus Ewing might want, or by pushing the Government to exempt coal from carbon taxes or to bail out outdated, redundant and polluting infrastructure. Instead, let us invest in the new infrastructure and new priorities that Scotland and the UK need for the future. That would be far better than inviting in private equity or overseas Governments to build

and own the country's infrastructure on our behalf. I hope that the Scottish Government is open to that argument.

I move amendment S4M-12776.2, to leave out from "rejects" to end and insert:

"considers that the UK Government's austerity agenda is ideologically motivated by those who seek an ever-smaller state and poorer public services as ends in themselves; deeply regrets that the main opposition party in the UK Parliament also remains committed to cuts that will have the same effect; believes that a credible alternative to austerity is available in the form of a programme of green quantitative easing (QE); recognises that, instead of creating money to rebalance balance sheets in the financial services sector, a green QE programme would provide investment in the transition to a sustainable economy; sees many benefits of such a programme, including stimulating the real economy and the creation of jobs in every constituency of the UK, more rapid progress toward social and environmental targets and localised control of economic assets instead of a privatised model of infrastructure investment; believes that Scotland's economy needs such investment, and considers that this would complement the progress that has been made on the development of renewables and energy efficiency in Scotland."

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to the open debate. Speeches should be of five minutes. We are extraordinarily tight for time, so if members do not manage the time keeping, the Presiding Officers will be making cuts of our own.

15:56

**Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** On the basis that I can keep my balance for five minutes, that is how long I intend to take.

As has been highlighted, two weeks ago the Labour Party led a debate on the economy. Sadly, I was not able to participate in it, because I had sustained an injury the previous Sunday. I was distraught to miss out on the opportunity to contribute to that debate, and I am sure that members were equally distraught. Luckily, the Labour Party has brought back a debate on the economy just for me, so that I can have the opportunity to speak on the issue.

While I might have sustained a broken leg, it is clear that the Labour Party is still acting like a broken record. Labour members continue to talk down the prospects of Scotland's economy and its economic future in an effort to perpetuate the myth that Scotland as a nation is uniquely incapable of sustaining itself, of growing and of performing well as an economy. That does the Labour Party no service whatever, and I suspect that it might be the genesis of the reason why it is performing so spectacularly badly in opinion polling in Scotland at the moment.

I want to look at the agenda that we are putting forward on the economy. We have chosen to

focus on the opportunities that exist for modest growth in public spending at a UK level, which would deliver direct benefits to Scotland and would have other benefits for the wider UK by addressing the continual cuts that are being made in public expenditure. As we know from the analysis that the IFS has undertaken, that would enable the deficit reduction projections that the Labour Party has made to be achieved while allowing us to operate within the financial envelope of increased public expenditure.

I believe that that is a win-win scenario. Deficit reduction undoubtedly needs to be tackled, but it does not need to be tackled by being made a priority ahead of everything else. That is the unfortunate position that we find ourselves in under the current UK Government, which sees reducing the deficit as the be-all and end-all, with the result that the poorest and most vulnerable in society are seen as an afterthought and a means to achieving the deficit reduction targets.

Today, the Conservatives have talked—as they often do—about the difficult decisions that have to be made. Those decisions are not difficult for Conservative ministers, because they do not tend to impact on them. They are certainly not difficult for many of the powerful corporate interests that are supportive of the Conservative Party and are quite friendly with some of its front-bench members at Westminster, because they do not impact directly on them. The people who are bearing the brunt of those difficult decisions are the poorest in society, who face regular assaults on their incomes and their way of life as a result of UK Government decisions. That is acknowledged in any analysis that is done of the impact of budget decisions by income deciles in the UK. It is those at the lower end who face significant detriment, while those at the top end face no significant detriment.

We can see that only too clearly if we look at where the focus in respect of effort, budget and rhetoric is directed between welfare—and in particular the concept of benefit fraud as it is often called—and tax avoidance. Welfare fraud should undoubtedly be tackled—I am not suggesting for one second that it should not be—but it accounts for less than £2 billion per annum. Less is lost to the Exchequer from welfare fraud than it retains through the failure of individuals to take up benefits to which they are entitled.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** You are in your final minute.

**Mark McDonald:** The Exchequer makes a net saving in that area.

Tax avoidance and tax evasion cost the Exchequer £30 billion to £35 billion annually, but a disproportionately higher number of staff are

allocated to tackling welfare fraud compared with those who are allocated to tackling tax evasion and tax avoidance. We have a UK Government that has got its priorities 100 per cent askew on that.

We should consider the number of people who face benefit sanctions, driving them to call on the assistance of food banks. In Aberdeen, we have seen the Instant Neighbour food bank run out of supplies in recent days.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You should begin to close, please.

**Mark McDonald:** We should consider that point versus the point about those who are being actively pursued and prosecuted for tax evasion. Again, we can see that the UK Government has its priorities 100 per cent askew.

There is a better way to do things. We have outlined a better way to do things, and I hope that, in May, we will have the opportunity to get on with doing things differently.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You have to close. I am afraid that there is no time available.

16:01

**Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Lab):** While Gavin Brown and Willie Rennie pat each other on the back for where they are, it is worth remembering that we were coming out of a recession in 2010 when the Tories, with the support of the Liberals, went into government. The economy was growing following the first global banking crisis and a global recession. I put it to both parties that, as a direct result of the economic policies and the austerity measures that were then pursued, the economy did not continue to grow at the rate at which it should have grown. That is why we are not any place now.

**Willie Rennie:** Will the member give way?

**Alex Rowley:** I have only five minutes; I am sorry.

The other key point that is worth making to the Tories in particular is that, although employment is growing, we need to look at the types of jobs that are being created in the economy. The levels of unfairness and inequality in the economy are not being tackled, with low pay and zero-hours contracts. Most workers have had to take a five-year pay freeze, in effect, while energy prices and the cost of living have continued to rise. Therefore, people are not in a really good place at this stage in terms of their budgets and moving forward.

The other big problem with Tory austerity is that it is an attack on the poor. It is not about saying that we will all take our share and that we all have to suffer equally to come out of this. The type of

welfare reforms that are taking place, the sanctions and the targets that are being set for sanctions are creating absolute poverty in communities across Scotland, probably for the first time since the 1940s. That is an absolute failure of economic policy, no matter how we measure it, and it cannot be and is not right.

Mark McDonald mentioned that, rather than having a war on the poor, we should go after the tax dodgers, cheats and evaders and start to collect the billions of pounds that can be brought in to start to address the deficit. It is a fact that the Tory chancellor has not addressed the deficit. We still have major problems with the country's debt levels. To be honest, we still have a major problem with what our economy produces and with the manufacturing base, which was destroyed in the 18 years of the previous Tory Government.

In the short time that I have, I want to speak about the policies that John Swinney and the Scottish Government are putting forward. I do not think that we are attacking with bile, as has been suggested, when we question the impact that full fiscal autonomy would have on the Scottish economy in the short to medium term.

The figure that was given in independent advice from the Scottish Parliament information centre was that the Barnett formula would mean that £6.5 billion would have to be made up from somewhere else under full fiscal autonomy. It is legitimate to ask the Deputy First Minister how we would make up that difference. I am genuinely concerned that that would result in major cuts to public services or in the need to increase taxes, which would be equally damaging to the economy. It is legitimate to ask whether full fiscal autonomy would result in deeper cuts and more job losses than we have already experienced. The Deputy First Minister has to deal with that question.

The Deputy First Minister's amendment talks about the economy performing and starting to tackle inequalities, but I do not believe that the Government has a clear anti-poverty strategy. When I looked for one, I found that there was a framework to tackle poverty and income inequality in Scotland in 2008. I am told that some updates have been made to that, but I cannot measure anything to see where the outcomes have been achieved. If there is no clear anti-poverty strategy for Scotland, we will not start to tackle inequality and poverty. Those are legitimate points that should be raised with the Government.

16:06

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** Labour's motion contains a number of issues, and we need to look at it in more detail. It talks about full fiscal autonomy and suggests that Scotland

would be £7.6 billion worse off. That point does not hold water for a number of reasons.

The motion looks only at one year on its own, and we need to take the long-term view. We need to remember the many, many years when Scotland was subsidising the rest of the UK. When we debated the economy two weeks ago, I spoke about the failure of the UK over the longer term. I will not mention all those points again today, but some particular failures include the UK's failure in manufacturing and the failure to grow Scotland's population.

**Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab):** Will the member give way?

**John Mason:** I am not taking any interventions.

If we ask the public which party stands best for Scotland, the answer is always the Scottish National Party, even among people who do not vote for us. Some politicians want what is best for the UK as a whole, even if Scotland suffers in the process, and they are entitled to do that if they are in the Labour Party, the Conservative Party or the Liberal Democrats. That is not a position we will find in the SNP. No one actually believes Labour when it talks nonsense about the SNP wanting Scotland to lose out.

As long as we stay in the UK, we want a better deal for Scotland. If there is to be a hung Parliament in London after May, we want more powers but we also want more money—for example, through high-speed rail being brought to Scotland.

Westminster has clearly stated that the transfer of powers should be on a no-detriment principle. More powers for Scotland must not mean that Scotland or the UK is automatically better or worse off as a result. For all those reasons, Labour members' suggestion that full fiscal autonomy could leave Scotland worse off is just laughable, and no one believes them.

Labour's motion also mentions "Labour's redistributive policy plans". Is it really the case that Labour would redistribute wealth and income? I have a few points to make about that. Why did the previous Labour Government preside over a widening gap between rich and poor in society? Labour's plan is to have income tax rates of between 10 and 50 per cent, which, on the surface, sounds progressive. Of course, it is not as progressive as a previous Labour Government that I remember, which took income tax rates up to 98 per cent—I think that even Labour members would accept that that is a bit extreme nowadays. At least a 50 per cent rate appears to be a step in the right direction.

We need to remember that national insurance is a factor. NI is not progressive. It starts at 12 per

cent and falls to 2 per cent. According to Labour, the combined rate would start at 22 per cent and the top rate would be only 52 per cent. Can that really be described as progressive? I do not think so. Will Labour increase the 2 per cent NI contribution for high earners, including MSPs? We can argue for or against higher income tax rates and higher NI contributions, but a combined top rate of 52 per cent cannot be called progressive, and 22 per cent is still too high a hurdle for low earners.

If we are serious about redistribution, surely we have to look at redistributing wealth, and not just income. Inheritance tax is the obvious player here, although we have also had capital transfer tax. It is very difficult for Labour to claim to be progressive or redistributive when its motion makes no mention of redistributing wealth.

**James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab):** Will the member take an intervention?

**John Mason:** Overall, it seems that we would see little more redistribution under a future Labour Government than we saw under the previous one.

**Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab):** Will the member take an intervention?

**John Mason:** I am not taking any interventions.

All of that leads me to wonder how the public view Labour. Is it seen as a progressive party with redistributive policies, and if not, why not? If we look back to last September and the referendum, we can see that something seems to have changed then.

Rightly or wrongly, many people saw the referendum as being about whether we wanted a fairer society. Clearly, many richer people voted no because they did not want a fairer and more equal society in which they might lose out. Many poorer people voted yes, not because they had some romantic idea about Scotland and not even because they thought that Scotland as a whole would be better off, but because they thought that, even if the cake was a little smaller, it would be shared out more fairly and equally. I therefore suggest that it is because Labour sided last September with the rich, with the status quo, with unfairness and with inequality, and because it campaigned against fairness and equality, that it is now suffering in the polls.

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

**John Mason:** Labour can wheel out fine words such as “progressive” and “redistributive”, but people saw last September what it really meant. It was against those things, and people will not support Labour.

16:11

**Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab):** John Mason did his argument no favours, glossing over the facts and spending most of his speech dealing with politics and parties and not with supporting Scotland’s economy, which is the subject of the motion.

A lot of statistics have been exchanged this afternoon, and at times my head spins as the parties opposite try to provide views on how Scotland and the UK in general are moving forward. In that context, I am loth to add any additional statistics, but I will mention a few. Jackie Baillie alluded to the wealth and assets survey that was published yesterday, but I do not think that the full impact has been brought to the Parliament’s attention. It says that 10 per cent of households own 74 per cent of financial wealth in Scotland and that that same 10 per cent have 55 per cent of the pension wealth and 43 per cent of the property wealth. Can it possibly be right, in a 21st century Scotland, that those statistics can appear in our national newspapers and we do not have a sense of social injustice? We need to take steps to move forward instead of marking time with good words and constant referrals to statistics that are meaningless.

I received another set of statistics today that adds to our fund of knowledge. The latest UK business register employment survey shows that many districts in Scotland lost jobs between 2009 and 2013. In East Ayrshire, 3,000 jobs were lost; in East Renfrewshire, 700 jobs were lost; in Glasgow, 24,500 were lost; and so on. Those were real jobs that offered a real purpose in life and represented an opportunity to develop an economy within a family. They gave people meaning and purpose, they created a distance between daily life and poverty, and they offered people a future contributing to the wellbeing of Scotland.

Much has been said about what the Labour Party is contributing in moving forward. We have said that we believe that energy costs should be capped and that we would raise living standards, initially by increasing the minimum wage to £8 an hour. We have introduced the idea that every young person aged 18 or 19 who leaves school and goes straight into work should have £1,600 allocated to them to help with training, tools and start-up costs for business. We have indicated that we believe that we should move forward on balancing the books and introduce a mansion tax in order that we can begin to shift wealth from those who have to those who have not. We would see 24 million working people being relieved of the burden of much of the tax that they face by the creation of a 10p starting rate for tax.

**Mark McDonald:** Will the member give way?

**Graeme Pearson:** I am sorry; there is not sufficient time.

Those are practical options that will take us forward in a productive way for the future.

The SNP has indicated that it would like full fiscal autonomy. That presupposes that the Barnett formula will no longer be applied in our relationship with the UK. It was only six months ago that we were told that the wealth of Scotland's oil would see us through any future that we might face and that there was enormous confidence that that wealth would continue to flow. How times have changed—not because an SNP Government has made any wrong choices but because, unfortunately, the world has impacted on decisions that we take in Scotland, and those impacts will be long-term ones.

There is a need to take a more productive look at the way forward. We should reject George Osborne's approach, which suggests that we are all doing well and are moving forward together. Whatever his plan was—I think that the Green Party had it right—it was not to ensure that those who have not could take part in our economy in the future, but to ensure that the wealthy did much better.

16:16

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I am probably going to be rather unkind to Jackie Baillie in the course of this speech, so let me start on a point of agreement. I agree with the part of the Labour motion that refers to the SNP's disastrous plans for full fiscal autonomy. As Jackie Baillie says, there would be huge funding cuts to health, education and policing totalling £7.6 billion. Alternatively, there would be substantial tax rises, as confirmed by the Institute for Fiscal Studies. I commend to members the excellent article in yesterday's *Scotsman* by Peter Jones. He concluded,

"this is an insane time to be pursuing such a policy",

and he is absolutely right. The Scottish people would be the ones who would suffer from such a move.

The SNP claims that it can grow the economy faster than even the record growth that it is predicted we will see in the UK in coming years. However, as Peter Jones pointed out, if there were any way of managing an economy to get out of public spending austerity caused by a deficit, would not the Governments of Greece, Ireland, Spain, Italy or Portugal have discovered it by now? Or maybe it is just that our SNP ministers are somehow magically blessed with a talent beyond that of anyone else anywhere in the world. I see that they are not leaping up to defend themselves.

Sadly, it is there that Jackie Baillie and I must part company, because much of the rest of her motion, and of her speech this afternoon, is patent nonsense. I will give her some gentle advice. One of the rules of politics is that you should play to your strengths. When choosing topics for debate, choose subjects on which you have a strong record and on which you can attack your opponents. Avoid areas of weakness where your opponents can undermine your arguments.

On that basis, Labour's choice of topic for this afternoon's debate must rank high on the "courageous" register, because the Labour track record on the economy is one that is best brushed under the carpet and quietly forgotten, not one to take to the chamber and champion in a debate. Everyone in this chamber can remember the state of the economy in 2010, with high unemployment, deep recession and the worst set of public finances in the developed world. That was Labour's legacy.

Thankfully, in 2010, the people of the United Kingdom had the good sense to elect a Conservative-led Government, which took some tough decisions in the teeth of opposition from the Labour Party and others. Those tough decisions are now delivering real success. Since 2010, we have seen—

**Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Will you afford Murdo Fraser the opportunity to correct himself? He said that, in 2010, the economy was not in growth but in recession. That is incorrect. The growth, although small, was there.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That is a debating point, not a point of order. Points of order are best made at the end of speeches rather than during them. We are well behind time now.

**Murdo Fraser:** I hope that the Presiding Officer will give me back time for that intervention.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Fraser, I am afraid that I do not have the time to do that, which is unfortunate. Please carry on as quickly as you can.

**Murdo Fraser:** I must have imagined the recession that we suffered in the early part of the decade. [*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Murdo Fraser:** Since then, we have had an excellent track record. Despite some of the nonsense that we hear from the Labour benches, 80 per cent of the new jobs created are in full-time positions and 80 per cent are in skilled occupations; three private sector jobs have been created for every lost public sector job; and, in 2014, there were 34,725 more businesses in Scotland than in 2010.

In February, the UK's inflation rate fell to zero, the lowest level since consumer prices index records began in 1998. Wages are rising faster than prices, helping families to meet their bills. The UK has the fastest growing economy in the eurozone, and we are projected to have the fastest growing economy in the developed world in coming years. Scotland is benefiting from all the hard decisions that have been taken.

The Labour motion refers to George Osborne's economic plan as having

"a detrimental impact on the UK's economy".

What is "detrimental"? Is it the rising employment? Is it the falling unemployment? Is it the low inflation? Is it the fast economic growth? If Labour wants to see detrimental decisions, it need only look back at the decisions taken by Gordon Brown and Ed Balls when they were in government.

Were I in the Labour Party I might have chosen some other topic for debate. The simple fact is that if the people of Scotland want to see continued economic growth, the SNP route brings economic disaster, the Labour route drags us back to the failures of the past, and it is only the Conservatives who can be trusted to keep us on the right path.

16:21

**Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):** I would like to see Murdo Fraser go to Aberdeen and say that it is only the Conservatives who will keep the economy on the right path.

**Murdo Fraser:** I was there on Monday.

**Kevin Stewart:** This week, we saw an Aberdeen food bank run out of food. That is absolutely disgraceful. We are a developed nation. It shows the huge divide that we have between rich and poor. If Murdo Fraser is proud of that Conservative record, I want him to go to Aberdeen and see what happens when he tells that to the folk at the food bank.

The opening line of Jackie Baillie's motion states:

"That the Parliament rejects the UK Government's plans for further austerity; believes that George Osborne's economic plan is based on extreme spending cuts and regressive taxation and will have a detrimental impact on the UK's economy".

I agree with that part of the motion. However, I wonder where the Labour Party stands on the matter. After all, the day after the budget, the shadow chancellor, Ed Balls, speaking on BBC Radio 4's "Today" programme, said that he would not reverse any of the budget. That is an admission that, if elected, an unfettered Labour Government would do absolutely nothing to change the damaging Tory-Liberal policies that

are having a major impact on the most vulnerable people in our society.

By signing up to the budget, the Labour Party, like the coalition parties, has signed up to an additional £12 billion-worth of cuts, despite the chancellor's admission that there is headroom for investment in public services. Of course, just weeks previously, the same Labour Party trooped through the lobbies with the Tories and Liberals to vote for the charter for budget responsibility, with £30 billion-worth of austerity cuts over the first two years of the next UK Parliament.

Labour's statements and actions at Westminster show quite clearly that, although the motion carps about Osborne's extreme spending cuts, when it comes to the crunch, Labour at Westminster backs his austerity measures to the hilt. Jackie Baillie said that we cannot afford another five years of Tory austerity. I say to her that we cannot afford five years of Labour austerity either.

**Jackie Baillie:** Can the member tell me how we can afford a £7.6 billion reduction in our budget as a result of the SNP's foolishness on full fiscal autonomy?

**Kevin Stewart:** Full fiscal autonomy is not going to happen tomorrow—

**Members:** Oh!

**Kevin Stewart:** As John Mason rightly said—  
[Interruption.]

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

**Kevin Stewart:** As John Mason rightly said, we can deal with this over the piece and not just rely on one year. I will come back to that issue later.

The SNP has offered an alternative in which modest increases in public spending allow for £180 billion of spend across the UK. After the First Minister's speech outlining that policy, Jonathan Portes, director of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research said:

"This idea that further austerity is inevitable, desirable and necessary simply doesn't add up from an economic perspective and in that sense, I think that Nicola Sturgeon is quite right to put these issues on the agenda."

Perhaps her good sense is the reason why she is the only political leader with a positive approval rating in England, according to YouGov.

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

**Kevin Stewart:** In that final minute, I want to say that Scotland's revenues are growing; that we pay more in per head than any other part of the UK, bar London; and that we can do even better if we break free of the Westminster anchor of austerity. Doing so will mean that we can provide better for those most vulnerable people who have



been affected by the austerity cuts that have hit them year on year. The only way to break that austerity anchor is to send a phalanx of SNP MPs to London to haul it up and bring some reality back to politics.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you very much. I must alert the chamber that I am likely to have to reduce speeches—[*Interruption.*] Order, please. I am likely to have to reduce speeches to four minutes at some point in the afternoon.

16:26

**James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab):** This is a very timely debate, given that we are on the verge of the general election. By allowing the different approaches of the parties in the Parliament to be outlined, it will have very much informed voters throughout Scotland.

What I find incredible is the contrast between the words in the Tory amendment and what is really happening on the ground. The Tories tell us about the growing economy and the number of people in employment, but the reality is that, in the past five years, people have become £1,600 worse off and families on benefits £1,100 worse off. Murdo Fraser says that 80 per cent of jobs are skilled jobs, but 80 per cent of the jobs that have been created in the past five years have been low paid. As a result, more people are on zero-hours contracts, are suffering from benefits sanctions, are struggling with the cost of living crisis and are, I very much regret to say, queueing up at food banks in our constituencies. That is the reality of the Tory approach and the situation would be exacerbated by the re-election of a Tory Government, which would take us back to the 1930s.

As for the SNP's approach to the debate, I was astonished to hear Mr Swinney and Mr McDonald say nothing about full fiscal autonomy. Perhaps they had forgotten about it, or perhaps they had too much of Alex Salmond's pink champagne at lunchtime. At least Mr Mason was honest enough to say something about it. Full fiscal autonomy will mean binning the Barnett formula and having £7.6 billion less than we have at the moment—and that is only in the first year. That amount will grow as the years go on.

Mr Swinney needs to examine the effect that that will have on schools throughout the country; they are already struggling with cuts, and some need to be rebuilt or modernised. What effect will that have on the NHS, where our accident and emergency departments are in crisis? What effect will it have when we have 150,000 people on social housing waiting lists? What impact will it have on the struggle to get more of the 400,000 people in Scotland who are not on the living wage

on to the living wage? What impact will it have on our growing elderly population if we have £7.6 billion less in our budget?

There is no point in shaking your head about it, Mr Swinney. You never covered it in the whole of your speech, because you are clearly embarrassed. You are embarrassed about the quality—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order. Mr Kelly, speak through the chair, please.

**James Kelly:** Let us contrast that with Labour's plans. We will seek not only to introduce fairness but to support economic growth, and we will do that by introducing a tax on the banker's bonus, a mansion tax on homes with a value of more than £2 million and a new top rate of tax. From the proceeds, we will support the creation of 1,000 more nurses to help to avert the crisis in the NHS, and we will create a jobs guarantee and a living wage of £8. In addition, we will freeze energy prices, give support to student bursaries and create a £1,600 allocation to those working-class kids who are not able to get to college or university.

In the next six weeks, the choice will be clear, as we have seen in the chamber today. We can continue with the Tory austerity cuts that are so damaging in our communities, we can adopt the SNP approach, which would create a £7.6 billion black hole in Scotland's budget, or we can adopt the positive redistributive policies of the Labour Party, which will create economic growth and help Scotland's communities to get back on their feet again.

16:32

**Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** The motion talks about austerity, so I wanted to start by having a look at the first anti-austerity national leader, President Franklin D Roosevelt, a man for whom the war on want was not rhetoric but real. Roosevelt's anti-austerity programme was the new deal, which saved many thousands of Americans from hunger and want by investing in the infrastructure of the country and establishing a social security safety net for the first time. It cost money and it made him enemies among the establishment. He was told that it was too expensive and that the priority should be to balance the books, as Jackie Baillie said.

In his election address at Madison Square Garden, Roosevelt noted:

"Never before in all our history have these forces"—  
the forces of conservatism—

"been so united against one candidate as they stand today. They are unanimous in their hate for me—and I welcome

their hatred. I should like to have it said ... that ... the forces of selfishness and of lust for power met their match."

Roosevelt was told that state spending was unaffordable and that a balanced budget should take priority over feeding the hungry and rebuilding the country after the great depression. It is a sad fact that the arguments and forces of fiscal conservatism that lined up against Roosevelt eight decades ago are alive and well today in the UK—ensconced, for the moment at least, in 11 Downing Street, and putting in place another £30 billion of cuts that will hit the poorest people in our society. Scotland alone will see another £12 billion of cumulative cuts over the next four years.

I know that the Labour Party would very much like to pretend to have inherited Roosevelt's mantle; its motion uses the language of anti-austerity, but Roosevelt never advocated the so-called "sensible" cuts in public spending that the Labour Party has supported at Westminster.

**Drew Smith:** Will the member give way?

**Joan McAlpine:** No, I have only got five minutes. I am sorry.

Anti-austerity, which means investing, nourishing the economy and encouraging economic activity will, as the Deputy First Minister says, increase the tax take. If we cut spending and reduce economic activity, we inhibit the income from tax and we have to borrow more as a consequence. That is the lesson that Roosevelt and Maynard Keynes taught us many decades ago, and it is why George Osborne's austerity has failed. It is the reason why borrowing has risen substantially beyond his initial expectation and has exceeded the June 2010 forecast by more than £50 billion in 2014-15.

Disgracefully, the Labour Party has signed up to that failed model. It is surely disgraceful that Ed Balls says that there is nothing that he would change in George Osborne's budget. George Osborne was explicit in his budget that welfare will take the biggest hit—a hit that disproportionately hurts the disabled and families with children.

In voting for the charter of budget responsibility at Westminster, Labour votes to put those £30 billion of austerity cuts in place over the next two years. Jackie Baillie calls that balancing the books and I suppose that it is inevitable that Labour will use the language of the Tories when it mirrors their policies.

Roosevelt was attacked for failing to balance the books and history celebrates him for doing so. That is the historical context in which we should view the First Minister's real anti-austerity proposals. As with the new deal, she advocated investment to promote growth through an increase in spending of £180 billion in public services until

2019-20 and she told her audience at University College London that we could use that investment to promote infrastructure, education and innovation, which would support stronger and more sustainable growth in the future.

Franklin D Roosevelt would have endorsed that proposal. In his 1936 campaign address, he said that his anti-austerity agenda had made him the most hated politician ever among the powerful and wealthy. He went on to win a landslide in 1936.

The SNP's anti-austerity programme has also induced some hysterical outbursts among the UK establishment. They fear and hate us and, as Roosevelt said, I welcome their hatred because we represent hope and offer true change and a true end to austerity if we wield power at Westminster after 7 May.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Dennis Robertson but, after him, I am afraid that speeches will have to be reduced to four minutes.

16:36

**Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP):** On 7 May, the people have a choice to make. They will vote for more austerity from the Tories, more austerity from the Labour Party, more austerity from the Lib Dems or a new way from the SNP, which will be able to influence the direction of travel in the hung Parliament. Nicola Sturgeon has the highest poll ratings, even in England.

We have another choice: Osborne, Balls or John Swinney to promote his plans to take Scotland forward. This economy debate is not just about what is happening in the UK but about what is best for Scotland. Scotland will be £12 billion worse off from the budget because Labour has supported the Tories and the Lib Dems once again to ensure that there is a £30 billion austerity cut. Labour members cannot run away from that. It is a fact and is on the record. There will be a £30 billion cut, more austerity and a £12 billion cut to Scotland from the budget. [*Interruption.*]

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

**Dennis Robertson:** Let us look at who has been paying the price for the remarkable and superb term of office for which the Conservatives and the Lib Dems are applauding themselves. It is the most vulnerable and poorest in our society.

Let us look at the welfare cuts and the sanctions that the Department for Work and Pensions has imposed in Scotland. Who stepped in to try to mitigate some of their impact? The Scottish Government did so. No one else has, but we have mitigated many of the cuts that are coming to Scotland. We should not be using the money to mitigate cuts; we should be using it to create a progressive outlook for our economy.

To try to ensure that our economy is prosperous and moves forward, the Scottish Government has put money into capital investments and infrastructure in Scotland, which has created jobs. In my constituency, we have the Inveramsay bridge, the Alford academy campus and the A96. Programmes are taking the economy forward and assisting the construction industry. We are moving forward with a progressive plan.

The plan that Mr Swinney and the First Minister have for a hung Parliament is the one that the Scots will adopt on 7 May because, as we know from the polls, Labour, the Conservatives and the Lib Dems are nowhere to be seen in Scotland. We will have many SNP MPs in Westminster influencing the direction of travel for the benefit of Scotland, because that is what the Scottish Parliament requires to ensure that it implements a plan to benefit Scotland, not to bring it back into austerity.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Drew Smith. I can give you about four and a half minutes, Mr Smith.

16:40

**Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab):** I am grateful to you, Presiding Officer. General elections are an opportunity not just to challenge those with power but, ultimately, to take the power from them. As Jackie Baillie has set out, Labour has a better plan for ending Tory austerity and for raising living standards. Under the Tories, plans to reduce the deficit have failed. They have failed because the Tories have failed to understand that the country succeeds when working families succeed. The Tory legacy is one of insecure and exploitative work for ordinary people and a rising cost of living while, at the same time, there are tax cuts for the richest and an on-going failure to tackle tax avoidance, which is robbing public services of proper support.

However, the SNP's central demand for the general election is for full fiscal autonomy. The time has come for scrutiny of that idea. Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon have been absolutely clear that the SNP's stated aim for the general election is to have enough influence in the House of Commons to secure full fiscal autonomy for Scotland. Others have defined what that means—we all understand what full fiscal autonomy means.

On one level, full fiscal autonomy is a simple solution to the conundrum about where power lies and in whose interest it is wielded. The outcome would in fact be very simple indeed. It would mean the devastation of Scottish public services, job losses and cuts on a scale that would dwarf the other issues that we are discussing. It would mean

full fiscal austerity—austerity max and cuts, on top of cuts, on top of cuts. It is, quite simply, a terrible idea. That is why John Swinney did not mention it once in his 10-minute speech. It is the SNP's key aim for the general election, yet neither the finance secretary nor Mr McDonald will even defend it. However, we have to give credit to Mr Mason for attempting to do so. *[Interruption.]* I say to Mr Swinney that if he wanted to talk about full fiscal autonomy, he had an opportunity to do so in his opening speech.

Full fiscal autonomy is an idea that no one who cares about the people who rely on public services could ever conceivably support. I have listened carefully to the SNP arguments this afternoon and the truth is that we have not heard a single cogent reason why it would be in Scotland's interests. Whatever our views are on the merits or otherwise of independence, or indeed our assessment of the coalition's record, we should all be able to agree that full fiscal autonomy is a very bad idea.

I am proud to argue the case for my party's better economic plan, which is to balance the books by growing our economy. I have to say to SNP members who bandied around the word "progressive" this afternoon that not one of them has mentioned taxation. That is shocking. I am prepared to say that achieving a fair balance means asking those with the most to pay a modest amount more. Labour's proposals are for redistribution from those with the most to those with the least, pooling and sharing the resources that Scotland's place in the UK—a place that we confirmed last year—delivers. That means redistribution to different parts of the union. The SNP's plan for full fiscal autonomy would wreck that redistribution across the UK and, in the process, wreck Scotland's public finances.

There are no arguments for full fiscal autonomy other than an ideological one. Why is the SNP attempting—occasionally—to argue it at all? It is because it is the idea that the SNP thinks looks most like independence. That is the only argument that could be made for that disastrous policy. John Mason said that others were talking Scotland down. The truth is that the SNP would argue for that policy whether it made Scotland richer or poorer and the truth is that we know that it would make Scotland poorer. How do we know that? The Scottish Government's own figures tell us that and the IFS puts the figure at £7.6 billion.

I understand that many people have a deeply held belief in Scotland being separate from the rest of the UK. I understand that, for SNP members, that is an unshakeable belief and they are not going to change it. I accept that the Conservatives and the Liberals will defend their record. Patrick Harvie is right to say that Conservative members who believe in a smaller

state support the continuation and deepening of austerity to achieve precisely that aim.

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

**Drew Smith:** What I cannot understand is that Scottish ministers now choose to campaign for an arrangement that is predicated on staying in the UK but which would make us worse off within the UK.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am sorry, Mr Smith, but I have no time left. I ask you to close.

**Drew Smith:** It is the worst of all worlds, and I will therefore support the Labour motion tonight. I look forward very much to the general election campaign.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Many thanks. I can give Mike MacKenzie and Chic Brodie four and a half minutes each.

16:45

**Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** It is very disappointing to hear Labour Party members reheating those tired old arguments: we are too poor, we are too wee, we are too stupid—[*Interruption.*]

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

**Mike MacKenzie:** Next, they will be telling us that we are not genetically suited to taking these big decisions for ourselves.

However, the really disappointing thing about this afternoon's debate is that only the SNP, and to a certain extent the Green Party, has put forward credible proposals for an alternative economic strategy. The Labour Party is desperately trying to create the illusion that there is any significant difference between its proposals and the Tories' proposals, but the reality is that those differences are marginal. Only a few weeks ago, Labour MPs marched through the lobbies side by side with their Tory friends to vote for continuing austerity. The reality is that all the UK parties are wedded to austerity, with Labour claiming that its cuts are somehow nicer than the Tory cuts.

The people have not spoken yet, but they are showing all the signs of having greater economic wisdom than their political masters at Westminster. In a Westminster electoral system that is designed to give one party a clear majority, it does not look as if any of the main UK parties enjoys much public confidence.

Scotland is the key battleground in the UK election, and there has been much speculation about the reasons for Labour's falling fortunes in Scotland. It is not just about the semantic shilly-

shallying over what was promised in the vow; the fact that Labour campaigned side by side with the Tories during the referendum; or the enhanced political engagement brought about by the referendum. It is also about an increasingly informed electorate, and a large section of the population who, as a result of the referendum, have received a political and economic education—

**James Kelly:** Will Mr MacKenzie take an intervention?

**Mike MacKenzie:** I am sorry, but I am short of time.

It is also about the democratisation of information, aided and abetted—as we know—by the internet and shared by means of social media. The increasingly informed electorate knows that deficit reduction is not in itself an economic plan—[*Interruption.*] Mr Kelly, I said no to your intervention.

Deficit reduction would be one of the happy outcomes of a good economic plan, but it should not be the sole purpose of an economic plan. To focus solely on deficit reduction is to attempt to treat one of the symptoms of the disease and not the disease itself.

If we are to nurse our economy back to good health, it is necessary to deal with the underlying problems of our economy. It is necessary to move from a low-wage economy to a high-wage economy, and from a position of low productivity to one of high productivity. Last night, I was reading about the financial and property crisis of the Roman empire in AD 33. The business cycle has waxed and waned from before that time.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Final minute.

**Mike MacKenzie:** Gordon Brown's boast that he had ended boom and bust was like a surfer riding on the crest of a wave and trying to claim that he created the wave.

Governments can dampen down the business cycle, but they cannot end it, and good Government economic policies can reshape our economy to deliver better outcomes. Increasing our productivity would increase competitiveness; moving to a higher-wage economy would increase taxation revenues and tackle the deficit far more effectively than implementing harsh cuts; and tackling inequality would deliver real and sustainable economic growth.

That is why economists such as Paul Krugman and Brian Ashcroft—I am not always a fan of those gentlemen—are suggesting that the UK parties have a bogus economic narrative.

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

**Mike MacKenzie:** For those reasons, it is necessary to send a large bloc of SNP MPs down to Westminster—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am afraid you must finish, or I will have to deduct the time from Chic Brodie's speech.

**Mike MacKenzie:** —to shape economic policy from there.

16:49

**Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP):** I feel that today we are in a time warp. Fourteen days ago, we were talking about Labour supporting the Scottish economy. Today, we are talking about supporting Scotland's economy, with the same mood music, which is funereal. Last time, the lyrics were bad; today they are absolutely horrible. The motion calls for the rejection of the UK Government's plans for austerity and says:

"George Osborne's economic plan is based on extreme spending cuts and regressive taxation".

As Mr Osborne did not or would not spell out the extreme cuts or any menu of them, it is incumbent on Labour—in fact, it is essential for it—to tell us now what was on the menu when it voted for the £30 billion of austerity cuts. I will not rehearse all the quotes from Ed Balls on Radio 4 last week on his non-reversal of the Osborne cuts in public spending. Osborne will not tell us, but Balls appears to know, so he should tell us what they are. What has Labour signed up to? Tell the people what the cuts are going to be.

Labour invokes the OBR and its warning about further "more savage" cuts over the next two years, although those are as yet undefined. That would be the OBR of which Alistair Darling said at its inception:

"Right from the start the Tories used the OBR not just as part of the Government but as part of the Conservative Party. They have succeeded in strangling ... a good idea at its birth."

That would be the OBR that, in its fiscal outlook just a year ago, said that it was unable to forecast the effect of the new Calman taxes on the Scottish budget because its forecasting methodologies are "work-in-progress", as it put it. That would be the OBR that passed over six iterations of its forecast basis to provide the forecast for Osborne to produce his recent budget.

The motion mentions introducing a 10p starting rate of tax on the first £1,000,

"to save money for hard working families".

Of course, Labour does not, cannot or will not spell out the personal tax allowances in its taxation programme, but just imagine that we apply the 10p rate to the first £1,000 and retain the current tax

thresholds. In that case, someone on £15,000 a year in 2016-17 will see a reduction of £140 in their tax bill, but someone on £50,000 a year will reap a reduction of £203 a year. So much for Labour's fairness and equality. So much for Drew Smith's crocodile tears in saying that the well-off should pay more.

The motion states that we should "reject full fiscal autonomy" and keep the Barnett formula. The late Lord Barnett—he of the formula—said that, in the event of Scotland getting more tax powers, retaining the formula would be a "terrible mistake". Another Labour luminary predicted that the formula would be

"diminished" ... because the funding arrangement would be irrevocably changed by new tax powers coming to Holyrood."

That was of course Jack McConnell, in August last year.

The only true solution is to have full fiscal autonomy married to full political independence. Labour has sold the jerseys. It sold the first team jerseys in 2008 and it is now selling the second team jerseys, on austerity, on undefined public expenditure cuts, on the spending of £100 billion on nuclear weapons, and on fair work, taxation and pay. Two weeks ago, I said that Labour has no economic strategy, no oil and gas plan and no fiscal determination. This week, Labour members have proved that yet again.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We come to the closing speeches. As ever, I expect members who have participated in the debate to be in the chamber for the closing speeches.

16:54

**Patrick Harvie:** It is common in these debates for me to find myself agreeing with at least half of what various members who disagree vociferously with one another have said. Maybe I am just in an unreasonably good mood today, but I will focus on the stuff that I agree with, at least at first.

Jackie Baillie began with a strong rejection of the coalition's record and its promises of austerity to come. She said that there is a clear need

"to get rid of the Tories",

and I can happily subscribe to that.

Rather than merely condemning Ed Balls, let me hold out the hope that, if he has the opportunity, he will find something in the last Tory budget that he would like to overturn. I could provide a list if that would be helpful.

Jackie Baillie, continuing her attempt to rebrand the Barnett formula as the Barnett bonus, launched an attack—and she was not the last Labour member to do so—on the concept of full

fiscal autonomy. Let me try to identify one point of agreement on that. Whatever change is proposed to the fiscal relationship between Scotland and the rest of the UK after the implementation of what the ramshackle Smith agreement led to, it must be subject to a more thoughtful, reflective, considered process than the Smith commission itself. We all know that the commission was given a breakneck timetable. Those who have described its work as “coherent” and “durable” find it hard to keep a straight face when they do so. Whatever comes after the Smith recommendations must be produced on a more thoughtful basis.

Lord Smith’s more agreeable namesake in the Parliament, Drew, was right to raise the question of tax and where it fits. He is quite right to say that it is absurd to argue for a more equal society without talking about the greater contribution that those who are wealthiest must be expected to pay. The Greens have argued for that consistently. I hope that we will not be alone in doing so in the run-up to next year’s Holyrood election, when all political parties will have to set out their stall on a more progressive tax system in Scotland.

Mr Swinney, the Deputy First Minister, places familiar emphasis on the SNP’s approach to stimulating more growth, leading to more jobs and more taxes, and to balancing the books in that way. Notwithstanding our old debate about the limits to growth—the limits to its extent and to its value as a metric—I welcome the fact that the SNP, under its new leadership, seems to have abandoned the nonsense of starting that cycle with tax cuts for big business. That is an important point of change in the SNP’s most recent economic policy, and I hope that it will follow through on that agenda further.

Gavin Brown—here I may struggle to be positive—like so many other members, judges economic recovery on the basis of incredibly narrow metrics. He talks about growth, regardless of who benefits from how wealth is generated or who manages to hoard it; about jobs, regardless of their quality, security or pay levels; and about cuts only in terms of necessity, as he perceives it, and regardless of their human impact.

Willie Rennie is not the first Liberal Democrat I have heard recently trying to create a measure of distance from the Conservatives. It is clear that the Liberal Democrats feel ready for a spell in opposition. I do not think that they need to worry—I feel that the burden may be lifted from them soon. The empty hopes of their activists, the empty soundbites and the empty yellow boxes—all will soon be things of the past.

The Green proposition on green QE is quite consistent with a paper from the Bank of England—I find such radical words astonishing, given that the Bank of England is not the most

radical economic voice in the land. In its recent discussion paper, “One Bank Research Agenda”, the Bank of England noted:

“Climate change, and policy, technological and societal responses to it, could have significant effects on financial markets and financial institutions”.

Presumably, as well as crashing the life-support system that we depend on, it will be bad for the markets. The bank concludes:

“central banks may have to respond to the challenges presented by these forces.”

We have offered a means by which the central bank can do that: investing in renewable energy; investing in energy efficiency; investing in the high-quality housing that the country needs; and investing, perhaps, in some of the intellectual property generation in offshore energy, energy storage and alternatives to petrochemicals. Scotland could have a leading advantage in some of those areas. The Green Investment Bank or a national investment bank could be used to enable local authorities, devolved Governments, NHS trusts and boards and other public bodies to make that investment.

As with the previous QE programme, debt issued by one part of government is taken up by another part of the public sector. It effectively ceases to be debt, no interest accrues, and that opens up the possibilities for that investment—investment in the public good, investment in environmental progress and investment in high-quality jobs in every constituency in the UK. That is the kind of programme that the next UK Government should be investing in.

I hope that whoever has influence on the balanced Parliament that is likely to emerge from this year’s election will press that point to the benefit of Scotland and the rest of the UK.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Before I call the next closing speaker, I note that Alex Rowley has not returned to chamber and I do not have an explanation for that.

I call Willie Rennie.

17:00

**Willie Rennie:** In response to an intervention from Jackie Baillie, Kevin Stewart said that full fiscal autonomy

“is not going to happen tomorrow.”

Thank goodness for that, because if we had listened to him last year and he had had his way in the referendum, it would be happening next year. If we listen to him on 7 May, it might still be here next year. That is the price that we would pay.

**Kevin Stewart:** Will Willie Rennie take an intervention?

**Willie Rennie:** I will take an intervention from Kevin Stewart to hear whether he has some kind of explanation.

**Kevin Stewart:** I think that Mr Rennie should tell the public about the deficit that is currently being run by the UK Government and the huge debt—£1.5 trillion—that the UK has. We could grow ourselves out of deficit—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Hurry along, Mr Stewart.

**Kevin Stewart:** —but there are some things that the UK Government seems incapable of doing. If other countries can do it, why not Scotland?

**Willie Rennie:** So we have Kevin Stewart, as chancellor, achieving miraculous rates of growth in just 12 months, in order to deal with a massive hole in the country's finances that he would bring about.

**Kevin Stewart:** I never said that.

**Willie Rennie:** That is what he is suggesting. He says that full fiscal autonomy is not going to be here tomorrow—and thank goodness that it is not.

I am disappointed that Alex Rowley is not in the chamber. He criticised the coalition's deficit-reduction plan, but he seems to have forgotten an important thing: when Alistair Darling was Gordon Brown's chancellor, Darling said that there would be "tougher and deeper" cuts than those implemented by Margaret Thatcher. That was the case because of the state that Alex Rowley's former boss and colleague Gordon Brown left the country in. Alex Rowley should be a bit more careful when criticising the coalition's plans, because they are exactly what his chancellor would have done had he been returned to office.

When they talked about the impact on working people, Alex Rowley and Drew Smith also failed to recognise the big tax cuts that we have had. The other day I met a man who receives £12,000 in income a year. Before the coalition came to power, he paid £1,100 in income tax; now he will pay £200 in income tax. That is the biggest tax cut for working people that I have ever seen and probably will ever see in the future. That is the sort of practical measure that we need to implement in order to help working people.

We have heard many people talking about progressive politics. I do not think that it is progressive to leave an ever growing mountain of debt for future generations to pay. I am not going to spend today what our children should have tomorrow. Nor do I believe—as opposed to the Conservatives—that we should cut today beyond what is necessary to balance the books. I think that we should invest appropriately and build that

stronger economy and fairer society so that there is opportunity for everyone.

I started off by setting out the differences between the various parties on the economy. I believe that Labour and the SNP want to borrow far too much, and the Conservatives want to cut too much. Either would return us to that damaging, see-saw economics of the past. We should steer clear of advice from those parties.

Many people have talked also about tax dodging. I have a report here that sets out what the UK coalition has done about tax dodgers. We have closed many loopholes—in fact, 33 different tax loopholes. We have prosecuted 10 times more people for tax crimes than the Labour Party did when it was in power. We have clawed back a massive £1.4 billion extra from fraud by using better data and £9 billion in tax from accounts in Switzerland, Liechtenstein and the Channel Islands. Those are practical measures that have resulted in big tax take back to the Government to help us in difficult times.

None of the members mentioned any of that, just as none of the members mentioned the tax cuts for working people. If we are going to have a balanced debate, we should recognise that we have also got the economy in this country back on track and we have done it fairly. We have done it by cutting tax for those on low and middle incomes and by making sure that we are helping those from disadvantaged backgrounds with things such as childcare. There has been a massive expansion in childcare; in fact, the SNP Government needs to do an awful lot to catch up with the UK Government on childcare. We have also made sure that the economy will stay the course.

If we listen to the advice from the SNP and the Labour Party, we will just plunge ourselves into even higher levels of debt. If we listen to the Tories, the cuts to public services will be really deep and will go back to the levels that we had in the 1960s: we will see massive cuts to public services and the NHS beyond what is sustainable.

We need to stay the course and keep the balanced approach that has worked over the last five years, creating 187,000 extra jobs in this country—something that no MSPs other than the Conservatives members are prepared to recognise. We have made significant progress in the last five years, based on a plan that none of those people said would work. We have heard from them repeatedly that the plan would not work.

We should get the balance between borrowing and spending right, keeping us on the path to a fairer society and a stronger economy.

17:06

**Gavin Brown:** Let me start by coming back to some of the points made by the Labour Party members. First, they said that the chancellor's plans would be detrimental and have a negative impact on the economy. However, that does not square terribly well with the growth projections, which, last week, were revised upwards, along with the unemployment projections, which were revised downwards, and the employment projections, which were revised upwards, with full employment now a distinct possibility, perhaps by the end of the next Parliament.

We heard that Labour members would do things differently, but they were a little light on detail. The idea of a 50p tax rate is something that this side of the chamber would obviously be against. However, I ask in all seriousness, particularly with income tax being devolved, how much a 50p rate would actually raise in Scotland relative to the economic damage that it could do, perhaps adding to the perception that Scotland is a difficult place to do business. How much would a 50p tax rate raise? I hope that the Labour Party will return to that in the closing speech.

The Labour Party wants to bring in a 10p tax rate, which is fair enough. Is that then a back-door admission that it was wrong of Gordon Brown to remove the 10p tax rate in the first place? It was his final act as Chancellor of the Exchequer, so why has Labour suddenly changed its position on that?

Although Labour tries to make out that the coalition Government is fond of austerity but that a Labour Government would not have made any change, it is simply not true. I looked deep into the budget, and I found that it says that the total consolidation—if tax changes and spending reductions are added—over the course of the Westminster Parliament until now has been approximately £106 billion. However, £70 billion out of the £106 billion was inherited from the previous UK Government. Labour would have had fewer spending cuts, but it signed up to £70 billion out of the £106 billion that actually happened—and that was before the euro crisis took shape, so Labour may well have ended up in a not-too-dissimilar place.

I want to turn to the comments made by the SNP because a couple of them were really important. First, the stated policy of the Scottish Government is full fiscal autonomy; it has put it down on paper many times and it has been reiterated by almost every SNP speaker today. The Labour motion talks about there being

“£7.6 billion in additional cuts or tax rises”

as a consequence of full fiscal autonomy—it does not mention borrowing, although of course things

could be done that way. However, there are only three ways in which they could be done.

The Scottish Government has said that the figures do not stack up—John Mason said that. Kevin Stewart said, “Don’t worry, it is not going to happen tomorrow anyway”, but that is not really a retort. The serious point is this: what is the Scottish Government’s official position on the finances for full fiscal autonomy? What does it think that the impact will be in 2016-17, 2017-18 or 2018-19?

If full fiscal autonomy is the Scottish Government’s stated policy and what it hopes to achieve if it gets a “phalanx”—to quote Kevin Stewart again—of MPs, that is what it would be pushing. I think that the people of Scotland and wider society have a right to know what the Scottish Government’s projections are if that were to happen. It is easy to rubbish other parties’ projections, but what is the Scottish Government’s view?

**John Mason:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Gavin Brown:** In a moment.

That is why in our amendment we call on the Scottish Government to publish Scotland’s balance sheet—an update to the “Outlook for Scotland’s Public Finances” report—so that we can see what it believes that the impact on the finances would be.

**John Mason:** Would Gavin Brown accept that no Scottish Government is going to ask for more powers that would leave it worse off?

**Gavin Brown:** I am not sure where to begin in tackling that, given that every time John Mason and every other SNP member, including the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister, speak on the subject, full fiscal autonomy is their stated policy or aim.

I have a proposal to make. Although we did not put it in our amendment, I hope that Alex Neil will address it when he closes the debate. Given that we have an independent Scottish Fiscal Commission with economic brains on it, which has the ability and capacity to do the work, why do we not ask it to look at the issue? Why do we not ask the Scottish Fiscal Commission to publish a report on full fiscal autonomy in which it uses all the statistics that it can get its hands on to work out to the best of its ability what its projections would be for 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19?

**Chic Brodie:** Will Gavin Brown take an intervention?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member is in his final minute.



**Gavin Brown:** I think that that would be fair. Those projections would not come from the Labour Party, the Conservative Party or the Scottish National Party; they would come from the Scottish Government's Fiscal Commission.

I hope that Mr Neil will address that proposal. I think that it would shed some light on what is a really important issue. It would enable us to see whose figures stack up and what the impacts would be; it would then be up to the electorate to judge to the best of their ability who is correct on the issue.

I close with a question for Alex Neil and John Swinney: why do we not get the Scottish Fiscal Commission to look at the matter and to publish an independent report on it?

17:12

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights (Alex Neil):** I have listened very carefully to all the speeches, not least those by Labour members. It is a great tragedy that Alex Rowley is not the main economic spokesman for the Labour Party instead of Jackie Baillie. He showed much more sense in his tone and in the serious issues that he raised, and much less illiteracy on economic matters than Jackie Baillie displayed.

The first lesson that Alex Rowley demonstrated was on a fundamental issue, about which Harold Macmillan—then Lord Stockton—made a speech in the House of Lords in the early 1980s, during the Thatcher recession. There are two basic strategies that can be adopted in tackling a structural deficit: a Government can grow its way out of it or it can try to cut its way out of it. We have seen in recent years that trying to cut our way out of the deficit delays the point at which we can get the deficit down, and it does so at enormous economic cost to our people. Professor Simon Wren-Lewis of the University of Oxford estimates that the cost of trying to cut our way out of the deficit has been a loss of 5 per cent of GDP across the UK, which is equivalent to £1,500 for every person in the country.

There are two very practical good examples that prove the point. Let us compare what has happened in the UK with what has happened under President Obama in the States. His strategy has been to grow his way out of the deficit, and the US now has a much lower deficit than the UK and many other countries. Indeed, as a percentage of GDP, the UK's deficit is one of the highest, if not the highest, in the whole of Europe, so the idea that it is possible to cut our way out of a deficit is absolutely wrong, and it is a very costly way of trying to do it.

There is another very good example closer to home.

**Gavin Brown:** Will the cabinet secretary give way?

**Alex Neil:** I will give way in a minute.

The strategy that has been followed was recommended by the World Bank. It recommended that two things can be done to bring down a deficit quicker as part of a growth strategy. First, there should be investment in capital; capital investment creates far more jobs than any other way of creating jobs. That means far more revenue, far more savings in social security and a much bigger reduction in the deficit. The other way is not to cut welfare. As the World Bank has shown, one of the ways in which the growth of a country can be boosted is by redistributive policies. *[Interruption.]*

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

**Alex Neil:** If we had pursued redistributive policies at UK level along with an investment plan over the past five years, the deficit would already be much lower, the level of employment and the quality of employment would be much higher, and our overall economy would be far stronger.

**Gavin Brown:** The French followed the economics of Alex Neil; they have double our level of unemployment and have had a fraction of the growth this year and last year. Why is that?

**Alex Neil:** Actually, the French did not follow that strategy; they did not have an investment-led growth strategy and they did not pursue the World Bank's suggested way of doing things.

We just need to look closer to home; we should look at the strategy that John Swinney has followed in recent years. We have placed massive emphasis on the importance of investment, we have shifted revenue spend to capital spend and, as a result of the Scottish Futures Trust—which some members opposed—we have had about £300 million a year on average more capital investment than would have been the case without it.

**Willie Rennie:** Will Alex Neil give way?

**Alex Neil:** I will give way in a minute.

We should look at the employment figures in Scotland. Of the countries that make up the United Kingdom, we have the highest level of employment and the second-lowest level of economic inactivity. Those are direct results of the policies and strategy that the Government and John Swinney have pursued.

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** When Mr Neil talks about redistribution, is he referring only to shifting spending from revenue

to capital, or is there any social redistribution policy measure that he would support?

**Alex Neil:** The Government has pursued much more progressive policies than the Labour Party—very often against the opposition of that party. We need only look at yesterday's and today's newspapers; the Labour Party pays lip service to redistribution. North Lanarkshire Council, which is one of the biggest councils in Scotland, has had to be forced by the courts to give equal pay to women, which it has fought against for the past 10 years. We will not take lessons on redistribution from the Labour Party. *[Interruption.]*

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

**Alex Neil:** The millions of pounds that were spent on lawyers' fees in order to do in the chances of women getting equal pay is an utter disgrace. *[Interruption.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Alex Neil:** Members will notice that no Labour member is getting up on their feet to defend that.

We should look at the Labour Party's policies. Earlier, we heard a statement on Longannet. What is the root cause of the challenges that Longannet faces? That is part of economy policy. The root cause of the challenges is the tariff structure that Ed Miliband introduced when he was the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. It is that tariff structure that has done so much damage and has brought forward the unnecessary closure of Longannet.

If we listen to the Labour Party, we realise that it has more faces than Big Ben when it comes to economic policy. On one hand, it tries to say that it is pursuing an anti-austerity policy and strategy; on the other hand, it votes for £30 billion of cuts. *[Interruption.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Alex Neil:** After the Tory budget, Ed Balls told us that there was nothing in it that he would reverse.

**Drew Smith:** In Mr Neil's round of issues from Longannet to equal pay in North Lanarkshire Council, will he perhaps address the SNP's proposal for full fiscal autonomy in the general election, which Mr Swinney singularly failed to address?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The cabinet secretary is approaching his final minute.

**Alex Neil:** Absolutely. Let me give just one example of how, if we were in charge of our own money, we could save £10 billion over the next few years to redirect to good social and economic causes. *[Interruption.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order, please. We must hear what the cabinet secretary says in his last minute.

**Alex Neil:** We could save that money by scrapping the plan to have a successor to Trident on the Clyde. That is an example of how to use fiscal independence for the benefit of the economy and employment, and to achieve a much fairer society. It is a disgrace that when the Labour Party is supporting £30 billion of new cuts, the one cut that it is not supporting is cutting the £100 billion that the Trident replacement will cost. The Labour Party, of all parties, is going to waste money on that.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Draw to a close, please, cabinet secretary.

**Alex Neil:** Fiscal independence gives us the chance to build up Scotland and the Scottish economy for the future.

17:20

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** The next six weeks will be about making choices, and today's debate has made some of, although perhaps not all, those choices clearer.

The Conservative amendment highlights the OBR's revised forecast for economic growth, but does not refer to the sharp squeeze on real spending in the next two years that the OBR predicted only last week.

Willie Rennie criticised his party's Conservative coalition partners for their ideological drive to reduce the size of the state, as if that was something that his party had not noticed until now, even though it has been part of a coalition Government that has been cutting the size of the state for the past five years.

Patrick Harvie talked about green investment, so I hope that his party will support Labour's plans to broaden the base of the Green Investment Bank by encouraging the issuing of green investment premium bonds.

**Patrick Harvie:** If Mr Blanchflower is right and the next UK Government is going to have to contemplate a new round of QE, will the Labour Party be open to the idea of that investment going into the real economy and green investment, rather than into the financial services sector, as the previous round did?

**Lewis Macdonald:** I am confident that the next Labour Government will want to ensure that any such economic measures are taken forward in a way that boosts the real economy in a sustainable way.

We have heard today that the SNP maintains that it is opposed to further cuts and is in favour of

increased public investment. At the same time, it stands for full fiscal autonomy, which would inevitably reduce the revenues that are available for investment and make cuts all the more certain.

The Tories would shrink the state through drastic cuts in services and regressive taxation. The SNP would divide the country by reducing to a minimum the services and the taxes that we share across this island. As Jackie Baillie made clear, Labour rejects those courses of action, just as we reject the ideologies that lie behind them. The best way to balance budgets and to reduce debt is to grow the economy and the living standards of working people, and the best way to secure the benefits of growth for Scotland is to maintain the fiscal union and the Barnett formula.

It is simply wrong to say that there is only one way to get the current budget into balance and to start to reduce the national debt. Gavin Brown and Murdo Fraser claim that it can be done only through drastic spending cuts, and the SNP echoes that because it wants to pretend that any party that commits to deficit reduction is committing to Tory cuts. None of that is true.

The charter for fiscal responsibility does not say what measures need to be taken to balance the books. Voting for a balanced budget and voting for Tory cuts are different things and the SNP repeatedly saying otherwise does not make it true. It was striking that Joan McAlpine criticised Jackie Baillie for using the language of balanced budgets, which is precisely the language that John Swinney likes to use on the front bench.

How quickly the deficit can begin to go down will depend on the state of the economy and levels of productivity. The sooner the next UK Government can achieve improved living standards and higher productivity, the sooner it can begin to cut the debt.

Labour's approach is to use all the tools that are available to Government to strengthen the economy in ways that benefit the individual citizen and public finances. That means using the tax system so that a greater share of the cost of strengthening the economy is borne by those who can afford to pay more, by reversing the cut to the top rate of tax for those who are on the highest incomes, and by putting a mansion tax on the biggest homes to fund investment in the NHS. Just as the incoming Labour Government 18 years ago taxed the windfall profits of the privatised utilities to provide a new deal for the long-term unemployed, so this year's incoming Labour Government will put a tax on bankers' bonuses to fund starter jobs for young people who have been out of work for a year or more.

It is fundamental to Labour's view of the world and to Labour values that social justice and

economic success go together; that is what an incoming Labour Government will seek to achieve. As well as increasing taxes for those who can afford to pay, Labour will reduce the disadvantages of those who have lost the most in the past five years, with a national minimum wage of £8 an hour, use of the tax system to reward private companies that sign up to paying a living wage—as the best have already done—and a move to ensure that workers on regular hours have regular contracts by ending exploitative zero-hours contracts.

**Mark McDonald:** One way in which to reduce the amount of money that is spent on benefits is to remove people from the situation of relying on in-work benefits. Does Lewis Macdonald share my concern that a minimum wage of £8 in the year 2020 will not significantly move people out of in-work poverty and the need to rely on in-work benefits?

**Lewis Macdonald:** It will, although perhaps it is not enough on its own, and that is why we want to see action on the living wage as well, with use of the tax system to reward that. It is just a shame that Mr McDonald and his colleagues voted five times against some of the measures that we brought forward in that area.

What is good for working people is good for the whole country. That is a fundamental truth to which the Government must return. It is fundamental, too, to the approach of Scottish Labour that we seek to promote further devolution in the context of the Smith agreement while continuing to pool and share resources across the United Kingdom. A Labour Government will in its first 100 days introduce a bill to implement the Smith agreement.

We want to see the powers of this Parliament strengthened, but we also want to see the sharing of power across all levels of Government entrenched in our political structures and our political culture. For those of us who have supported devolution within the United Kingdom, the rational response to the Smith agreement is to put it in place as soon as possible and then for both Parliaments and both Governments to do whatever they can to make it work.

Of course, we understand that that will not happen in the next few weeks. Full fiscal autonomy will be the platform of the SNP at the next election and is, no doubt, what it will seek to pursue thereafter.

I listened with interest to the Government's closing speech, because it is always illuminating to compare and contrast the speaking styles of Mr Swinney and Mr Neil. Mr Swinney seeks to stay calm and measured and he often succeeds, except perhaps when he is criticised for what he

has not said and he complains from a sedentary position. Mr Neil prefers to put on a more theatrical performance, and he hardly ever fails to achieve that. Of course, when Mr Neil is asked to close a debate, there is always a suspicion that there may be some important issue that the Scottish Government does not wish to be rationally addressed. I think that that was confirmed by Mr Neil's performance, and Mr Swinney gave the game away not by what he said but by what he failed to say. In 10 minutes, he managed to say nothing substantial about his party's actual economic policy, which is full fiscal autonomy. Instead, he left the defence of full fiscal autonomy to some of those who sit behind him.

**Dennis Robertson:** Mr Macdonald criticises what we have not said. He has not said what his view is on Trident or what Labour spending would be on Trident.

**Lewis Macdonald:** I look forward to debating defence issues with Mr Robertson. [*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Order.

**Lewis Macdonald:** Clearly, Alex Neil is not the only member on the SNP benches who somehow imagines that full fiscal autonomy involves a decision-making power over the defence of the United Kingdom. It is no wonder that Alex Neil did not want to address the issue of full fiscal autonomy when he was asked about it. The only thing that he could think of was a defence issue—namely, Trident.

When Mr Swinney left defence of full fiscal autonomy to those who sit behind him, he gave us some insights into what the SNP really thinks. John Mason made a sincere but bizarre defence of full fiscal autonomy that seemed to consist only of protesting that his party would not want to do anything that damaged the Scottish economy, therefore its policy must be all right after all. Chic Brodie went further than anybody. He quoted Lord Barnett saying that keeping the Barnett formula alongside the Smith agreement would be a terrible mistake, and he made it clear that he agrees with that.

**Chic Brodie:** Will Lewis Macdonald give way?

**The Presiding Officer:** The member is in his last 45 seconds.

**Lewis Macdonald:** Kevin Stewart's defence was that full fiscal autonomy is not really a problem because it is not going to happen tomorrow. The question has to be whether the SNP front bench envisages it happening at all. There is clearly a cost to going down the road of full fiscal autonomy, and the Scottish Government needs to tell us what that cost is if voters in Scotland are to make an informed choice in the next few weeks.

The right choice is a Labour Government that recognises that what is good for working people is good for the economy, and rejection of another five years of Tory austerity and the extra austerity of full fiscal autonomy. That is the right choice for Scotland and the right choice for the future.

## Business Motions

17:30

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-12787, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 31 March 2015

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)

*followed by* Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee Debate: Dairy Industry Inquiry

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 1 April 2015

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions  
Finance, Constitution and Economy

*followed by* Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 2 April 2015

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

*followed by* Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Stage 1 Debate: Prisoners (Control of Release) (Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Financial Resolution: Prisoners (Control of Release) (Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 21 April 2015

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)

*followed by* Scottish Government Business

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 22 April 2015

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions  
Justice and the Law Officers;  
Rural Affairs, Food and Environment

*followed by* Scottish Government Business

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 23 April 2015

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

*followed by* Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Scottish Government Business

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-12784, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a stage 2 timetable for the Mental Health (Scotland) Bill.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Mental Health (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 5 June 2015.—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-12788, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a stage 1 timetable for the Carers (Scotland) Bill.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Carers (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 2 October 2015.—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:31

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motions S4M-12785 and S4M-12786, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Single Use Carrier Bags Charge (Fixed Penalty Notices and Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2015 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 (Consequential Modifications and Saving) Order 2015 [draft] be approved.—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

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

## Decision Time

17:31

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

The first question is, that motion S4M-12776.4, in the name of John Swinney, which seeks to amend motion S4M-12776, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on supporting Scotland's economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**For**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)

Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

### Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

### Abstentions

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 62, Against 48, Abstentions 4.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** I remind members that if the amendment in the name of Gavin Brown is agreed to, the amendments in the name of Willie Rennie and Patrick Harvie fall.

The next question is, that motion S4M-12776.3, in the name of Gavin Brown, which seeks to amend motion S4M-12776, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on supporting Scotland's economy, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

### For

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

### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)

Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 15, Against 99, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S4M-12776.1, in the name of Willie Rennie, which seeks to amend motion S4M-12776, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on supporting Scotland's economy, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**For**

Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**Against**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)



Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 4, Against 109, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S4M-12776.2, in the name of Patrick Harvie, which seeks to amend motion S4M-12776, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on supporting Scotland's economy, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members: No.**

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### For

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)

#### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)

MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 5, Against 109, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-12776, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on supporting Scotland's economy, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**For**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)

Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

**Against**

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)

Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

#### Abstentions

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 62, Against 47, Abstentions 4.

#### *Motion, as amended, agreed to,*

That the Parliament rejects the UK Government's plans for further austerity; believes that George Osborne's economic plan is based on extreme spending cuts and regressive taxation and will have a detrimental impact on the UK's economy; notes that the Office for Budget Responsibility has warned about yet further and more savage cuts in the next two years; condemns the Fiscal Mandate, endorsed by Labour, which will lead to a requirement for a further £30 billion of cuts over 2016-17 and 2017-18; further condemns the statement from the Shadow Chancellor that there is nothing he would reverse from the Chancellor's 2015 Budget statement; endorses the need for increased investment in public services; agrees that this can be achieved while reducing the deficit, and believes that full fiscal powers over the Scottish economy would enable Scotland to improve its sustainable economic performance and boost the revenues available for tackling inequality.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-12785, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Single Use Carrier Bags Charge (Fixed Penalty Notices and Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2015 [draft] be approved.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-12786, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on approval of an SSI, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 (Consequential Modifications and Saving) Order 2015 [draft] be approved.

## Earth Hour 2015

### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):**

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-12157, in the name of Graeme Dey, on earth hour 2015. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

#### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament supports WWF's Earth Hour 2015; celebrates the many individuals, families, communities, organisations and landmarks across Scotland, including the Scottish Parliament, that will be participating by switching their lights off for an hour at 8.30pm on 28 March; congratulates all of the local authorities participating in Earth Hour 2015, particularly Angus Council, which has been awarded one of WWF Scotland's Super Local Authority badges for its level of participation; considers that Earth Hour has become a moment for people around the world to think about the importance of action to address climate change and protect the planet; notes that Scotland will be one of more than 160 countries, nations and territories around the world that will take part in Earth Hour 2015; understands that this year is an important year for action on climate change, with the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change taking place in Paris in December; welcomes the continued cross-party support for the aims of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and would welcome other nations sharing Scotland's ambitions on tackling climate change, and wishes everyone participating in Earth Hour 2015 every success.

17:39

**Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP):** On Saturday 28 March, the ninth annual WWF-inspired earth hour will take place. For 60 minutes, 160-plus countries and territories will come together to create a symbolic and spectacular lights-out display around the globe that is aimed at highlighting the need to address climate change. Landmarks including Times Square in New York and the Sydney harbour bridge will feature, and they will be joined here in Scotland by Edinburgh castle, the Forth rail bridge, the Kelpies for the first time and, of course, the Scottish Parliament.

With the critical international climate change summit due to take place in Paris later this year, the importance of earth hour 2015 cannot be overstated. We collectively and as individual citizens need to ramp up the pressure on world leaders to deliver a legally binding international deal that, in a fair and equitable way, delivers on restricting global temperature increases to less than the catastrophe that would be 2°C. In the same way, we collectively and as individuals require to ensure our own behaviours are those of environmentally responsible inhabitants of this planet.

The need for tangible action becomes increasingly evident right here on our own doorstep. For example, 2014 was the hottest and

fourth-wettest year in the United Kingdom since records began in 1910. The average temperature for 2014 was 9.9°C, which is 1°C warmer than the UK's long-term average. That fits into the wider trend, which shows that eight of the UK's top 10 warmest years have occurred since 2002. As Bob Ward, policy and communications director at the Grantham research institute on climate change and the environment, put it, 2014 was

"part of a pattern"

and

"clear evidence of the impact of man-made climate change on the UK".

The truth is that we are not responding, at least not to the extent we in Scotland have acknowledged we must. By 2012, only Finland and Denmark in Europe had bettered Scotland's emissions reduction performance. However, we all know that we are missing the early targets—although readjustment of the baselines is not helping in that respect—and from here on in the trajectory gets much steeper and far more challenging.

That said, although it is at face value a symbolic gesture, the response to earth hour suggests that the population is increasingly waking up to the situation. WWF found that 85 per cent of the adults who had been involved in last year's earth hour had felt inspired by the event to do more to protect the planet. It might be a symbolic event, but it appears to be making a difference in terms of raising awareness and inspiring more environmentally friendly behaviour.

Since the UK first became involved with earth hour back in 2008, there has been a steady increase in participation at all levels. Last year, more than 1,000 businesses across these islands took part, ensuring that hundreds of buildings were switched off across the country, and just short of 1,000 schools across Scotland participated, reaching more than 2 million pupils. This year, the task is to create "For the love of..." bunting to highlight the campaign that WWF started as part of the 100-strong climate coalition and which called on people to share why they care about climate change by focusing on the many things about their lives that will be affected unless we tackle this global issue.

It is not just members of the public who are showing enthusiasm for earth hour. When I lodged this motion, I never thought for a moment that it would fail to receive the level of cross-party support required to secure this debate, but it says a lot about the subject matter that multiple members from every single party in the Parliament supported it. There is no doubt that such consensus on earth hour's importance is also evident at local authority level, so let us give

ourselves a pat on the back: Scotland is the first country in the world where every local authority supports the earth hour initiative.

The earth hour 2015 local authority initiative requires councils to do three basic things. The first is to switch off; councils have to turn off the lights in their town halls and headquarters and other landmarks in their control for an hour at 8.30 pm on 28 March 2015. The second is to take part by promoting WWF's earth hour to staff through emails and intranet, encouraging them to sign up as individuals and take part in the event on a personal basis. The third is to engage by making use of the council's website, newsletters, Twitter and Facebook to encourage members of the public to sign up, demonstrating the support for action on climate change that exists in the local area.

If a local authority does an additional three activities from a top-up list, it becomes a WWF Scotland super local authority badge recipient. Those activities include getting community planning partnership partners to sign up to earth hour, holding a major public countdown to the switch-off event and talking to local businesses and organisations to get the lights switched off on iconic or important buildings or structures in the area.

I want to use the platform that is provided by tonight's debate to urge councils to pay particular heed to that last point, especially in relation to businesses that occupy major retail parks. I find it absolutely galling to think about the amount of electricity that is wasted on lighting up shop fronts and vacant car parks in these places between the hours of dusk and dawn when no one, but no one, is window shopping. Switching off for earth hour would be a start down a road that might result in those parks reducing energy consumption—and if security is a concern, they could direct the savings to job opportunities for people to guard the premises.

Last year, 14 councils were awarded the status of super local authority, and my local council, Angus Council, is one of them. Angus Council will be switching off the lights at the council headquarters, Angus house at Orchardbank, County buildings and the Balmashanner war memorial, and it will be joined in taking that action by Historic Scotland at Arbroath abbey.

Most schools in Angus will be involved in various projects, such as switching off appliances and signing up to switch off at home. Last year, participating schools received feedback on their energy consumption during earth hour. Figures returned by the Angus carbon and energy team showed that one primary school had an overall saving of 62KWh, which would equate to £2,467 if continued over the year. That is equal to the

energy used by six houses in a day and the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of a car travelling 145 miles.

The council is using earth hour as an opportunity to raise awareness about energy use and is giving staff details of how to reduce their energy use. The council is also encouraging community planning partners, such as Dundee and Angus College, Tayside NHS Board, Police Scotland, Scottish Enterprise and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to get involved as well.

At local level, right across Scotland, we are taking that moment to think about and highlight the need for action on climate change. I hope that we are sending the message that, as citizens of this planet, we understand the need to change behaviour, and if our political leaders take the appropriate lead, they will also have our support.

I will draw my contribution to a close, because I know that a number of colleagues want to participate in the debate. As with tackling climate change, the more who can contribute, the better.

17:46

**Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab):** I congratulate Graeme Dey on lodging his important motion, and I apologise to him and to the minister because I was due to chair a meeting starting at 5.30, but that is what happens when debates start later than scheduled. It is clearly an important debate, and that is why I wanted to speak in it.

As we know, earth hour has been getting bigger and bigger every year since it started in Sydney in 2007. As Graeme Dey has reminded us, Scotland should be proud of the fact that every single local authority has pledged to take part in it. This year, more than 100 iconic buildings and landmarks will go dark on 28 March, including Edinburgh castle, Stirling castle, Glasgow's George Square and the Kelpies. However, earth hour was not started by WWF just to switch off the lights. It is a day that is aimed at raising awareness about climate change and it is also a great opportunity to take concrete action with a global impact.

With climate change, we are now facing one of the biggest threats that humanity has ever had to face, and 2015 is a significant year for global action. For example, Paris will be hosting the 21st session of the conference of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December over two weeks, under guidance from the UN. The expectations of that meeting are high and reflect the urgency to contain climate disruption. In that context, Scotland has made bold commitments so far. The Scottish Government has set an ambitious but necessary target of a 42 per cent reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases by 2020.

The fact remains, however, that the reduction target was missed for the third time in 2012 by a substantial margin of 4.5 per cent. According to the Committee on Climate Change,

“the Scottish Government will need to strengthen key policies to meet future targets.”

Therefore, the Scottish Government must continue and go further to make sustainability a key area of policy devolved to Scotland, including infrastructure and procurement, green housing, active travel and much more.

The recent high-profile climate change petition led by Alan Rusbridger, editor-in-chief of *The Guardian*, echoes the wake-up call on climate change that we are experiencing from all over the world, from scientists and academics to politicians. I want to highlight that campaign, because *The Guardian* should be congratulated on its great campaign over the past three or four weeks. Rob Edwards, a journalist who writes for a different paper, said that the launch editorial was the best editorial that he had ever seen on the subject.

Alan Rusbridger, who is retiring soon, started a keep it in the ground campaign, calling for a “civilisational wake-up call”. Moreover, he said that it was time to disinvest in companies that seek to exploit fossil fuels. To quote what he said in that starting editorial:

“Evidence shows that proven fossil fuel reserves are more than three times higher than we can afford to burn in order to stay below the generally agreed threshold for dangerous climate change. Fossil fuel companies are currently banking on extracting these reserves and selling them—and are actively prospecting for more.”

If legislators continue to support those actions through policy, while at the same time purporting to prioritise carbon emissions reduction targets, the situation will become a stalemate between global corporate energy interests and the wellbeing and sustenance of our children and our planet. It is well worth everyone looking at *The Guardian* over the month of March, particularly on Mondays and Fridays, because it has been a great campaign that carries on.

Climate change is having a hugely detrimental impact on the quality of life for earth's inhabitants—human and otherwise. Earth hour is just one moment where we can come together and make the case for a cleaner and more sustainable way of living in our own small but significant way. Therefore, on Saturday 28 March, when the skies above our major towns and cities go dark, I hope that as many members as possible—and as many citizens as possible—will show their support and switch off at 8.30 pm.

I support the motion and congratulate Graeme Dey once again on lodging it.

17:50

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** Like others, I congratulate Graeme Dey and thank him for securing time for the debate.

A lot is happening in the world. Ocean currents are slowing. The gulf stream will be a less significant moderator of the climate in north-west Europe in years to come. That has already started, which is why we are having harsh winters. In one of the past five years, the temperature at our house dropped to -21°C. In another year, it was -19°C. That has been followed by two years of unseasonable warmth that meant that we were sitting having a barbecue at the end of February last winter.

There is greater variability in our climate, which will not be good news for the long-term health of our planet. We have seen shrinking of the Arctic and Antarctic ice caps, and we are seeing increased aridification in Africa in particular. As I have said in many debates before, that is a gender issue because the majority of subsistence farmers in rural Africa are female. They are having to go further for water and will have to go further for the wood that they burn in their stoves.

Climate change causes very significant problems for real people. It will lead to mass migration and deaths. It is not simply an academic argument.

I shall be doing my little bit to promote earth hour. I will be in the Shuna and Staffa suite of the Crowne Plaza hotel next to the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre at 8.30 on Saturday night. I am the quizmaster in a WWF candlelit quiz. It is, of course, associated with the Scottish National Party conference but it is not on the SNP conference campus, so I extend an invitation to all who are listening to come and join us on that excellent occasion. I shall be on sparkling form as I normally am at such occasions.

The motion talks about celebrating the work of individuals, families and communities, and it highlights the work of Angus Council. It is worth mentioning the two councils in my constituency. Most if not all of Aberdeenshire Council's offices will switch their lights off, which is good news. Moray Council has arranged that the Buckie town clock and the Cullen town clock will be part of earth hour. Indeed, it has been awarded a super local authority badge. It is not a great secret that I have my disagreements with Moray Council but, on this policy area, it is at least taking the right steps.

It is somewhat ironic that earth hour started in Sydney because Australia now has a Prime Minister who has been deconstructing his predecessor's efforts to address climate change at

a time when the states, particularly South Australia, have been doing well. Indeed, the Government here lost its head of environment to South Australia, where he is now carrying on good work at a state level.

The conference of the parties will be in Paris this year. As a minister, I went first to the one in Poznań and then to the one in Copenhagen. The United Kingdom—in particular, Gordon Brown—refused to allow us to be part of the delegation, but I am delighted to say that, since then, the Scottish Government has been part of the delegation and has been an active and effective contributor.

I will end with a controversial point on which I am in a single-digit minority. The big thing that we should and could contemplate is reducing the speed limits in Scotland, wherever they are, by 10mph. It would cost almost nothing to do. It would not be popular, but I do not care because I will be 70 next year. It is one of the proposals that we must get on the agenda, and I encourage people to think about it seriously.

17:54

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I join Graeme Dey and others in commending WWF for once again organising this year's earth hour and indeed for the positive work that WWF does more generally to raise awareness of climate change and the challenges facing our biodiversity across the planet.

Like other members, I also encourage constituents in my region to take part in this year's earth hour by switching off lights at 8.30 pm this Saturday. Earth hour, which was established in 2007, is now a well-known event that raises awareness of climate change issues internationally and helps to put the focus on this policy area. It is an hour when people can contemplate human impact on the planet.

Earth hour always reminds me of the late Michael Jackson's "Earth Song"—some of the lyrics are apt:

"What have we done to the world  
Look what we've done".

Light pollution, quite apart from being a significant energy issue, spoils clear vision of the night sky, which, in darkness, is so breathtakingly beautiful, so it is a type of vandalism.

The motion mentions the involvement of local authorities in earth hour, and I am pleased that all the councils in my region are taking part. In Argyll and Bute, the famous McCaig's tower in Oban will take its place in a display of darkness alongside iconic buildings and structures across the globe such as the Sydney harbour bridge. In the Highlands—where WWF has awarded the council

a super local authority badge in recognition of its enthusiastic support for earth hour 2015—Ruthven barracks, Inverness castle, Inverness cathedral, Urquhart castle and Eilean Donan castle will all have their floodlighting switched off. Highland Council rangers will also offer a range of guided walks and every school in the Highlands has been encouraged to mark earth hour. In the Western Isles, the lights of the Stornoway war memorial will be turned off, and the town hall in Lerwick, in Shetland, will similarly be darkened.

I am aware that many other public agencies in my region are also joining earth hour, including Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Canals, VisitScotland, NHS Orkney and Scottish Natural Heritage, which is good.

The motion also refers to welcoming other nations sharing Scotland's ambitions on tackling climate change. We would all agree with that but, as I have argued in this chamber before, Scotland would carry more weight in persuading other countries to adopt tough climate change targets if we could point to meeting our own targets rather than missing them—most notably on greenhouse gas emissions, targets that the Government has now failed to meet three years in a row. That lack of achievement emphasises the difficulty in translating rhetoric into reality.

I again welcome the fact that earth hour 2015 will help to put climate change on the international political agenda, and I agree with Graeme Dey that this December's Paris conference will be a very important milestone in international efforts towards tackling climate change. We look to the Scottish Government to work with the public and private sectors here to develop further practical policies that help individual consumers make low-carbon, environmentally friendly choices.

17:58

**Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab):** I congratulate Graeme Dey on securing tonight's debate, and I congratulate WWF on its excellent campaign. On Saturday night, from 8.30 pm, I will be joining millions of people in Scotland and around the world by switching off the lights in my house to mark earth hour 2015—although, having three young children, I do not think that I will be lighting any candles.

I know that many hundreds of my constituents in Dunfermline and in the west Fife villages will be doing the same. I have certainly been doing my bit to urge constituents to sign up. As a Fife MSP, I was pleased to hear that joining the iconic buildings and structures across Scotland that will take part in earth hour are Dunfermline city chambers, the Forth rail bridge, Fife house, the

Town house in Kirkcaldy, and Saltire house. NHS Fife is also taking part.

I congratulate Fife Council, which has been so active in promoting earth hour this year to both council staff and the local community that the WWF has awarded it a super local authority badge.

Earth hour gives us the opportunity to show that we are concerned about what is happening to our planet. Climate change is not something that is going to happen in the future and it is not something that is in any doubt. Climate change is happening right now.

Although it can be hard for us in Scotland to believe, our world is hotter right now than it has been in 2,000 years. By the end of the century, if we do not act, global temperatures will climb higher than at any time in the past two million years.

We are already seeing the impact, from floods here in the UK to extreme conditions in the US and droughts, poverty and rising sea levels affecting many developing countries. Climate change is already affecting our lives, damaging our ecosystems and endangering the livelihoods of millions of people around the world.

Climate change affects the whole planet: it touches, and will touch, every one of us in every country on every continent around the world. Yet it is not an unstoppable tide, and there is nothing inevitable about it. We all have the power to act and to make a difference, and right now that is simply not happening enough.

If everyone in the world consumed natural resources at the rate that we do in Scotland, we would need three planets, not just one, to support us. However, from the food we eat to the air we breathe, and from the fuel we consume to the water we drink, we rely on a healthy planet to enable us to lead our lives.

In the choices that we all make every single day—in our homes, on our journeys to work and in the food that we eat—we can take small simple steps that can add up to big energy savings. We can all live our lives in a more climate-friendly way.

Earth hour is not, therefore, just a one-off event. It is not about switching the lights off once a year and doing nothing else. Earth hour is an opportunity for each and every one of us to think about the everyday changes that we can make to save the planet that we love. It is also an opportunity to demand concerted action to ensure that, in Scotland, we meet our climate change targets in future, and that we play a role on the world stage in promoting climate change action here, in Europe and around the world.

Each and every one of us has the power to shape and change the future of our planet and to make the day-to-day choices that will secure a better and brighter future for the generations to come. I hope that this year's earth hour is another huge success, but switching off the lights can only be the start of a journey. Together, we can make change happen, taking action not just for one hour but every single day. We owe it to our children, and to all that we love and value, to act now and put a halt to climate change.

18:02

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** I join other members in thanking Graeme Dey for bringing the debate to the chamber to highlight the importance of WWF's earth hour and of demonstrating support for people and wildlife that are threatened by climate change. I am delighted to be supporting earth hour on 28 March, and I urge my constituents and the local businesses and organisations in my Falkirk East constituency to join me in supporting the initiative.

This year in Falkirk East, we will see the lights going out on the Falkirk wheel and the Kelpies—as Graeme Dey mentioned—among many other landmarks. It is great to see those landmarks being used to highlight that important issue. A lone piper and a blues band at the Kelpies will announce the switch-off at 8.30pm on 28 March, so I am in a bit of a quandary about whether to attend that event or Stewart Stevenson's quiz night at the SNP conference.

Around the world, nations face a range of challenges from climate change and energy and water security to tackling extreme poverty. However, the biggest challenge is surely climate change. In 2009, as we all know, the Scottish Parliament passed world-leading legislation on climate change. We in Scotland have shown that, when we have the powers, we are prepared to lead. No other country in the world has set itself the demanding emissions reduction targets that Scotland has set.

In addition, Scotland's climate justice fund is already making a difference to the lives of climate-change affected communities in Tanzania, Rwanda, Malawi and Zambia. The devastation that is caused by extreme weather events and the link to climate change will surely feature high on the agenda of the next session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change conference of parties. It must be a wake-up call to world Governments. I am sure that the minister, if she is attending the Paris conference, will call on those Governments to share Scotland's ambition on tackling climate change.



In international development, in human rights, in action on climate change and in climate justice, Scotland already has a well-established international reputation. In 2014, thousands of people across Scotland joined hundreds of millions of people in other countries around the world in switching off all non-essential lighting on and within buildings. The Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament and my local authority—Falkirk Council—will play their part again this year, and we anticipate a great response from the rest of the public sector.

WWF's earth hour is an extraordinary annual event that focuses the world's attention on the steps that we need to take to protect it. As a supporter, I am committed to taking more action to address climate change and other environmental threats. However, I consider myself to be not an environmentalist but a pragmatist. I enjoy the benefits of a technologically advanced and industrialised nation and I would not agree with any action that takes a regressive stance on that. However, my pragmatism extends to the acknowledgement that, with the benefits of technology and industrialisation, comes the down side of climate change.

In my Falkirk East constituency there is the largest container terminal in Scotland, Scotland's only crude-oil refinery and a number of proposals for fracking, which are currently suspended by the moratorium on that. There are also the hills and farmland of the Braes area as well as multiple wildlife reserves, woodland and parks. We as legislators must get right the balance between environment and industrialisation, for the benefit of us all and for the benefit of future generations.

It is clear that climate change is an issue that will give us many challenges in years to come. Scotland can lead the way with legislation that will ultimately help to mitigate the effects of climate change and provide a sustainable supply of energy and a technologically advanced economy. Earth hour provides a moment in time for us all to think about what more we can do to address climate change. I believe that a moment in time is not enough, so I call on all colleagues in the Scottish Parliament to continue to provide cross-party support for the aims of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and any other legislation that helps to prevent climate change.

18:06

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** I, too, congratulate Graeme Dey on securing the debate. We have heard some excellent speeches so far. I am very proud that every local authority is taking part in earth hour this year, because that is hugely symbolic and is definitely worth highlighting. My local authority, the City of Edinburgh Council, is

one of the super local authorities, because of the work that it has done and the initiative that it has taken. As part of its darker skies policy, it has already reduced the number of city monuments that are illuminated at night. That is a good example of earth hour creating a year-round impact.

The iconic buildings that are involved in Edinburgh this weekend and the leading organisations that are taking action should be put on the record. It is not just the castle or the Parliament, important though those are; there is the royal yacht Britannia, the Forth rail bridge, the national gallery of Scotland, the Royal Scottish Academy building and the Palace of Holyroodhouse. Public sector organisations are taking part, including Scottish Enterprise, whose Apex house is involved, and the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council.

Hotels including the Balmoral and the Caledonian are taking part, along with the camera obscura, St Giles' cathedral, St Cuthbert's church, Heart of Midlothian Football Club and the University of Edinburgh. A range of key buildings in the city will have their lights off for an hour on Saturday. That is an act of symbolism, but it is also an act of solidarity with the people who, as Cara Hilton said, are already being affected by climate change.

There is a lot that we can celebrate. As Graeme Dey said, this year's earth hour is important, because it comes in the run-up to the Paris talks. There is a huge amount that we can be proud of in Scotland but, as Jamie McGrigor said, we need to focus on what more we need to do to meet our climate change targets, which we have missed for three years in a row. The Committee on Climate Change's fourth annual progress report, which was published yesterday, sets out some of the challenges that we face and some of the policy areas in which we can really make a difference, if we act now.

WWF has rightly called for significantly greater policy effort. It comments that it

"remains difficult to pinpoint a policy 'fingerprint' on the emissions reductions we have seen since the introduction of the Climate Change Act."

Let us focus on energy efficiency in Scotland. In Edinburgh, tackling our tenements is a huge challenge. We struggle to keep our tenements wind tight and water tight, but we have to raise our game in making them more energy efficient. We need more low-carbon heat networks across the country so that people have energy-efficient and low-carbon heating for the future. We need more low-emissions transport, more electric cars and more active travel and walking. I say to Stewart Stevenson that Edinburgh is considering lower

speed limits on selected streets. Other parts of the country will be able to learn from that.

Across the public sector, we have targets to reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. I note that Glasgow City Council has signed up to a deal with the Green Investment Bank that will result in 10,000 street lights with lower energy use, which will halve the amount of energy that is used to light the city.

There is a huge amount being done across Scotland, and there is much to be proud of. We need to have more land-use action, particularly for forestry, farming and peatlands. Part of that is about good advice and guidance, part of it is about leadership from the Scottish Government and part of it is about using financial resources to create the win-wins, with carbon emission reductions and green jobs.

That has to be the prize for us in Scotland as we play our part across the world with the symbolism and also the solidarity of earth hour, focusing on what we can do so that all of us, in switching off our lights for an hour on Saturday night, are taking part in a global movement, saying that climate change needs action and that Scotland can lead the way and play a full part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

18:10

**Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP):** I welcome this opportunity to speak on the subject of world earth hour 2015. Like other members, I congratulate Graeme Dey on securing the debate and I congratulate and applaud the work of WWF. I wish Stewart Stevenson all the best on Saturday in his chairmanship of the quiz.

In his speech and in his motion, Graeme Dey referred to the number of countries that will participate in this year's earth hour and to the importance of this year's event, particularly ahead of the rather grandly named 21st session of the conference of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which takes place in Paris in December.

As a symbolic act, earth hour is not only unique; it is extremely appropriate. Whether at a local level, at home, in the workplace or even at a traditional level, turning out the lights provides a visual opportunity to display support or to draw attention to those who do not.

When landmarks across Scotland, including the Parliament, Edinburgh castle, the Kelpies, the Forth road bridge and—dare I say it—Cupar county buildings fall into temporary darkness this Saturday night, they will be joined by other landmarks in other cities and places across the globe. They might be rather better known than

those in Cupar or Angus, but nevertheless the sentiment is the same. I am especially pleased that NHS Fife is taking part in this year's earth hour. As Cara Hilton mentioned, Fife Council joins Angus Council and others in being awarded a super local authority badge by WWF as a result of its enthusiastic participation in and support for earth hour.

Events such as earth hour help to encourage people to take stock of a global issue. Many people suggest that climate change could overtake all other issues as a matter of importance, as its effects become more apparent and have increasing consequences around the globe.

At the UN climate summit in 2014, Barack Obama said, as we probably all remember:

“We are the first generation to feel the impact of climate change and the last generation that can do something about it.”

How true that is. We in Scotland have found ourselves in some ways in the unfortunate but privileged position of being able to instigate change. Change is unlikely to happen overnight or with a single action, but it can occur if we make many little changes in our everyday lives. How many people regularly leave the lights or television on when they leave the room? Just a few years ago, those things would not even be thought of as an issue. As people become more conscious of the problem, however, they are more willing, I believe, to implement the small changes in their daily routines that, when made by a significant number of people together, will make a significant difference.

There are colossal challenges that cannot be met simply by using energy-efficient light bulbs or not leaving the television on stand-by. Equipping ourselves with a clean, reliable energy source is essential. I am pleased that, while other nations and states have moved without even pausing for breath to using another carbon-based resource through fracking, the Scottish Government is taking more of a considered approach and has instigated a moratorium on granting planning consents.

The Scottish Government's ambition for renewable sources to generate the equivalent of 100 per cent of electricity by 2020 is well on the way to being achieved, with renewable sources now exceeding 44 per cent of gross electricity consumption. That is particularly good when compared with other areas of the United Kingdom, where the proportion that is provided by renewables is far lower.

However encouraging those figures are, there is no scope for complacency. As Malcolm Chisholm mentioned, we have failed to reach the emissions

targets, so there is absolutely no room for complacency. I believe that we can continue to make big steps in the renewable energy market, with our vast potential for wind, wave and tidal power.

Keeping this issue at the front of our minds is important. This one event is a small, symbolic gesture. As Cara Hilton said, it should not be seen as a one-off. I hope that, if they can, people will mark the occasion on 28 March at 8.30 by turning off their lights.

18:15

**The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Aileen McLeod):** I congratulate Graeme Dey on bringing this important debate to Parliament and on highlighting the success of WWF's earth hour in engaging with a mass audience worldwide and encouraging hundreds of millions of people across our planet to stand behind environmental issues.

As the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, I am delighted to add my congratulations to WWF and to all who are taking part in earth hour this Saturday evening. I wish them every success in their efforts. I also look forward to seeing Angus MacDonald and Stewart Stevenson take part in the candlelit quiz that will be hosted by WWF at our party conference.

I am pleased, too, that the motion has commanded support from all sides of the Parliament. We should all continue to take pride in the very fact that the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 was passed unanimously. That demonstrates that the Scottish Parliament is prepared to show international leadership on targets that are aligned with climate science. I agree with Malcolm Chisholm that climate change is one of the biggest challenges that the world faces. I also agree with Rod Campbell's comment about the importance of consumer behaviour.

As noted in the motion, 2015 is a particularly crucial year for mobilising the international effort. As many members have highlighted, Governments from around the world will meet in Paris in December and agree a new global treaty on climate change. I will attend in Paris and I will press for the highest global ambition.

One of my earliest ministerial duties was to attend the conference of the parties in Lima in December last year, where I met many international figures who were committed to addressing climate change and challenging the international community to deliver a new global treaty that would match Scotland's high ambition. With that in mind, I agree with Graeme Dey that

we must ramp up the pressure on our world leaders.

Just in the last few weeks, I have met and discussed climate action with the Irish minister for natural resources and with the French ambassador to the UK. Earlier today, I met and discussed climate change with the Quebec agent-general to the UK.

Many members will be aware that yesterday the independent Committee on Climate Change published its report on Scotland's progress, which I very much welcome. The report shows that Scotland is outperforming the UK as a whole in reducing greenhouse gases, as a result of the innovative and effective action that we are taking to achieve the most ambitious climate change targets in the world. Since 1990, gross Scottish emissions have fallen nearly 30 per cent, compared with 24 per cent for the UK as a whole.

The report recognises the challenges that we face as a result of methodological changes in how estimated emissions are calculated; those changes, which have been made since our targets were set, make achieving the targets more difficult. As we know, Scotland's targets are not easy. They are challenging, and there is still much for us to do, but we are making good progress against our targets. That was also recognised in the report, particularly with regard to renewable energy; for example, in 2013 Scotland's generation from renewables was equivalent to 44 per cent of our gross electricity consumption.

We have the ambition to do more. Last year the Scottish Government established the Cabinet sub-committee on climate change, which is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment in a clear demonstration of our collective commitment to climate change at the very highest level within this Government.

That commitment is evidenced by the range of work that we are undertaking across the Scottish Government, which is making a difference on the ground. There are now around 600 publicly available vehicle charging points in Scotland for electric cars. In 2013, 42.2 per cent of household waste was recycled. In the budget, we increased our investment in energy efficiency by £20 million, which should have a positive impact on how we tackle climate change emissions from housing. Just this morning, my colleague Derek Mackay announced a £10 million boost to active travel, bringing the total budget for active travel in the coming financial year to almost £36 million. The latter is an excellent example of Scottish Government funding that delivers multiple benefits, from emissions reduction to healthier lives.

Of course, Scotland's actions alone are not enough. Earth hour is important in that regard, because it sends a co-ordinated message in support of action on climate change from grass-root levels around the world. The Government gives an annual grant to WWF Scotland to ensure that that co-ordination happens in Scotland.

A number of members have highlighted some of the public bodies and national organisations that are switching off their non-essential lights. They include Edinburgh castle, the Forth bridge, the Falkirk wheel, Stirling castle, Eilean Donan castle and our very own Kelpies. It is fantastic that every one of our 32 local authorities will also be switching off. Last year, three of them won local authority champion awards, while another 12 that went the extra mile—including Fife Council and, as Graeme Dey noted, Angus Council—were awarded super local authority badges.

Earth hour has demonstrated that, when we act collectively, we have the power to make a difference. I agree with Sarah Boyack that earth hour is a symbol of solidarity with the climate vulnerable around the world.

I want to pick up on Graeme Dey's comment about the for the love of campaign. The First Minister has received many hundreds of emails and letters, and I have written on her behalf to Stop Climate Chaos Scotland and the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund to thank them and their supporters for all their many actions on climate change.

I welcome the debate. I again thank Graeme Dey for bringing such an important issue to the chamber for debate, and I thank members for all the excellent contributions that they have made, in which they have highlighted how important earth hour is and how it is being marked in our local communities.

I have two closing points to make. First, I again congratulate all those who will participate in earth hour—everyone involved will make a huge difference. Secondly, I call on everyone not only to participate in earth hour, but to work with us to realise Scotland's ambitions on climate change here in Scotland and on the international stage.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I thank you all for taking part in the debate.

*Meeting closed at 18:21.*

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice to SPICe.

---

Available in e-format only. Printed Scottish Parliament documentation is published in Edinburgh by APS Group Scotland.

All documents are available on  
the Scottish Parliament website at:

[www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk)

For details of documents available to  
order in hard copy format, please contact:  
APS Scottish Parliament Publications on 0131 629 9941.

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact  
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000  
Textphone: 0800 092 7100  
Email: [sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk)

e-format first available  
ISBN 978-1-78568-259-9

Revised e-format available  
ISBN 978-1-78568-275-9