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Thursday 14 September 2017

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 14 September 2017

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

General Question Time

Forensic Medical Examinations (Orkney and Shetland)

1. Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made towards the provision of local forensic medical examinations for victims of sexual crimes in Orkney and Shetland. (S5O-01245)

The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs (Annabelle Ewing): NHS Orkney and NHS Shetland have both publicly committed to developing local services for the care and support of adults who have experienced rape or sexual assault. We are providing financial and practical support to assist with the delivery of those new services, which will ensure that victims of sexual crime receive the best available help and support locally. We have also committed an additional £38,000 to Rape Crisis Shetland and Rape Crisis Orkney to further enhance specialist advocacy support services for victims on the islands.

Maree Todd: I met representatives of Rape Crisis Orkney earlier this year, and I know how crucial the service is. I welcome the fact that the funding has helped it to employ two new part-time staff who started work this month. Folk in Orkney and Shetland first highlighted that victims of sexual crimes have to travel to the Scottish mainland—by police escort and without a wash—for examination. Can the minister provide more information about the practical support that is to be made available?

Annabelle Ewing: One of the key elements of improving provision in Orkney and Shetland—and, indeed, across Scotland—is making sure that we have sufficient doctors to carry out forensic medical examinations. We are providing an additional £76,000 to NHS Education Scotland to redesign the current training model to make it more accessible to doctors, and we aim for an extra 50 doctors to be trained by March 2018. We are delighted that both Orkney and Shetland health boards will be part of that revised training approach, releasing key staff to pilot the new remote training course. We expect that lessons learned from the pilot will inform the future training model across the whole of Scotland and ensure a

greater consistency in the approach to delivering these important services.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I thank the minister for her response and put on record my thanks to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice for the work that he has done with Tavish Scott and me, alongside local stakeholders and the local health boards, to ensure that services better meet the needs of island survivors of rape and sexual assault. What assurance has the Government received that Rape Crisis Orkney and Orkney Women's Aid will be included in the planning of the forensic service around referral pathways and survivor feedback? What steps are being taken to look at the delivery of services for child victims, whose needs are very specific and who need a tailored response?

Annabelle Ewing: Liam McArthur has pursued the first issue long and hard, and with a degree of success thus far; we will continue to make progress. On the issue of involvement, we will be happy to hear views and I am sure that officials will be happy to meet representatives of the organisations to which he referred.

With regard to children and the examinations that may, sadly, be required, it is important to say that they must be carried out with a paediatrician and a forensic examiner present. Although there are different factors across the country, recent managed clinical networks standards of service provision and quality indicators for the paediatric medical component of child protection services in Scotland state that that is the standard to adhere to.

There may be additional factors in a case that involves a child witness, such as requirements to remove the child from immediate danger. Other complementary medical professionals may be needed in such cases. I assure the member that we are currently considering, from a national point of view, how we can improve the experience of children through the justice system—I think the cabinet secretary alluded the other day in the chamber to the fact that we are looking at the Nordic barnahus model. That consideration will inform any national position that we take and how it might be supported, in particular, in remote and island communities. I am sure that the member will wish to have further input, which will be happily and gratefully received.

Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (Lanarkshire)

2. Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action its partnership action for continuing employment has taken in Lanarkshire in the last year. (S5O-01246)

The Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy (Paul Wheelhouse): From September 2016 until August 2017, our partnership action for continuing employment initiative has provided skills development and employability support to 1,080 individuals and 31 employers based in Lanarkshire. Support has included PACE presentations on site; information on benefits; workshops on CV preparation, interview skills and job searching; and one-to-one sessions on career management.

Mark Griffin: Beyond the work that is carried out by PACE, is it still Government policy to relocate civil service jobs and agencies outside Edinburgh? Has the Government considered doing that with any of the new agencies, such as the social security agency and Revenue Scotland, to compensate for the potential impact of HM Revenue and Customs closures in communities in Lanarkshire?

Paul Wheelhouse: Mark Griffin raises an interesting point. The Scottish Government has a record of moving jobs out of Edinburgh into locations such as the Borders, where the Scottish Public Pensions Agency is based. My colleagues Jeane Freeman and Angela Constance are looking at the possibility of establishing a new social security workforce in Scotland. I leave it to Mark Griffin to engage with my fellow ministers on that.

On the wider point, the Government is looking at how it can support economic growth and inclusive growth across the country. I am very aware of the significant potential impact that HMRC job losses in Cumbernauld, East Kilbride and Lanarkshire more generally may have on the Lanarkshire economy. I welcome the fact that, after discussion with my colleagues Jamie Hepburn and Stewart McDonald MP, Councillor Jim Logue of North Lanarkshire Council is bringing forward an economic impact study for the area, the results of which we will be very keen to see. *[Interruption.]* I apologise to the member if he was involved as well. We are very keen to see the results of the study, which the Government will study closely.

Town Centre Status (Underdeveloped Areas)

3. Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what progress is being made in delivering town centre status for underdeveloped areas, including Drumchapel in Glasgow. (S5O-01247)

The Minister for Local Government and Housing (Kevin Stewart): A local town centre has been designated in Drumchapel in the Glasgow city development plan, which was adopted earlier this year. With regards to other areas, in "Scottish Planning Policy" we have set out that planning authorities should identify in their

development plans the status of a particular area. Local authorities are best placed to set the conditions to help an area thrive.

Bill Kidd: The minister will be aware that Drumchapel formerly had a much-needed and highly successful shopping and entertainment centre, which was devastated by Strathclyde Regional Council's decision that it would not be a strategic shopping centre. It was subsequently run down to the extent that it is now a shell of its former existence, which fails to serve the needs of my constituents, who need to travel for any significant shopping. I know that such problems exist in other parts of Scotland, but Drumchapel is a prime example.

Kevin Stewart: The Scottish Government is aware that many town centres in Scotland are struggling, and a lot of that is down to decisions that were made in the past, such as the one that Mr Kidd outlined. The Scottish Government will continue to work closely with the retail sector to maximise its potential in relation to the town centre agenda. Scotland's town centre first principle, which we have agreed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, together with a range of measures in the "Town Centre Action Plan" set the conditions and underpin activity designed to tackle key issues such as empty shops. They also allow for the diversification of town centres, thereby attracting new businesses and services in them.

We recognise the value of a vibrant retail sector and we will continue to work with others to ensure that we carry on with those partnerships, to improve areas such as Drumchapel.

Benefits (Automation)

4. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to further the automation of benefits to help poorer families. (S5O-01248)

The Minister for Social Security (Jeane Freeman): I know that Pauline McNeill has taken a keen interest in the issue, which the Scottish Government is keen to progress. We recognise that, where feasible, the automation of assistance can play an important role in helping people to access their full entitlement to benefits, including passported benefits. That is why the Scottish Government supported Pauline McNeill's amendment to the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill on the issue and will discuss automation with the local reference group that was established to develop guidance for local authorities and health boards on the duties that the bill will place on them. That discussion will take place at the group's next meeting, which is scheduled for October.

Pauline McNeill: According to the *Daily Record*, the poorest in Scotland are missing out on £2 billion-worth of benefits. The automation of certain benefits could make a difference to that.

I thank the minister and the Social Security Committee for supporting my stage 2 amendment to the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill and I thank the minister for the answer that she just gave. Has any assessment been done of what benefits might be suitable for automation? Perhaps that is a subject for the meeting that she mentioned. Should automation be possible, will there be a requirement to allow for any adjustment in future budgets?

Jeane Freeman: I appreciate what the member is asking about. Automation of the scale and extent that she is talking about—beyond one local authority—is what the Scottish Government wishes to pursue if we can; that is more complex because it involves more than one system, as I am sure the member will understand. Such automation would involve local authority systems, the Scottish Government and the Department for Work and Pensions in relation to the benefits for which it continues to be responsible. Realising that will require significant discussion.

We will start with the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill, as I just outlined. We are continuing to look at the issue as part of the development of our social security system in discussion with local authorities and others. With the welcome support of the member's colleague, Mr Rowley, we recently convened a round-table discussion with local authorities to increase benefit uptake across the piece. Mr Rowley and I have agreed to follow that up with another round table, and from there we will continue to discuss with local authorities how, in practical terms, we can pursue significant Scotland-wide automation where that is possible. That all needs to be considered and taken into account before we feed anything into a future budget discussion.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): The financial memorandum that accompanies the Social Security (Scotland) Bill mentions a £190 million cost that is associated with information technology for the new social security agency. To what extent did the modelling that led to the figure of £190 million take into account the possibility of the automation of benefits?

Jeane Freeman: The figure that Mr Tomkins mentions refers to the set-up of our social security system in Scotland to take responsibility for the 11 benefits that will be devolved to us. Alongside the work that is going on in that IT build—it is learning from previous programmes the lessons about what works and where there could be improvements—our chief digital officer and other colleagues are working across stakeholders to take into account

what I just said to Ms McNeill about automation. However, the primary focus is on building an IT system that can safely and securely make the payments. We want to ensure that, when we take over responsibility for those benefits, the 1.4 million people who are affected receive the money that they are entitled to on the date that they expect to receive it.

Primary and Community Healthcare Services

5. Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I declare an interest as a registered nurse.

To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to assess the models of healthcare that are used in primary and community services. (S5O-01249)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): How national health service boards and integration authorities design and deliver their local primary and community services is a matter for them in consultation with all stakeholders, including members of the local communities. To support service redesign, the Scottish Government has made available £43.5 million from 2016 to 2018 to support about 70 tests of change and other activity through the primary care transformation programme.

Emma Harper: In the light of local issues that those who live in the west of Dumfries and Galloway have raised, how is the Scottish Government directly supporting NHS Dumfries and Galloway to provide Galloway community hospital and local general practitioner services with the support that they require while GP and other doctor vacancies are being filled?

Shona Robison: We are investing to ensure that NHS Dumfries and Galloway has the resource that it needs. Its resource budget increased by 6.8 per cent in real terms between 2010-11 and 2017-18. The board's resource is £283.6 million for 2017-18, which includes an uplift of £4.2 million.

We also keep in touch with the health and social care partnership about the important community hospital and other issues. The partnership is committed to maintaining services at the hospital and is considering how services can be improved; a programme of community engagement is under way and a hospital liaison group is being formed.

We expect the health board, as with other health boards, to work with local GP practices to help them to overcome any recruitment or retention challenges. We will invest an additional £250 million per year in direct support of general practice by the end of this parliamentary session, as part of a wider £500 million investment in primary care.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): Audit Scotland has repeatedly highlighted the Scottish Government's lack of progress in shifting the balance of care away from an acute setting. How will the cabinet secretary ensure that current efforts make a real change? Specifically, what assessment has she done of the transitional funding that she just outlined?

Shona Robison: I thank Miles Briggs for that question. He will be aware that the programme for government laid out the clear ambition that, by the end of this session, more than half the spend will be in community health services. That is a big transition and a big change, which will have an impact as we move resources from acute services into community health services. We need to do that in a proper, planned and sustainable way. That is why I have asked Professor Derek Bell to work as part of a collaborative approach to look at the transformation of elective capacity in our acute services, so that we can drive the resources into the community to keep people out of hospital.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Across the Lothians, GP practices under the current model are closing their lists to patients and many are a GP resignation away from collapse and are relying on locums to stay open. What practical advice does the cabinet secretary have for GP practices that find themselves in that situation here and now? Will she apologise to patients for the Government's mishandling and underfunding of general practice?

Shona Robison: As I said in my original answer, we will be investing £250 million every year in direct support of general practice by the end of this session, as part of a wider £500 million investment in primary care. That is an unprecedented investment in primary care services. However, I recognise that there are recruitment and retention issues in a number of GP practices in the here and now, which is why health boards have been tasked to work with those practices to help them to overcome some of those difficulties, and they are providing practical support to GP practices.

It is also important that we make general practice a more rewarding career opportunity for young doctors who are choosing their specialty, which is why we are negotiating a completely new GP contract that we are very confident will have that result. We are working with the British Medical Association to deliver that.

Wildlife Crime (Role of Police and Crown Office)

6. Mairi Gougeon (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what role the police and the Crown Office have in dealing with wildlife crime. (S5O-01250)

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): Wildlife crime is crime. Perpetrators will be investigated and, if there is sufficient evidence, prosecuted, as with any other crime. However, we are aware that there are characteristics of wildlife crime that mean that a specialised approach is required. For example, wildlife crime often takes place in remote areas where there are no witnesses, and of course there are usually no victims able to report what has happened to them. For those reasons, we are working with Police Scotland to expand the resources that are available to the police to tackle wildlife crime, with a pilot project to provide additional special constables in Cairngorms national park. The Crown Office also has a specialist wildlife and environmental crime unit to tackle such crime.

Mairi Gougeon: The cabinet secretary will be aware of the recent shooting of a hen harrier on the Cabrach estate and the recent disappearance of Calluna, a satellite-tagged hen harrier, near Ballater. In the light of those incidents, what action is the Scottish Government taking to implement the recommendations of the satellite tagging review?

Roseanna Cunningham: I am aware of those appalling incidents. In the light of the satellite tagging review, which was announced on 31 May, we will bring forward a number of measures, which include setting up an independently led group to look at grouse moor management practices and increasing Police Scotland resources, as I mentioned.

In accordance with that, good progress is being made on those areas; I will announce further details shortly. In the meantime, other work goes on—the police respond to and investigate reports that are received, and there are actions such as the further use of restrictions on general licences by Scottish Natural Heritage when wildlife crime is suspected to have taken place. We are determined to put an end to wildlife crime.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Teacher Numbers

1. Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con):

This week, we learned that at Trinity academy in Edinburgh children are having to be taught maths by teachers from other subjects, and that the situation is so bad that the school has written to parents to ask them to help out—all because of the Government's failure to train enough new staff. We know that that has happened in Perthshire and we now know that it is happening in Edinburgh. Can the First Minister confirm that the situation is not more widespread and that it is not happening anywhere else?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As Ruth Davidson and other members are aware, we—like many other countries—face a challenge in teacher recruitment. At the start of the school term in August, the vacancy rate was around 1 per cent—just above it, to be precise—of the total number of teachers. We expect that vacancy rate to reduce as the school term proceeds. We face that challenge, and nobody within the Government has ever sought to say otherwise. That is why we are taking a range of actions to deal with and address it. Let me again set out some of those actions.

We have increased student teacher intakes for six years in a row. Back in 2011, the intake to student teaching was 2,297, and in the most recent year it was more than 4,000. We had 231 more newly qualified probationer teachers starting the induction scheme in August than started in the previous year.

We have also recently launched the next phase of the teacher recruitment campaign. We are developing a national approach to support recruitment of teachers from outside Scotland, and we are developing a specific campaign for headteacher recruitment. We are also right now finalising a specification for a new route into teaching to help us even more to attract teachers—in particular, to parts of the country and to subjects that are under pressure. That is the range of actions that we are taking to tackle a challenge that is in no way unique to Scotland.

Finally, let me say that the biggest threat to all the action that we are taking is, of course, the restrictions that Ruth Davidson's party wants to put on the ability of people—teachers, nurses and doctors—to come to this country from other parts of Europe. That, as in so many other areas, is the biggest challenge that we now face.

Ruth Davidson: From a Government that cut 4,000 teaching posts before Brexit even

happened, that is the most pathetic excuse that I have ever heard. If that was supposed to cover up for the fact that the First Minister did not answer my question and clearly does not know whether what I described is happening elsewhere, it is not going to work. The first thing that she should have done was to get on the phone and find out.

Teacher shortages are not just in Perthshire and in Edinburgh. When the schools went back last month, Angus Council, for example, asked the Scottish Government for 40 probationer teachers to cover the staff shortages in its area. It got about half of that number; it got 23. Children are starting school knowing that there are not enough teachers to do the job. In May, John Swinney admitted that this Government's cuts to teacher training "probably" went too far. With all that we know now, should that "probably" not be "definitely"?

The First Minister: I will say two things to preface my substantive remarks in answer to Ruth Davidson's question. First, I started my first answer by recognising that teacher recruitment is a challenge in all parts of Scotland.

Secondly, it is interesting that in order to back up her flawed and false narrative—that the situation is somehow uniquely down to actions of this Government—Ruth Davidson has to go back several years to a point when her party and other parties across this chamber were regularly coming to First Minister's questions to ask my predecessor and the then education secretary about the problem of teacher unemployment, because they thought that we were training too many teachers for the jobs that were available. In every single one of the past six years, we have increased the number of student teachers going into teacher training.

As for probationer teachers, which Ruth Davidson mentioned, I said in my original answer that 231 more newly qualified probationers are starting the induction scheme this August than did so last August. In terms of numbers and the other actions that we are taking, we are addressing what is a difficult challenge for Scotland, and for many other parts of the world.

Ruth Davidson has not yet addressed a very relevant point. As we are working, in all the ways that I have set out, to increase the numbers coming into teaching and to attract teachers from other parts of the world to come and use their talents here in Scotland, her party is trying to put the shutters up to stop people coming in. If she wants to be taken seriously on the issue, she should at least have the good grace to address that point.

Ruth Davidson: The First Minister wants me to talk about people coming to teach here from outside Scotland, so let us do so. For years, we

have been calling for people who have qualified outside Scotland and who want to teach here to be fast-tracked. That is just one of the ways to help the situation.

Yesterday, we received an email from a couple who moved to Scotland five years ago. The husband did his teacher training in mathematics and worked down south for 15 years as a maths teacher; however, when he moved here, he was told that he could not teach maths without a full year's retraining as a student. That qualified maths teacher is not allowed to teach maths in Scotland.

He is not alone. We have a crippling shortage of teachers, but according to evidence that was presented this year to the Parliament, more than 550 qualified teachers from outside Scotland applied to teach here but were told by the Government to go back to school themselves. We have been asking for years for the system to be speeded up as a way to help, so why has there been a delay in implementing that?

The First Minister: Unfortunately for Ruth Davidson, I, too, received that email yesterday, and I have been able to look into it. The circumstances—*[Interruption.]* My answer is going to include something that I thought Ruth Davidson would have known. Given that she clearly does not, I am going to tell her about it.

The circumstances that are narrated in that email—I am very grateful to the woman who sent it to me—relate to 2012. Since then—this is the bit that I would have thought that Ruth Davidson, as she is raising the issue today, would have been aware of—the General Teaching Council for Scotland has introduced provisional conditional registration, which allows teachers who have qualified outside Scotland to become registered and to take up a teaching post in Scotland while they work towards meeting the minimum requirements. Ruth Davidson asks me why we have not fixed the situation. I am afraid that the answer is that we have—she just did not bother to do the research to find that out.

It is absolutely right that the individual in question would not have been able to teach in 2012, but he might now be in a position to do so. That is why we will be contacting him to see whether he wants to take up a teaching post. To be frank, I am gobsmacked that Ruth Davidson did not bother to find out about that change in circumstances before she came here today.

Ruth Davidson: What the First Minister has not brought to the table is that the matter was only talked about by the General Teaching Council for Scotland in May and has not been taken through yet. It is smoke and mirrors. Again, the First Minister stands here and says, "This is my top priority, and after 10 years of Government and 10

years of failure, I want a herogram for only now beginning to try to fix what has been going on for years." *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Let us hear the question, please.

Ruth Davidson: The record that the First Minister cannot run away from is this: after 10 years, there are 4,000 fewer teachers; 40 per cent of teachers—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Just one second, Ms Davidson. Let us hear the question, please.

Ruth Davidson: The Scottish National Party does not want to hear the record, but you are absolutely right, Presiding Officer. I will say it again.

On the First Minister's watch, there are now 4,000 fewer teachers, 40 per cent of Scottish teachers are considering retirement in the next 18 months, and hundreds of qualified teachers are being held back from getting into classrooms because of the Government's bureaucracy. For all the promises for the future, that is the record of 10 years of failing our children. Does the First Minister get a pass or a fail? She gets a fail.

The First Minister: We always know when Ruth Davidson has lost the plot at First Minister's question time, because we just get the angry waffling in place of a question.

I say again that this Government is taking action. It is clear that Ruth Davidson wants to ignore some of it. Some of it, she just does not even bother to find out about. The truth of the matter is that Ruth Davidson is not interested in solutions—she is interested only in talking about problems.

We will continue to take the action that is right for our education system, our teachers and young people across the country, and we will leave the Tories—unfortunately—to continue to do the damage that they are doing to this country through their reckless Brexit approach, which is going to make finding the solutions to such issues all the harder. Ruth Davidson never wants to talk about that.

Fire Safety (Resources)

2. Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): It is three months since we witnessed the horror of the fire that engulfed Grenfell tower, killing at least 80 people. We have since heard from many experts that fire sprinklers in high-rise flats can play a vital role in saving lives. I know that the Government has set up a ministerial working group, which met for the first time on 20 June, and I look forward to finding out what recommendations it makes.

I invite the First Minister to comment on the Fire Brigades Union's submission for yesterday's meeting of the Local Government and Communities Committee, in which it said:

"Scotland has lost 24% of its ... fire safety inspecting officers since 2013/14".

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Of course, it is the responsibility of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to make sure that it has the right staff doing the right jobs in the right place. I understand that the 68 uniformed fire safety enforcement officers that are deployed across Scotland, which I think is the number that was referred to at yesterday's meeting, are supplemented by 13 specialist non-uniformed auditing officers. In addition, the Fire and Rescue Service has a team of senior fire officers who are also competent in fire safety enforcement, thereby ensuring that we have a national 24/7 capability to respond to fire safety-related matters. In the budget for this year, we increased the overall operational budget by £21.7 million to support investment in equipment and resources.

These are hugely serious issues, and we will continue to work closely on all of them with the Fire and Rescue Service and to listen carefully to the views of staff. As Alex Rowley rightly says, following the Grenfell tragedy, we established a ministerial working group, which has now met on a number of occasions, most recently last week. It is considering all relevant measures to ensure the safety of residents in high-rise domestic buildings. That includes a review of the evidence on sprinklers, which Alex Rowley mentioned. We will continue to work—through that group and more generally with all relevant stakeholders and partners—to ensure that we are doing absolutely everything to ensure the safety of people who live in high-rise buildings and other relevant buildings across the country.

Alex Rowley: But it is, of course, the responsibility of Government to make sure that the Fire and Rescue Service has the resources that it needs.

I have talked to many firefighters and have met the Fire Brigades Union, and some serious concerns are being raised. Despite ministers' assurances that they would protect the front line, the FBU says that more than 700 front-line firefighter jobs have gone. There are growing concerns about whether staffing levels are adequate and about the future of fire stations.

Will the First Minister give Parliament an assurance that there will be no further job cuts in our fire service and that no programme of fire station closures will be introduced in Scotland?

The First Minister: I give an absolute assurance that we will continue to work with the

fire service and to work in dialogue with the FBU to make sure that we are protecting those who keep us safe from fire. We have sought to do that, and we will continue to work to do that, in terms of the number of fire officers and others who work in the Fire and Rescue Service and of the configuration of fire stations across our country.

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to all firefighters, who do a very dangerous job to keep us safe. In the aftermath of Grenfell, it is absolutely vital that we look carefully and critically at every aspect of fire safety, including all those that Alex Rowley has raised, and we will continue to do that. As we do so, we will not only talk regularly to the Fire and Rescue Service, as we do now, but hear the views of the FBU and those who work in the service. We will try to come to decisions that are about not just protecting the front-line service but making sure that it is configured to keep the people of Scotland safe. I give that assurance. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and the Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs regularly have discussions about these matters and they will continue to do so.

Alex Rowley: We certainly owe a debt of gratitude to all firefighters—of that there can be no question. However, the First Minister needs to look again at some of the big issues that are being raised. We need assurances about further job cuts and closures, which we have not had today.

It is now four years since the Government merged eight fire and rescue services into one. I am told that progress on harmonising terms and conditions and wages for firefighters remains very slow, which is having a great impact on staff morale in the service, which needs to be addressed.

Does the First Minister accept that a background of continuing cuts to the fire service is unlikely to help resolve those issues and that cuts within our Fire and Rescue Service cannot be allowed to continue?

The First Minister: We are protecting those who fight fire and keep us safe. I think that I said in an earlier answer to Alex Rowley that in this year's budget we increased the overall operational budget by more than £20 million to support some of the investment that the Fire and Rescue Service needs to make. Obviously there are on-going negotiations around pay and conditions and I hope that those discussions continue in a constructive way.

Alex Rowley has asked me to look carefully at all these matters and he is right to do so. We have an absolute responsibility to ensure that we do that at any time, but particularly given the tragedy that we saw happen in London over the summer. That is why the ministerial group is looking at all

these individual issues very carefully and recommendations will undoubtedly come forward in due course. It is also why we continue to have such discussions with the Fire and Rescue Service in a wider sense to make sure that we are putting in place the resources that it needs to do the job that the rest of us across the country depend on it to do.

The Presiding Officer: We have a constituency question from Monica Lennon.

Neurological Conditions (Support)

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): Today Sue Ryder published a report on the support available to people with neurological conditions. It featured the story of Thomas and Dee McGreevy, constituents whose case I have been helping with for several months. Dee, a former nurse who is only 58, has an undiagnosed neurological condition. She has been in an older persons' care home for the past two years and has been largely confined to her room for 24 hours a day.

Mr McGreevy's tenacity in battling for better support for his wife has been incredible, but very little support is available for Dee and others like her.

Will the First Minister agree to look further into the details of my constituents' case? Will the Scottish Government be considering the report's recommendations in full?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): First, of course the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport will be happy to look at the individual constituency case if Monica Lennon wants to provide the details of it.

On the report that has been published today, I pay tribute to Sue Ryder, which is a fantastic organisation that is doing very good work. The Scottish Government works closely with it and took action based on the priorities that it identified last year to make progress on data and clinical standards.

The report has made five recommendations and we will take forward work on all of them. It is perhaps most appropriate today to say that we have already started to develop Scotland's first national action plan on neurological conditions. The Minister for Public Health and Sport has made it clear that she wants new standards of care to be developed for people with neurological conditions as part of that work.

I will make one final point that, given the details that Monica Lennon shared with the chamber, might be relevant to the case that she mentioned. Our decision to take forward and implement Frank's law will allow those under 65 with some

neurological conditions to access personal care in the way that those over 65 already can.

On a range of these issues we are already taking action and we will continue to do so. As we do so, we will continue to work closely with Sue Ryder.

Education

3. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Scottish education is judged by international inspectors as just average. We have lost thousands of classroom assistants, teacher vacancies are up to 700—thousands more want to give up, too—and a school that is less than 3 miles from Scotland's Parliament is desperate for maths teachers. Has the First Minister had any doubts about her Government's education programme over the past 10 years?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As I have said repeatedly, there are many strengths in the Scottish education system and it does no service to anybody in that system for us not to point to those strengths. For example, there has been a 30 per cent increase in higher passes over the past number of years and more young people, particularly from our deprived communities, are coming out of school with qualifications and going to university.

However, I want us to go even further, which is why we have under way the most radical programme of school education reform in the Scottish Parliament's lifetime. I note again that Willie Rennie is opposing almost every aspect of that reform programme, although it is entirely his right to do so and I am not suggesting otherwise. We will continue to take forward the actions that are necessary to ensure that improvements in our education system are made.

With regard to vacancies, we have increased the numbers of student teachers going into teacher training in each of the past six years, as I said to Ruth Davidson. That is why, compared with last year, we had more than 200 additional newly qualified probationer teachers starting in our schools in August.

We will not shy away from those challenges—far from it—and we will continue to focus on taking the action that is needed to address the challenges.

Willie Rennie: That was quite an astonishing answer. The First Minister has no doubts about anything that she has done in education in the past 10 years. She listed all those great things and I agree that there are great things about Scottish education. However, in reality, under her leadership, education in Scotland has got worse over that time.

The First Minister knows that Scottish teachers are on the edge. Their pay is lagging way behind that of those in other countries. A study found that there will potentially be an exodus from teaching, yet we already have 700 vacancies.

The McCrone report was delivered by the Liberal Democrat-Labour Government, despite Nicola Sturgeon's opposition. It transformed education and had future teachers queuing up to join the profession but, after 10 years of the Scottish National Party, that is not happening any more. Is it not time for the First Minister to urgently establish a new McCrone inquiry to reinvigorate teaching and have future teachers queuing up once again?

The First Minister: No, I do not think that the right thing to do is to embark on a review that could take years to undertake and complete. The better thing to do is to take the hard, tangible actions that we are taking right now, such as increasing the number of student teachers coming into the profession with the various recruitment initiatives that I have already spoken about, or the action that we are taking to put more powers and resources into the hands of headteachers to ensure that they and the teams of teachers who they work with are real leaders of learning in their classrooms. That is not only good for motivating teachers, but evidence tells us that it is the best way to raise standards in our schools.

We will get on with the programme of reform and investment in our schools that we have embarked upon. I look forward to continuing to debate the detail of that in this chamber, but I hope that members will engage on the actions that we are taking right now, rather than doing what Willie Rennie appears to be trying to do, which is to kick everything into the long grass with a review that will take forever to report. We are taking action now to deal with the challenges that we face.

European Union (Withdrawal) Bill

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): Is the First Minister aware that the First Secretary of State Damian Green warned this week that there are no post-Brexit framework agreements across the United Kingdom on issues such as agriculture and that the devolved Administrations could adopt policies that are at odds with the UK Government's views? In other words, he wants framework agreements to be drawn up to smother and silence devolution and this Parliament's right to decide what is in the interests of Scotland. Does she agree that that is another example of Conservative ministers' strong desire to use Brexit to undermine devolution and Scottish democracy?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, I agree. That is not just the view of this

Government. We have seen that view expressed in House of Commons briefing papers and we have seen organisations such as the Law Society of Scotland talk about how the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill will centralise at Westminster powers that should lie with this Parliament. That is wrong, and it is a deeply retrograde step.

This week, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the devolution referendum. The Scotland Act 1998, on which this Parliament is built, is based on the important principle that everything is devolved unless it is expressly reserved. The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill turns that principle on its head and means that every power, if it comes back from the EU—even in devolved areas—is reserved at Westminster unless a United Kingdom Government decides that it is going to devolve it.

Damian Green, in the comments that were reported today, gives the game away. The UK Government wants to take that approach in order to restrict the freedom of decision and manoeuvre of this Parliament in devolved areas. There are deeply concerning aspects to that. Take agriculture for example. Damian Green talked about "subsidy wars". Is that code for wanting to reduce the funding that goes to our farmers? Right now, farmers in Scotland get 16 per cent of farm funding. We should get more than that, because of the percentage of land. Does the UK Government want to see that amount reduced?

This is a serious issue. It has serious consequences for different parts of society and our economy; it is also serious in principle. Matters that are devolved should be for this Parliament to decide; they should not be re-reserved to Westminster to allow a Westminster Government to do whatever it sees fit. It is a big issue of principle, and the Tories would do well to start standing up for this Parliament, instead of just doing what their bosses at Westminster tell them to do.

Scottish Rural Development Programme

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I will stay with that theme. Two weeks ago, Fergus Ewing announced £109 million-worth of cuts to the Scottish rural development programme, blaming Westminster for its failure to transfer the European Union convergence payments. Our research shows that those convergence payments were never included in the original budget and therefore cannot be the reason behind the cuts. Will the First Minister explain to Parliament what the real reason is behind the cuts to the SRDP, which will impact on communities, businesses and our rural environment?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I am sorry, but the full convergence funding—this is a matter of fact—was not passed on by the UK

Government. This is additional funding that was made available to the UK, principally because of issues in Scotland. The funding should have come to Scotland but, because it did not, Scottish farmers were short changed to the tune of £160 million over the course of the common agricultural policy programme. That is the reality. All of us in this Parliament should be getting behind the call for that wrong to be righted and for farmers to get the money that they are due.

Sexual Offences Committed by a Child

4. Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):

To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the number of reported cases involving a child committing a sexual offence against another increasing by a third over the last four years. (S5F-01515)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Those figures are extremely concerning. Our priority is to ensure the safety of children. Of course, it is too soon to say to what extent the reported increase reflects a rise in offending, because we know that greater confidence in the reporting of sexual offences might also be a factor.

Last week, the Deputy First Minister spoke at an education summit organised by the Solicitor General for Scotland to highlight the importance of a preventative approach in helping to stop children becoming either victims or perpetrators of sexual offending. Our review of personal and social education also supports that approach.

Later this month, we will publish new analysis looking at sexual crimes committed through the internet, including the age of both victims and offenders. That will help to inform how the justice system responds to such offending.

Gillian Martin: Will the First Minister join me in encouraging all schools, youth groups and parent groups to get involved in tackling issues about the sharing of unsolicited images and in initiatives such as *digi, aye?*, which is run by Young Scot? What can Government, and we as MSPs in our areas, do to highlight the issues and to encourage cyber-resilience in young people and their parents?

The First Minister: That question is important. I particularly mention the Young Scot *digi, aye?* campaign, which the Government supports with funding. That is one of a range of actions that we are taking as part of our internet safety action plan.

Gillian Martin is right. This is first and foremost, and fundamentally, a community issue—and it often takes a community approach to deal with such issues effectively. Not all sexual offending shown in the statistics will be offences committed on the internet, but we know that the internet can

often be an unsafe place for young people. All MSPs can play our part in our communities in raising awareness and helping to educate parents about the steps that they can take to keep their children safe online.

Police Scotland (Leadership)

5. Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking to ensure that there is public confidence in the leadership of Police Scotland. (S5F-01509)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The Government is committed to ensuring that Police Scotland has a strong, resilient and effective senior leadership team. As the Cabinet Secretary for Justice set out in his parliamentary statement on Tuesday, Deputy Chief Constable Iain Livingstone will provide leadership to Police Scotland in the chief constable's absence. As the DCC designate, he will have all the powers of the chief constable during this period. He is, of course, ably supported by the other experienced and capable members of the senior team. I have confidence that, along with all our police officers and staff, they will continue to provide the excellent police service that keeps our communities safe and has helped to bring crime down to a 42-year low.

Edward Mountain: This is not about political posturing in difficult times. The public and our police officers must have unequivocal confidence in the leadership of Police Scotland. Given that leadership requires scrutiny and scrutiny requires leadership, and that there is currently a perceived vacuum, will the First Minister tell us how she will ensure that the chief constable retains or gains the respect of all those whom he or she leads and serves?

The First Minister: I agree with the sentiment of that question. The Scottish Police Authority has recently taken a number of steps to increase transparency around its conduct and decision making, and the ability to scrutinise that. We should all welcome that.

Members will appreciate that I am not going to comment—it would not be appropriate for me to do so—on the allegations that have been made about the chief constable. However, it is important to say that there is a well-established process in place for investigating and coming to conclusions about complaints of the nature of those that have been made. That process is now under way. In those circumstances, the chief constable was right to take leave of absence while the investigation is on-going.

Iain Livingstone is a senior police officer who has many years of experience. He will be known

to many members across the chamber. He is a highly respected officer and I know that he will do an excellent job while he is carrying out the functions of chief constable.

We continue to reassure the public. Edward Mountain talked about a perception of a vacuum. Although all members have a scrutiny role to perform in Parliament, I think that it is important that we do not say to the public that there is a leadership vacuum because there is not. An acting chief constable is in place, and the chair of the SPA is in place and will continue to be in place until his successor is appointed.

Police officers right around our country do an excellent job, often in very difficult circumstances. We can take a step back from all this and remind ourselves yet again that crime in this country is at a 42-year low, which is down to the hard work of police officers in every part of Scotland.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): One area in which Police Scotland is involved is undercover policing. Today, lawyers are at the Court of Session to seek a judicial review of the exclusion of Scottish victims from the United Kingdom-wide public inquiry into illegal and unethical undercover policing and the Scottish Government's failure to carry out a parallel inquiry.

What does the First Minister say to the victims, including women who were violated and tricked into relationships and who even had children by undercover officers with assumed identities? Some victims describe that as state rape. Why is there no full public inquiry in Scotland?

The First Minister: I deprecate the kind of actions that Neil Findlay has outlined, and I hope that everybody does.

Neil Findlay started his question by referring to the court case and said that it is in court today. Clearly, it would be completely inappropriate for me to make any comment on that judicial review.

On the wider issue, I assume that Neil Findlay is aware that Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary in Scotland is conducting a review of undercover policing. That will conclude in due course. If there are recommendations for the Scottish Government, we will take them forward.

Combustible Cladding on Public Buildings

6. Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what progress the Scottish Government has made in the identification of combustible cladding on public buildings, in light of reports that it was found at the Edinburgh royal infirmary. (S5F-01530)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Following the Grenfell tower tragedy, the ministerial working group on building and fire

safety focused on identifying combustible cladding on high-rise buildings that are over 18m in height. The national health service has identified two hospitals—the Queen Elizabeth university hospital and the Royal infirmary of Edinburgh—where some combustible cladding is present. However, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has confirmed that patients are safe. That is because there are other fire-stopping measures and good fire safety management procedures in place at both hospitals.

Daniel Johnson: As Alex Rowley pointed out earlier, today marks the three-month anniversary of the tragic fire at Grenfell tower. Over those three months, combustible cladding has been found in schools, university buildings and hospitals in Glasgow and Edinburgh, as reported in recent days. In light of that information, will the First Minister tell Parliament how many publicly accessible buildings still remain to be checked and which those are? When does she believe that the Government will have a comprehensive picture of the use of combustible cladding? Can she confirm how she will keep Parliament informed of and up to date with progress towards getting that comprehensive picture?

The First Minister: First, as I should have said earlier, it is appropriate to say that, at this moment in time, our thoughts should be with the Grenfell tower victims and their families, given the three months that have passed and the opening of the Grenfell tower inquiry. Every day of the past three months will have been incredibly difficult for them; as the issues start to be looked into, that trauma is underlined.

There has been on-going transparency as we have done that work. As the member will be aware, we have focused—for reasons that I think everybody will both understand and agree with—on buildings that are over 18m in height. That is because, in the event of fire, it is more possible for the fire service to gain access to buildings that are underneath that height. The ministerial working group has been very open about its deliberations and there has been reporting, first on the work around high-rise flats and domestic dwellings, and then, as it has been carried out, on the work around hospitals and schools. I will ask Angela Constance to write to the member with full and up-to-date details on exactly where that work has got to.

All along, if issues have been identified, steps have been taken to mitigate any risk. For example, when cladding of a particular type was identified at Queen Elizabeth university hospital, the health board set out the steps that it was going to take to remove that cladding. I should say that further tests are being carried out on the cladding at the Edinburgh royal infirmary; notwithstanding that,

particular mitigations have been put in place to ensure the safety of patients and anybody visiting the hospital, which is absolutely paramount.

We will continue to update Parliament as appropriate on that work. As I said, I will ask Angela Constance to write an update letter to the member, setting out exactly what work remains to be carried out.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): Fire safety goes beyond issues of combustible cladding. The Local Government and Communities Committee has heard a suggestion from the Fire Brigades Union that there should be a series of intrusive inspections of high-rise buildings in Scotland to interrogate fire safety procedures and to take the opportunity to improve fire safety further. Is that something that the Scottish Government will give consideration to?

The First Minister: We will of course continue to give consideration to any suggestions that are made, particularly that come from the experts in fire safety. Through the ministerial working group, we are already carrying out a review of building and fire safety regulatory frameworks and other relevant matters.

It is important to say that no aluminium composite material cladding, which was the particular type of cladding on Grenfell tower, has been found on any high-rise social blocks in Scotland. We would expect all building owners to have been doing their own fire safety risk assessments and of course if they have any concerns, they should seek further advice from the fire service.

Through the working group, we will continue to consider all relevant measures. I have already mentioned the work that has been carried out around sprinklers. The suggestion that Bob Doris highlights will be taken fully into account in the deliberations of the working group.

Devolution Referendum (20th Anniversary)

7. Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Government is marking the 20th anniversary of the devolution referendum. (S5F-01524)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Like many others, I marked the 20th anniversary of the devolution referendum on Monday. The point that I sought to make, which I will make again today, is that, whatever divides us in the Parliament—many things divide us in the Parliament—it should still be possible, as we proved 20 years ago, to try to find areas of agreement. That should be true about the powers of the Parliament and about other issues, as well. As I said on Monday, to that end we will in the coming months publish a series

of papers on extending the powers of our Parliament. Those papers are not intended to be the final word; they are intended to stimulate debate. I look forward to discussing them across the Parliament as we seek to defend our current powers from the threat that is posed by the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill and as we look, in light of Brexit and the other challenges that we face as a country, at what additional powers would allow this Parliament to address those challenges and concerns even more effectively.

Maree Todd: Damian Green has let the cat out of the bag: he has said explicitly that the United Kingdom Government plans to take control of Scottish agriculture at the very time when we should be celebrating the many achievements of the Scottish Parliament. The Tory party at Westminster is staging a power grab. Does the First Minister agree that the Tory party's attempt to undermine the Scottish Parliament is completely unacceptable?

The First Minister: It is unacceptable—I hear grumbling from Tory members. I was not in the chamber for Mike Russell's statement the other day, but I managed to catch some of it and I thought that the Tories were very constructive in their approach. I hope that we can find a way of working together to protect the powers of our Parliament. With not just the Scottish National Party Scottish Government, but the Labour Welsh Government and many other organisations saying that, in its current state, the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill is unacceptable and represents a power grab from the devolved Administrations, the UK Government should sit up, listen, take notice and agree to amendments.

Many Brexit issues are highly technical, so they can often be quite difficult, but, as I said earlier on, the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill reverses the very principle on which the Scottish Parliament is founded. Every power that comes back from the EU in respect of devolved matters will go to Westminster instead of coming to the Scottish Parliament, and that will allow the UK Government to make decisions on a whole range of matters, including agriculture, fisheries and the environment—justice would also be included. In 111 different areas, which Michael Russell talked about the other day, the UK Government will be allowed to take decisions on issues that are rightly devolved to the Scottish Parliament. Whatever else we disagree on, surely we can all come together and agree that that is simply unacceptable and cannot be allowed to stand. That is the Scottish Government's position, and I hope that we will have the backing of every other party in the Parliament on that.

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): In that light, I ask the First Minister to reflect on the

rhetoric that she has deployed in response to Richard Lochhead's and Maree Todd's questions. Her minister warmly welcomed the offer that we made in all sincerity on Tuesday to work with ministers to seek to find solutions to the issues that arise from the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, which I believe the Scottish Government has raised in all good conscience.

I am concerned. Does the First Minister want a soap box to promote a grievance agenda and to deploy rhetoric that is designed to scupper that work, or does she genuinely want to seek to find a solution to the problems? Will she give members an assurance that that is the case, because what she has said almost seeks to undermine the spirit in which we offered to work with her Government to find a solution?

The First Minister: I am genuinely not sure how much attention Jackson Carlaw has been paying to this—I do not mean that pejoratively. [*Laughter.*] This is a really serious point. Although I welcome the change of tone from the Conservatives on Tuesday, surely Jackson Carlaw can understand—if he has been paying attention—that we have been trying to find solutions since the early summer, when the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill was first published. We have been trying to find common ground and compromise with the UK Government since the EU referendum more than a year ago, and all that we have had every step of the way has been occasional warm words. When push comes to shove, the UK Government's approach has been, "It'll be our way or no way."

With the greatest respect to Jackson Carlaw, it is nice to have a suggestion now that the Scottish Tories might be on the side of protecting the Scottish Parliament, but I am sure that he can forgive the degree of frustration on the part of the Scottish Government that, thus far, all the attempts that we have made to find compromise and common ground have been rejected by the UK Government. If that is going to change, I welcome that but, frankly, I want to see some of that in action rather than just—if Jackson Carlaw forgives me—in rhetoric.

Borders Talking Newspapers

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): I ask those who are leaving the chamber and the gallery to do so quietly, please, because business is about to start again.

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-06818, in the name of Rachael Hamilton, on the 25th anniversary of Borders Talking Newspapers. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises and congratulates the Borders Talking Newspaper on its 25th anniversary; considers that the newspaper, which is based in Duns and Hawick, is a vital resource for people who are completely blind or have visual impairments and want to keep up with local news and issues; believes that it is a simple yet effective measure to counteract the social isolation that can occur as a result of sight problems; considers that the 180,000 people across Scotland who, according to the Royal National Institute of Blind People, have sight problems would benefit from this or a similar service; recognises the numerous volunteers who give up their time to help keep this service available every week for listeners, and wishes the volunteers, organisation and listeners all the best for the future.

12:47

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): It gives me great pleasure to bring to Parliament a debate on a motion that recognises and congratulates the hard work of Borders Talking Newspapers, which recently celebrated 25 years of providing a service for blind and visually impaired people and those who cannot read or hold a local newspaper. I thank the people from Borders Talking Newspapers who have joined us today, although I do not think that they have actually made it to the gallery yet.

During the summer recess, I was delighted to join those who intend to join us in the gallery today at a celebration garden party. The sun shone and there was much happiness, and Carrick McClelland entertained us by playing the fiddle. We raised a glass to the volunteer editors and readers who give up their time to make the talking newspapers a success, and to all those who work tirelessly to ensure that deadlines are never missed, no matter what.

I am told that one of those individuals made Borders Talking Newspapers possible—the founder and patron, Matilda Mitchell. Matilda's dedication to the project has made Borders Talking Newspapers possible, so she should be extremely proud that it continues to thrive 25 years on. I understand that Matilda learned from a friend about a similar project in Hampshire and, on finding that there was nothing comparable in the

Scottish Borders, made it her mission to deliver a talking newspapers service for blind and visually impaired people.

Of course, it would be remiss of me not to thank my colleagues for supporting my motion, which has made the debate possible, and I look forward to hearing their speeches.

Borders Talking Newspapers provides a free local weekly news and information service that plays an invaluable and vital part in many people's weekly routine. The organisation relies on the generosity of its supporters to deliver a seamless service. The focus of the service is to provide Borders residents with news items from the weekly local papers *The Southern Reporter*, *The Berwickshire News* and the *Hawick News*. Although the emphasis is local, the 90-minute audio news programme is sent to listeners on USB sticks and is streamed worldwide free of charge so—literally—the world can find out what is happening in the Borders. Moreover, around 160 Borders residents receive memory sticks and specially designed players, so that they can access local news.

Access is key. Without the hard work of Borders Talking Newspapers, many people would have no access to their local news. They would be at risk of not knowing what had happened and what was going to happen. The service helps to ensure that everyone is informed, whatever their circumstances.

At the summer garden party, Clova Reid told me that Borders Talking Newspapers customers love hearing the sounds of different voices. They start to recognise speakers' tones and inflections and they take comfort from hearing a human voice.

We must remember the impact of not having access to local news publications. A person's being without access takes away their opportunity to discuss local news, to stay informed about what is happening on their doorstep and to speak to a neighbour about the headlines that matter to them or the local sports teams that they support. It risks isolating people in their communities.

It is also important to remember that many of us will need services such as a talking newspaper in the future. None of us is age proof, and some of us will suffer eyesight deterioration. For now, because of the efforts of Matilda Mitchell, Wendy Moss and the many volunteers, we need not worry about not being kept informed about local issues in the Borders.

The Royal National Institute of Blind People promotes services such as Borders Talking Newspapers as a means to help people who have sight issues. I hope that the debate will raise awareness of talking newspapers, which are

invaluable in the lives of so many people, and will become invaluable to people including us.

Like many other people, I welcome the Big Lottery Fund's award of £5,300 to Borders Talking Newspapers to enable it to expand. The service was also recognised for its important contribution to Borders life when it was awarded £500 by Asda in Galashiels.

Borders Talking Newspapers has come a long way. In 2012 it recorded its 1,000th show. The shows are no longer recorded on cassette tapes; they are on memory sticks, which are distributed and returned free of charge through the Royal Mail. The technology has enabled the service to reach more people by delivering the *Hawick News* and a longer recording. The recordings deliver the news as it is presented in the publications. Deviation from that and opinion giving are not permitted, as Matilda Mitchell's husband knows too well. He was sacked for doing it.

I hope that today's members' business debate will raise awareness of the Borders Talking Newspapers service and its important and valuable contribution to communities throughout the Borders. I hope that it will spread the idea of a local talking newspaper to areas that do not have such a service, and I hope that it will encourage more volunteers to support such services by getting involved and helping them to succeed and grow in the coming years.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Hamilton, you might want to take an extra minute or so to welcome your guests to the gallery.

Rachael Hamilton: Thank you. I said earlier that we were happy to welcome people from Borders Talking Newspapers to Parliament. I do not know whether our guests were here in time to hear me speak fondly about the garden party that we had in summer, in the sunshine, at which entertainment was provided by Carrick McClelland. I am delighted that they could join us today, and I will speak to them later.

12:53

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): First, I declare an interest, in that I am not age proof.

I welcome the people from Borders Talking Newspapers, and I congratulate Rachael Hamilton on securing the debate on her important motion. I, too, have lodged a motion about Borders Talking Newspapers, which underlines the service's importance across our neighbouring constituencies.

I was lucky enough to be invited to Borders Talking Newspapers' recent annual general meeting, which took place in the Focus community

centre in Galashiels, in my constituency. I should have known from the congested car park how well attended it would be. When I went into the hall, I found it to be packed with a mix of volunteers and listeners and their partners. By the way, for a good attendance at an AGM, it does no harm to have a hearty supply of sandwiches, cakes, tea and coffee at the tables, and to let folk eat first before moving on to the AGM.

Voluntary organisations with household names hit the headlines, but talking newspapers are below the radar of most folk. However, they form part of the backbone of a local community. As Rachael Hamilton said, Borders Talking Newspapers was founded in 1992 by Matilda Mitchell and it relies on its 60-plus volunteers to translate from print to USB or flash drive—whatever that is—all the local gossip: the ins and outs, the hatches, matches and dispatches, who is in the jile, who is out of the jile, what events are on, who will be braw lad and his lass this year, and so on. It puts a stop to that feeling of being isolated and excluded from everything local.

Borders Talking Newspapers covers *The Southern Reporter* in my patch and its Peebles partner covers the *Peeblesshire News*, while in Midlothian there is Midlothian News and Views Talking Newspaper's service. Borders Talking Newspapers has at least 200 listeners, and I had chat with a few at that AGM, including Graham Hanson and his wife, Margaret. She made it plain, as we scoffed those important cakes, that it is very important for her to keep on top of what is going on in her community and to be part of the local buzz.

Although local papers are having a tough time—like much of the national newsprint—they still matter in rural communities. They are bought and read because their news is very localised indeed. *The Southern Reporter* serves mainly the central Borders area—Galashiels, Lauder, Earlston and Melrose in my patch—although it occasionally strays west into Tweeddale. In that area, the most read is the *Peeblesshire News*; in Midlothian, it is the *Midlothian Advertiser*.

In Scotland, 188,000 people currently suffer sight loss or impairment, and that figure is set to double by 2031 because of the growing elderly population and an increase in diabetes, so talking newspapers will become even more important. The great thing about this Parliament is that this debate, as are all our debates and activities, is available online for people who have such impairments so that they can keep in touch with their Parliament—what it is up to and what it is not doing.

I congratulate all the volunteers, particularly Wendy Moss, who is the director, and Tom Ingoldsby, who is a trustee of Borders Talking

Newspapers, for their commitment. I thank them for inviting me to learn about the service. At my next open meeting, I am going to have good tea and coffee, and a spread of decent cakes—because it works.

12:58

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I echo the comments of Christine Grahame and congratulate Rachael Hamilton on lodging her motion and providing members with the opportunity to wish Borders Talking Newspapers a very happy 25th birthday. I add to the welcome to the Scottish Parliament that has been given to the volunteers from Borders Talking Newspapers who are in the gallery.

In a week in which we mark 20 years since the people of Scotland, including nearly 67 per cent of Borderers, voted in favour of devolution, it is worth reflecting on the fact that this Parliament did not even exist when, in 1992, Matilda Mitchell began Borders Talking Newspapers, recording local news stories on to cassette tapes—in an attic, I understand—for the benefit of visually impaired and blind people in the region.

Since then, although it now uses digital recordings on data sticks and the internet, the newspaper has no doubt covered much of our Parliament's work and delivery of groundbreaking legislation, such as free personal care for the elderly, the ban on smoking in public places and, of course, the Waverley Railway (Scotland) Bill—the borders railway bill. It is my hope that soon it will be able to report on plans to extend that railway to Carlisle through Langholm, among other places—but that is maybe a debate for another day.

Today's debate is an opportunity to celebrate the enormous contributions that Borders Talking Newspapers and the many other talking newspapers services make in our communities. They are often small local charities that provide talking newspapers to usually between 100 and 200 people free of charge, and rely heavily on the tireless commitment of their volunteers, to whom we owe a huge debt of gratitude.

As a member of the Scottish Parliament cross-party group on visual impairment, I know how important the work of those volunteers is to many people. I have often spoken to people who are blind or partially sighted, and they describe losing their sight as an incredibly isolating experience. Losing the ability to read as one's sight deteriorates can contribute enormously to that feeling of isolation. As one's vision worsens and it becomes more of a challenge to read, it is more difficult to keep up to date with local and national events. The sources that keep people informed of

events—newspapers, posters and flyers—become more and more inaccessible until they are impossible to use.

Most of us in the chamber probably take it for granted that everything we want to read will be in a format that is accessible to us, but that is not the case for people with sight loss. Less than 5 per cent of books are produced in accessible formats, which has a particular impact on children with sight loss who are often excluded from reading the same books as their peer group. Every child should have the opportunity to develop a love of reading, but that is difficult when fewer than 1 in 20 of the books that is available to a child's peers are available to that child.

That is why the work that is taking place across Scotland to tackle the isolation that is caused by sight loss that I have described is so important, whether it is the fantastic contribution of Borders Talking Newspapers and other talking books in bringing the news to local communities, or the RNIB talking book library, which provides 60,000 books in accessible formats and is free at the point of use. The importance of that work will grow, as the number of people with sight loss is set to double by 2030.

In many cases, sight loss is not inevitable. Next week is national eye health week. Sight-loss charities and ophthalmologists across the country will be encouraging everyone to book an eye-health check—a check that has been free for almost a decade in Scotland, thanks to the Government in 2006. Those checks can make a real difference, with sight loss being preventable in 50 per cent of cases if it is picked up quickly through them. I encourage everyone to make sure that they take advantage of the free eye checks.

Once again I congratulate Borders Talking Newspapers and all our talking newspapers, and thank them for the invaluable service that they provide to our constituents across Scotland.

13:01

Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con): I thank my Conservative colleague Rachael Hamilton for bringing the motion for debate. I welcome the team from Borders Talking Newspapers and the children from Dalbeattie primary school—it is great to see them here in the chamber. I congratulate everyone who is involved in Borders Talking Newspapers, especially Matilda Mitchell, on this very special 25th anniversary.

The service's longevity is testament to the volunteers' unwavering passion for and commitment to the service that they provide. To start such a project is a challenge in itself, but to have never missed an edition in 25 years and stayed the course in the face of all the challenges

that life throws at us—illness, inclement weather, technical difficulties and technological developments—is an incredible achievement that is well worth celebrating.

I do not and cannot know what it is like to be blind or visually impaired, but I am well aware, from my years of nursing, that adjusting to sight loss can reduce a person's confidence, which leads to a risk of isolation. People can feel afraid, trapped in their own home and excluded from the social aspects of day-to-day life.

Not having access to local news, which Rachael Hamilton referred to, is a key issue and a significant aspect of that social isolation. It is far more than just missing out on sitting down and taking in the news of the day. Blindness and visual impairment can rob a person of their engagement and involvement with the community. How can they find out about local events and festivals? How can they stay informed of the practical things that impact our everyday life—things as simple and mundane as road works or changes to public transport? How can they keep their finger on the pulse of the issues that matter to them?

I am sure that those are just some of the questions that Matilda Mitchell asked herself all those years ago when she founded Borders Talking Newspapers. Thank goodness that she did because, when we strip away the changes in volunteers, the addition of newspapers and the improvements in technology, we see that Borders Talking Newspapers is and always has been a lifeline.

The team has come such a long way in 25 years: it is using new technology to replace cassettes and stream digital content worldwide; it is expanding the range of Borders newspapers that are available to its listeners; it has received more than £5,000 from the Big Lottery Fund; and it has recorded well over 1,000 editions, not to mention winning the best tape in Scotland award.

However, I do not, and will not, understate the importance of funding for talking newspapers. It is becoming more and more difficult for small voluntary groups such as Borders Talking Newspapers to survive in the face of ever-increasing costs. It is my sincere hope that the debate will raise further awareness of that essential service and will encourage more people to get involved in backing and growing talking newspapers throughout Scotland.

I think I speak for all the talking newspaper listeners when I say thank you to Matilda Mitchell and everyone at Borders Talking Newspapers. I thank them for the vital service that they provide and wish them all the best for the future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Maureen Watt to respond to the debate.

13:05

The Minister for Mental Health (Maureen Watt): I thank Rachael Hamilton—[Interruption.]

Christine Grahame: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. The minister's microphone does not seem to be switched on.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister must have a loud voice, as I had not noticed. Let us try again from the start, with the microphone on.

Maureen Watt: I do not know what happened there.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We have lift-off.

Maureen Watt: I thank Rachael Hamilton for bringing today's debate to Parliament and other members for sharing their experiences of Borders Talking Newspapers. I, too, welcome all the talking newspaper volunteers in the public gallery. Some of them might not have heard Rachael Hamilton's welcome at the beginning of the debate and there is quite a crowd of them—I hope that they have a grand day out. I also welcome pupils from Dalbeattie primary school and I hope that they, too, have a lovely day.

It is clear from members' remarks how much local services, such as Borders talking newspapers and talking newspapers across Scotland, are appreciated by those who use them, as is the valuable role that volunteers play in delivering them. Rachael Hamilton was right to recognise the great work of the founder, Matilda Mitchell, and of Wendy Moss and others who are involved in that valuable work.

Today is not the first time that we have held a members' business debate on talking newspapers in Parliament—Gil Paterson had a motion on his local newspaper, Bankie Talk, in 2011 and Jim Eadie led a similar debate in 2013. Such debates highlight the important work of local newspapers. I remember a member of my family sending copies of local newspapers to people abroad, but I had not appreciated that such newspapers are sent worldwide in talking form.

The debate gives me an opportunity to highlight the Government's commitment to supporting children and adults with a sensory loss through its see hear strategy, which, with its focus on sight loss, deafness and dual sensory loss, was the first of its kind in the United Kingdom. See hear is jointly endorsed by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and is being delivered through partnerships of statutory and third sector organisations.

Our shared vision is of a Scotland where people can access the services and support that they need and where there is equal access to

opportunities. Together with partners, we will continue to work to realise the vision of see hear. To support the implementation of the strategy, we allocated £2 million of funding over two years, and we allocated a further £478,000 this financial year and last year to support the on-going delivery of local and national priorities.

As Christine Grahame said, about 180,000 people in Scotland are living with sight loss. One in five of them is over the age of 75 and, with an ageing population, it is estimated that prevalence could double by 2031. It is therefore vital that we continue to work together to support people who are living with sight loss and that we do all that we can to raise awareness to ensure that there is early diagnosis to enable people to receive at the earliest opportunity the care that they need.

Since the see hear strategy was introduced in 2014, we have been working with local areas to build capacity and ensure that the right structures are in place for delivery. Local sensory leads have been identified and are working in partnership to drive progress locally. Support to deliver the strategy is also provided through the national co-ordinator—funded by the Scottish Government and based at the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland—who works in close collaboration with stakeholders.

By working with local areas, we are delivering the priorities in see hear and enabling people to access the support that they need. That includes the development of basic sensory checks, with a focus on care homes and day care units to connect people with services; mapping and agreeing with partners in local areas across Scotland care pathways for vision, hearing and dual sensory loss; introducing e-learning modules for sight loss and deafness to ensure that all partners in our workforce are aware; and training 100 sensory champions in Edinburgh and the Lothians and in Argyll and Bute to support people with a hidden sensory loss, which is one that is undiagnosed or unrecognised and can often be present in people with learning disabilities or conditions such as dementia or stroke.

We are continuing to work with local areas on our shared priorities. If Borders Talking Newspapers is not already involved in the local delivery of the see hear strategy, I encourage it to become involved, because I know that the national strategy is being delivered in the Borders area to meet local needs. We also collaborate with the visual impairment network for children and young people to improve the care and support that are available to children with sight loss and their families.

We are engaging with a wide range of stakeholders as we consider the recommendations from the two reviews that the

Scottish Government has undertaken, which are on low-vision services and community eye care services. We are working with ophthalmology departments to refresh the form that certifies people as blind or partially sighted, which will further improve people's access to care pathways and support following diagnosis. We are also working with Glasgow Caledonian University and partners to develop an accredited Scotland-based training course for low-vision rehabilitation workers, which is ensuring that our workforce has the skills and training to provide rehabilitation for people with sight loss. It is important that those such as the volunteers in Borders Talking Newspapers who meet people regularly ensure that they are aware of all the opportunities and forms of provision that are available.

Looking ahead, we want to build on the achievements that we have made so far and we are working on an evaluation to see what progress has been made. A key part of that progress is the work that is done by volunteers and third sector organisations such as Borders Talking Newspapers. The Government and local agencies cannot do it all on their own, especially as we have an ageing workforce. The volunteers of Borders Talking Newspapers are to be congratulated on the work that they do not just in the 25th year of the organisation but every year.

13:14

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Community Justice

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a statement by Michael Matheson on community justice in Scotland. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson): In the summer, I launched this Government's vision and priorities for justice in Scotland. I laid out our intention to adopt a more progressive, evidence-based approach, supported by partners across the justice sector and beyond. The approach underpins our determination to ensure that we live in safe, cohesive and resilient communities.

In the programme for government that was published last week, we pledged to extend the presumption against short sentences to twelve months. That announcement was welcomed by former justice secretaries across the political spectrum, who recognise that the time has come for a more progressive and transformative perspective. It is a commitment that is consistent with our drive to create a more progressive, evidence-based justice system.

This very week marks the 20th anniversary of the devolution referendum. In the intervening years, this Parliament has done great things, and members across the chamber can feel rightly proud of their achievements. However, penal reform is one area in which we have made little progress.

In 1999-2000, the average daily prison population across Scotland's prisons was less than 6,000. During 2015-16, the figure was more than 7,600. That means that since the Parliament's inception, we have witnessed an increase of nearly 30 per cent in the number of people who are locked up on any given day.

We know that short prison sentences do little to rehabilitate people or reduce the likelihood of their reoffending. We know that short-term imprisonment disrupts families and communities, and adversely affects employment opportunities and stable housing—the very things that evidence shows support desistance from offending. We know that short sentences are both a poor use of public resources and a waste of human potential.

There will always be cases in which the court rightly takes the view that a prison sentence is absolutely justified, but for individuals who end up in custody, we need to think beyond just bricks

and mortar. That change is part of the rationale behind our plans for the female custodial estate.

In July, I witnessed the start of demolition work on Cornton Vale prison. The Scottish Prison Service has now commenced the planning and public consultation process for the creation of a replacement. Although located on the existing site of Cornton Vale, the replacement will provide an entirely new approach to the custodial care of around 80 women. The new facility will use therapeutic community principles and will incorporate gender-specific and trauma-informed practice in addressing the particular needs of the female prison population.

For women who do not require the level of security or intensive intervention that is provided by the national facility, we will provide community custody units. In July, I announced that the first two units would be located in Glasgow and either Fife or Dundee. I can today inform Parliament that the SPS has acquired a site in Maryhill for the first unit in Glasgow and that the second unit will be in Dundee.

Those new community units will assist women to maintain their links with their families and accommodate them close to their communities and the agencies that can ensure that they are able to move away from offending. Work on the units will respond to the changing profile of the female prison population and the risk profile of women in custody. The Scottish Prison Service plans that those first two units and the national facility will be open by the end of 2020.

That work is part of a wider transformation in our prisons to professionalise the role of prison officers, ensure a focus on rehabilitation and support the reintegration of people who are leaving custody.

Those developments are encouraging, but I would still like our criminal justice system to have a stronger emphasis on robust community sentences that focus on addressing the causes of offending behaviour. In the 2008 report of the Scottish Prisons Commission, Henry McLeish wrote:

“To target imprisonment better and make it more effective ... imprisonment should be reserved for people whose offences are so serious that no other form of punishment will do and for those who pose a threat of serious harm to the public.”

That aim was described as the necessary “touchstone” of a society that wanted

“to break with the idea that the only real punishment is prison.”

If we truly want to hold ourselves up as a modern and progressive nation, that is the foundation that our community justice system needs to be built on.

The First Minister has made clear her ambition to build an inclusive and socially just Scotland. Our justice system has a crucial role to play in shaping that future and in helping to tackle social inequality. A just, equitable and inclusive society needs to be supported by a progressive, evidence-based justice system that works across communities to reduce and ultimately to prevent further offending and which holds individuals to account for their offending, but ultimately supports them to make positive contributions to our communities.

Over the past decade, the Government has taken steps to end our reliance on custody and move towards effective community sentences that enhance public safety and promote rehabilitation and which evidence shows are more effective at reducing reoffending and thus reducing the risk of creating further victims.

When the Government first came to power, more people were given custodial sentences than community sentences; since then, there has been an increasing shift in favour of community sentences. The latest figures show that, in 2015-16, more than 5,000 more community sentences than custodial sentences were imposed. That is 5,000 more opportunities for individuals to pay back for the harm that they have caused, fewer prison receptions taking up resources in our prison system and fewer people having to make the difficult transition from custody back into the community.

That transition also happens for people who are held on remand. The programme for government outlines our continued backing for supported and supervised bail, to help individuals to remain in the community under supervision.

The Government will continue to promote the delivery of effective evidence-based interventions that are designed to prevent and reduce further offending. Our national strategy for community justice sets out our commitment to shifting criminal justice interventions upstream and using the least intrusive intervention at the earliest point. It encourages justice partners to maximise opportunities for the appropriate use of diversion from prosecution to help to address the underlying causes of offending and ensure that people get access to drug, alcohol, mental health or other appropriate services.

We remain committed to supporting local authorities in delivering robust community sentences that deliver tangible benefits for our communities. Funding for criminal justice social work remains at record levels. We invested an additional £4 million in community sentences in 2016-17 and again in 2017-18.

Last week, we announced proposed legislation that would give our sentencers broader options and powers for using electronic monitoring and, just this morning, we published the analysis of a public consultation on our next steps.

Electronic monitoring is already an important tool in the delivery of justice. It carries a punitive element and offers a range of options to improve public protection while allowing an individual to maintain their employment and family links. When used to enforce curfew conditions, it can provide stability to those whose offending is part and parcel of a chaotic lifestyle. The forthcoming legislation will expand the range of options and enable the use of new technology, such as global positioning system technology.

Sitting alongside community sentences, the presumption against short sentences underlines our determination to move away from short-term custodial sentences. It is of course a presumption, and not a ban. Sentencing discretion remains with the courts, and it is for the court to decide the appropriate sentence based on the facts at hand. The purpose of the presumption is to ensure that short sentences are imposed when they are the only suitable option.

As I have made clear, our vision for community justice is predicated on an evidence-based approach. The evidence shows that the use of very short sentences has fallen over the past decade. However, it also shows that we need to go further if we are to make a real impact on Scotland's high rate of imprisonment and the negative consequences of short-term sentences. That is why we consulted on a proposal to strengthen the presumption.

The responses to the consultation were overwhelmingly supportive of an extension and the vast majority of those who expressed a view favoured a presumption against sentences of 12 months or less. There was, however, a clear view that any extension of the presumption would need to be accompanied by a commitment to developing and resourcing community sentences, and concerns were voiced by a number of respondents over the need to ensure that the court is able to take steps to protect victims, especially victims of domestic violence.

Since the consultation closed, the Government has worked with stakeholders across the justice sector to address those concerns. In March of this year, I brought before the Parliament the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill, which contains a number of provisions that are specifically designed to protect the victims of domestic abuse. It will ensure that, when sentencing, courts are required to have regard to the need to protect victims from further offences and it contains provisions that will make it

mandatory for the court to consider imposing a non-harassment order following a conviction.

Of course, the bill contains the new domestic abuse offence, which carries a tough maximum sentence of 14 years and which will improve the justice system's ability to hold perpetrators of domestic abuse to account. Those provisions place the safety of victims at the heart of that important bill, and I urge members across the chamber to support it in the coming months. I can confirm that we will work in collaboration with Scottish Women's Aid to ensure that developments in electronic monitoring will improve the safety of women and children who are affected by domestic abuse.

We have also already taken steps to create a more progressive landscape for the delivery of community sentences, with our new model coming into effect on 1 April this year. The model places decision making locally with those who know their communities best, who understand the problems in their areas and who will be most affected by community justice issues. Under the new model, local planning, delivery and collaboration are complemented by national leadership and strategic direction, which are provided by a new body, Community Justice Scotland.

Community Justice Scotland will raise awareness of the benefits of community sentences and build public support. Working with community justice partners and stakeholders, it will drive improvement in service delivery in order to build safer, stronger and more inclusive communities.

I believe that, in combination, those measures address the concerns that respondents to the consultation expressed. That is why we will implement the extension of the presumption only when the relevant provisions of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill are in force. I anticipate that the extension of the presumption will therefore be in place by the end of 2018, subject to the Parliament's approval.

The Government believes that extending the presumption is in line with our progressive approach to criminal justice policy. More than that, in concert with our on-going approach to delivering safer and stronger communities, it is about being the progressive and socially inclusive nation that we want to be.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will take questions on the issues raised in his statement. I intend to allow around 30 minutes for questions, after which we must move to the next item of business.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for the advance sight of his statement.

Let me make clear at the outset that I welcome parts of the statement. In particular, I welcome the expansion in the use of new forms of electronic monitoring, which was called for in my party's manifesto, and the general principles of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill.

However, there are areas of concern. Can the cabinet secretary really refer to the current system of community sentences as "robust" and "effective", when a third of community payback orders are never completed and some offenders are waiting more than a year for their work placement to begin?

Although the focus on reducing reoffending is welcome, does the cabinet secretary recognise that, after 10 years of Scottish National Party government, the reoffending rate has barely shifted from one in three since the start of devolution? To address that, does he agree that, alongside a rigorous system of community sentences, we must ensure that there is adequate work and purposeful activity in prisons and reverse his Government's 300,000-hours cut over the past two years?

Michael Matheson: Let me address a few of the issues that the member raised. I welcome his support for the greater use of electronic monitoring. I am not entirely sure what his party's views are on the type of electronic monitoring that should be used and how it should be used in partnership with community sentencing. We know that electronic monitoring on its own is very ineffective; it must be part of a programme that addresses the individual's offending behaviour. That is why we support the extension. I am surprised that the member supports the greater use of electronic monitoring but not the greater use of community sentencing, which is a key part of making the approach much more effective, as experience across Europe shows.

I also welcome the member's support for the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill, which represents a slight change in approach from that of the Conservative Party's previous justice spokesperson.

The reality is that completion of community payback orders has increased, compared with the completion rate under the scheme that was previously in place. There has been an increase in compliance with and completion of community payback orders.

Alongside that, the outcomes are better. The member said that the reconviction rate has not changed. The reality is that the reconviction rate is at its lowest in 18 years, which is a significant improvement—I am surprised that the member is not aware that the situation in Scotland is better than it is in any other part of the United Kingdom.

Important progress has been made, during a period of increasing use of community payback orders.

The approach that this Government is determined to take is based on evidence on what is more effective in tackling the causes that drive offending behaviour. In taking such an approach, we can reduce the risk of individuals committing offences again. All the evidence, not just in Scotland but internationally, demonstrates that community payback orders and community sentencing are much more effective than short-term prison sentences. If we get that right, we can reduce the risk of reoffending.

That is exactly the approach that we will take, and it is why recorded crime in Scotland is at a 42-year low. We have a strong track record in how we deliver justice in this country, and our track record over the past 10 years on changing how we deliver community sentencing demonstrates the benefits of the approach that the programme of work that I described will take forward.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for the advance copy of his statement. There is much that we can agree on; we support the need for prison reform and the important role that community sentencing can play. However, I wish to raise a couple of points.

The cabinet secretary will be aware that crimes that are currently given less than 12 month sentencing include handling offensive weapons, assault, some violent crimes and domestic abuse. Scottish Labour's manifesto committed to an increase in the presumption to six months. The cabinet secretary will need to work hard to convince the public of the merits of his argument, particularly those who have been victims of crimes that are often very distressing and even life changing. Has he done enough so far to convince Women's Aid of these plans?

The existing presumption does not mean an end to sentencing of up to three months. I hear constantly that there is a lack of confidence within the courts for the community options, and that a sentencing option is often taken because it is seen as being in the best interest of the convicted as well as the victim. Community options are often underfunded and patchy in provision and they can be open to abuse. We are all familiar with reports of the level of breaches and stretched resources. How will the cabinet secretary ensure that community options are properly resourced, that they provide a robust alternative in which victims can have confidence and that they deliver a system that puts the protection of the public first?

Michael Matheson: I will pick up on Claire Baker's latter point about confidence in community sentencing. I agree that it is extremely important.

Making sure that our sentencers have confidence in the community disposals that are to hand has been a long-standing issue. We know from the research work that has been carried out that sentencers have greater confidence in the community payback scheme that we now have in place compared with the previous scheme—that was identified by the review that was carried out in 2015. We need to make sure that we build on that and that our sentencers continue to have confidence in that process. That is why we have provided an extra £4 million to our local authorities to deliver further community sentence programmes and to extend the range of programmes that are available. We have provided that funding over two financial years and we will consider it for the future, because I recognise that it is an area of important priority to expand the range of options and to make sure that our sentencers have confidence in them.

Over and above that, if the public are to have faith in the greater use of community sentences, those sentences must be effective in delivering better outcomes. Today, I was in Dunfermline in Fife looking at the WINGS project, which is delivered by the local authority. It was initially set up by funding that came from the Scottish Government for changing our approach to female offending. The outcomes from that project have been really positive and are a demonstration of local policy being taken forward by a local authority. The project is making a real difference in tackling offending behaviour among young people and it has the confidence of sentencers who make use of it.

I turn to the specific offences that were referred to by Claire Baker. The average custodial sentence for handling offensive weapons has more than doubled in the past 10 years from 160 days in 2006-07 to 365 days in 2015-16. For some of the other areas, including domestic violence, sentences for those particular offences have very often increased over the past 10 years. It is important to recognise that presumption is exactly that—it is a presumption. If a sentencer still believes that, for any of those offences, an individual should have a period in custody, that option will remain open to them. It will be their choice to make that decision. Although sentences have been increasing for a range of the crimes that the member referred to, it must be recognised that, even with the presumption, the sentencer will still have the right to impose a custodial sentence if they believe that that is the most appropriate measure that should be applied.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have 13 members who wish to ask questions and I have 20 minutes—members can do the arithmetic. I ask for succinct questions, please.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I welcome the steps that have been taken by the Government in recent years to tackle domestic abuse, including bringing forward new legislation. Given that increased surveillance and reporting of such offences is likely to lead to higher rates of conviction and community payback orders, what steps is the Government taking to ensure that resources are made available to effective rehabilitation programmes, especially around domestic abuse, to reduce the risk of reoffending?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I must give a definition of “succinct” sometime.

Michael Matheson: We are taking forward a range of measures to support the organisations that work with women who experience domestic abuse. That includes the provision of an extra £20 million from the justice portfolio over the past three years to support some of these measures. That work includes extending the Caledonian system programme, which tackles those who perpetrate domestic abuse, in order to change their behaviour.

Alongside that work are the measures that we put in the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill, such as the mandatory requirement to consider a non-harassment order in order to protect women who have experienced domestic abuse.

As I mentioned in my statement, we will be looking at how electronic monitoring can be used to support women who have experienced domestic abuse. We will look at taking forward a pilot project on electronic monitoring with Scottish Women's Aid.

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary made no reference in his statement to those who are at risk of offending, many of whom are at risk as a result of debt. Is he aware of Christians Against Poverty debt counselling, which works Scotland wide, helping those in crisis with debt? How will the Scottish Government raise awareness of the work of voluntary and third sector organisations such as CAP debt counselling, which do so much to identify and support those at risk of offending?

Michael Matheson: I recognise that debt can blight many individuals and households. The Scottish Government takes forward a range of measures in partnership with agencies to tackle issues of debt and ensure that individuals receive the right advice and information to assist them in addressing such issues.

Given the specific project that Margaret Mitchell raised, I will ask my Cabinet colleague Angela Constance, who is responsible for the relevant policy area, to write to her setting out exactly the

measures that are being taken to support such organisations.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The question was connected to the statement, in that debt may lead people into crime and conviction and so on. I think that that was the link that Margaret Mitchell was making—I saw a little frown on Michael Matheson's face.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): What impact will the presumption against short sentences have on the Scottish Prison Service?

Michael Matheson: The impact on the prison population of extending the presumption against short sentences to 12 months will depend on how sentencers choose to take it forward. For example, if there is a greater use of community sentencing, that could result in a reduction in the number of individuals who receive short-term prison sentences of less than 12 months.

As we have moved to a presumption against sentences of less than three months, we have seen a reduction in the number of people who have received sentences of less than three months. It would be reasonable to anticipate that we will see a reduction in the overall prison population should more of our sentencers choose not to sentence someone to custody for less than 12 months and to make use of a community disposal instead. However, that will depend entirely on how our judiciary chooses to take it forward.

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): With local authorities and partner agencies on the ground taking on a greater role in community justice, will the cabinet secretary provide an assurance that Scotland's councils, which year after year have seen budgets cut by his Government, will receive funding for community justice that matches the real cost of delivering effective and meaningful community sentences, which the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has highlighted? Will he also confirm when the funding formula for community sentences will be announced? He has not done that today.

Michael Matheson: The funding formula for the allocation of resources has already been published. It was published earlier this year and, as agreed with COSLA and the COSLA leadership group, was applied to this financial year. It has already been agreed.

Community justice budgets have been protected during the past number of years under this Government. In fact, we have increased them by putting an extra £4 million into them over the past two years. The community justice social work budgets have been ring fenced for some time, and we continue to protect them, which is why, with

that additional £4 million over the past two years, we have record levels of funding going into community justice programmes.

The support for community justice programmes is not just funding that goes to local authorities. We support a range of organisations such as Sacro, Apex Scotland and shine women's mentoring, which are national service providers in the third sector. Over the past couple of years, we have been increasing the level of funding that we make available to them to provide those types of services.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): The cabinet secretary referred to the resource allocation model. Some community disposals require a certain cohort of personnel to make them viable. Does the resource allocation model reflect that and ensure that offenders in rural areas are not disadvantaged in comparison with offenders in urban areas?

Michael Matheson: The member raises an important point. It is worth re-emphasising that the resource allocation model that is now in place was agreed by local authorities in partnership with the Scottish Government. We have taken it forward on a co-production basis, and it is designed to support local authorities as much as possible. We have said that the transition will take place over five years, so that there is no marked financial disadvantage in the reallocation of resources.

A part of the resource allocation model specifically ensures that resources that are allocated to local authorities reflect the need in the community. That should ensure that funding that is allocated to local authorities better reflects where there is a need in our rural communities. There were concerns about the previous model, which was largely focused on allocation to our main central belt local authorities. The new model allows for greater, more effective distribution of funding across all local authorities to reflect local need.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I thank the cabinet secretary for giving us early sight of his statement, for the liberal measures in it and for his response to John Finnie's question. The cabinet secretary referred to COSLA and Sacro, both of which have pointed to the significant expansion in provision that is needed and the cost of the additional resources that will need to be put in. Is he aware of that? What assurances can he give COSLA, Sacro and others that the Government will commit those resources?

Michael Matheson: As the number of individuals who receive custodial sentences reduces, we will have to have a greater expansion of community disposals. That is why I decided two years ago to increase the allocation of resources

to community-based programmes, to allow them to expand and develop.

As some of the changes in our overall prison population take place, I expect a freeing up of some resources that are currently tied to our custodial estate. I will then seek to reallocate those resources to community-based programmes.

As I have said, we have started that process, with the £4 million increase over the past two years. I will continue to examine how we can have an incremental increase in that. This is not just about increasing funding to local authorities but about ensuring that third sector organisations such as Sacro can support work across the country through the national programmes that they deliver.

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): The cabinet secretary will be aware of the important work that is carried out by current community-based services that are targeted at female offenders. The Glen Isla project, which is based in my constituency, is a good example of that. Will the cabinet secretary expand on the role that he envisages such projects having?

Michael Matheson: I am aware of that project and its value. On working with female offenders, the member will be aware that we had the change fund, which supported the initiation of such services in communities. We did not impose a particular model for working with female offenders because we wanted that to be developed locally. Angus was one area that took forward a model that reflected the local community's needs. The funding's purpose was to support the development of that model and its mainstreaming in the local authority area. Some of our local authorities have taken that forward.

What I witnessed today and the way in which Fife Council has taken that agenda forward through the WINGS project demonstrates how successful such an approach can be. The Glen Isla project in Angus, which Graeme Dey mentioned, is another example of that success. I see such projects as key to the on-going work to change how we deal with female offenders.

Equally, with the change in the female custodial estate, I recognise that there will need to be a greater tie-in between such projects and the new female custodial units, particularly when individuals are released and go back into their communities. Having those units closer to hand—there is no doubt that Dundee is closer to Angus than Cornton Vale is—will facilitate such partnership working, which is crucial in reducing the risk for individuals when settling back into and becoming productive members of their community.

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): Can the cabinet secretary offer any reassurance to the

communities in Maryhill in Glasgow and in Dundee, and the victims of crime there, who might have concerns about the safety of the new community custodial units?

Michael Matheson: I recognise the issue that the member has raised, but I am sure that he will recognise our determination to change fundamentally how we tackle female offending. It is worth noting the danger that some people might choose to turn the matter into a political football on the basis of the location of the custodial facilities.

We are taking a transformational approach to tackling female offending and particularly the situation for those who come into the custodial estate. I hope that there is cross-party support for that change in the model and the benefits that can come from female custodial units.

We know from the Angiolini report, which looked at female custodial issues, that having smaller custodial units in places that are closer to the communities from which offenders come and having services that will support offenders once they go back into the community is much more effective at reducing the risk that they will repeat their offending behaviour. The custodial units will be for individuals who are regarded as low risk. I certainly hope that there will be cross-party support for the change in the model and for assuring communities that the intention is to deliver greater safety, rather than increase risk, through working with female offenders.

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): I strongly welcome the cabinet secretary's statement, because it is widely accepted that community justice helps to reduce reoffending. What action is the Scottish Government taking to also reduce the chances that those who are given custodial sentences will reoffend?

Michael Matheson: One benefit of reducing the prison population is that it will increase the capacity in our Prison Service to tackle much more effectively what causes some offenders to commit serious offences. We just have to look at the conditions and situation in the prison estate in England and Wales, where there is complete chaos. A major problem there is that, as a result, prisons cannot deliver effective rehabilitation programmes to any great degree.

Part of the challenge in Scotland is that a disproportionately large amount of the Prison Service's resources are taken up by the churn of short-term prisoners moving through the system. If some of those resources and that capacity can be released, that will allow us to focus more of the resources on tackling the issues for the serious offenders in our custodial estate. It will also allow us to move some of that resource into the

community setting. That is a potential benefit of reducing our prison population.

Some members say that we just need to have more rehabilitation in our prisons. However, the reality is that there is only a short window of time from when short-term prisoners are inducted into prison to when they leave prison for addressing any form of offending behaviour. Anyone who knows the approach to rehabilitation will recognise that trying to do it effectively in such a short time is, frankly, almost impossible. If we are to deliver effective rehabilitation, we must target those who are imprisoned for a longer time and take a community-based approach, which is much more effective in tackling offending behaviour.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): The cabinet secretary has rightly spoken about the impact that imprisonment has on employment opportunities and the ability to have stable housing, the lack of which is likely to increase reoffending rates. What discussions have he and his officials had about the practical support that the new social security powers and social security agency will offer offenders who are about to be released from prison?

Michael Matheson: The member raises an important issue, because housing, welfare and employment issues are a challenge for individuals who are being liberated from prison. That is why we set out in the programme for government the fact that we need to have a greater provision of supervised bail and other bail options instead of remand, because we know that that allows an offender who is in employment and has housing to maintain that until a case reaches court and a sentence is imposed.

Work is on-going in the Government, and I have already discussed with Jeane Freeman and Kevin Stewart how we can align our new social security powers to better meet the needs of those who are being liberated from prison. For example, one of the challenges from the changes that the Department for Work and Pensions made to universal credit was that a claimant had to apply online and have an address before they could apply. Many individuals in prison do not have an address or access to a computer, which created problems from the outset. It meant that they were being liberated without having access to benefits.

We have been working internally in the Government on what specific measures would support an individual to get into housing and access welfare when they are liberated from prison. Ministers have engaged with the Scottish Prison Service to look at how we can deliver that support more effectively.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary provide more detail about which

groups took part in the consultation on the presumption against short sentences and about the evidence that they gave to support that position?

Michael Matheson: The feedback that we received from the consultation has been published. The groups that were involved ranged widely from organisations such as the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to experts in the justice sector and the academic world, people in Sacro, Apex Scotland and the Howard League for Penal Reform, and a range of individual local authorities.

I should mention Scottish Women's Aid and other organisations that work with women who have experienced domestic violence. When members asked when we would publish our views on the consultation responses, I made it clear that we were working through the responses—in particular the concerns that had been raised by a couple of stakeholders, one of which was Scottish Women's Aid. In my statement, I set out the measures that we have taken to address the concerns that they raised during the consultation. It is worth keeping it in mind that there was overwhelming support from consultation respondents for extending the presumption against short sentences to sentences of under 12 months.

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): I welcome the commitment to a system that works with communities to reduce and, ultimately, prevent further offending. I also recognise the comments about those who are on short-term sentences. However, we have something like 1,000-plus prisoners in Scottish prisons who are not engaged in what the guidelines refer to as “purposeful activity”. What specific measures are being looked at to address that issue for those who remain in prison?

Michael Matheson: The review of purposeful activity was carried out by the SPS, which has already taken forward a range of measures to change how activities are delivered in the prison estate. I re-emphasise the issue that concerns purposeful activity for short-term prisoners. About 4,000 short-term prisoners go through the Scottish prison estate in any year. To put that in context, the total number of prisoners in the system over a year is about 7,000 to 7,500. That demonstrates the number of short-term prisoners that the SPS is working with, many of whom present with alcohol, drug and mental health issues that need to be addressed.

The SPS seeks to address such issues as best it can in a short time, but Gordon Lindhurst will recognise that, when someone comes into prison with many years—possibly many decades—of such problems, it is almost impossible for the

Prison Service to address them in six or seven months. A much longer time is needed to address such issues effectively.

One of the big problems that undermine the Prison Service's ability to work more effectively with prisoners who are in for more than a year is the churn of short-term prisoners, who take up a disproportionate amount of the service's resource. If we can free up some of that capacity, it will allow the SPS to give greater focus to purposeful activity and other appropriate interventions while someone is in prison, and it will at the same time allow us to use resources in the community. We know that the underlying causes that drive offending behaviour, such as alcohol, drug and mental health issues, can be much more effectively addressed when someone is on a community disposal.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that enabling female offenders to maintain links with their families will benefit not only them but often the families, by potentially reducing the chances of children becoming involved in crime as they grow up?

Michael Matheson: The member raises an important point. It was a key issue in the Angiolini report, which highlighted the fact that a break in family links during a period of custody can have a significant impact on a family and, in particular, have a negative impact on children. A growing body of evidence shows that adverse childhood events such as parental imprisonment can have a significant impact on a child's future development, with an increasing risk that they will end up in the criminal justice system. We have to listen to the evidence on that issue, as we know that children can clearly be damaged by parental imprisonment.

We have put in place additional resources for a range of family contact centres in our prisons. We now have 11 such centres—I opened the most recent one, at Glenochil—to support contact between families and prisoners.

In the female custodial estate, we have moved to a model of smaller community custodial units to allow women who are in custody to be placed much closer to their families, so that they can maintain such contacts more effectively and so that, once they leave the establishment, they can be supported and assisted by the services that assisted them while they were in the community unit. We know that such a model can be much more effective in supporting women who find themselves in custody, but it can also give the family more effective support and reduce the risk that children whose parents have been in custody are exposed to.

I believe that such an approach will achieve better outcomes in the future and, importantly, prevent the individuals in question from committing

further offences. After all, family contact is a key factor in promoting desistance.

Food and Drink Strategy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-07641, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on Scotland's food and drink strategy, "Ambition 2030". Members who wish to speak in the debate should press their request-to-speak button now.

15:18

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing): Over the past few weeks, I have been a very lucky chap indeed. For example, in the excellent food and drink retail specialist Elephants in the Pantry in Grantown-on-Spey, I sampled a nip of whisky from what I believe is the world's only community-owned distillery, GlenWyvis, which I recommend to the chamber. I have also had the opportunity to sample Thistly Cross cider from Dunbar, which is a terrific success story, as well as Mara Seaweed's absolutely delicious seaweed, which is exported to the USA. Members might not know this—I certainly did not—but seaweed for consumption is stored in barrels. Each barrel is worth \$1,000, which means that one barrel of Scottish seaweed is worth 20 barrels of oil. *[Laughter.]* It is a somewhat unusual statistic in the lexicon of Scottish Government statistics. Finally, in launching the annual food and drink fortnight, I had the world's most aesthetically pleasing and beautiful array of delicious breakfast fare in the Barras in Glasgow.

I know that in this debate we will all want to celebrate the excellence and entrepreneurial flair of businesses throughout the country and local contributions in that respect. The examples I gave typify what seems to be nothing short of a revolution in our food and drink sector. I have not frequently advocated revolution, but whatever our political views about the desirability of revolution might be, I hope that the revolution in food and drink is one that we can all support.

The success of the industry is well known: turnover has increased by 35 per cent since 2007; exports are at record levels; the birth rate of new businesses in the food and drink sector is higher than anywhere in the United Kingdom; and it covers communities across the land.

At the heart of that success has been our reputation. Our brand is based on provenance, our reputation for high quality, our clean natural environment and our heritage, but none of our success could have been achieved without the passion, dedication and entrepreneurship of the thousands of people who work across the industry, and I pay tribute to them.

When I meet those men and women, I am always struck by their verve, their drive and their optimism. With "Ambition 2030", the document that Scotland Food & Drink has produced—I am not sure whether the code of conduct allows me to wave it around—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have already done it.

Fergus Ewing: Thank you for spotting that, Presiding Officer.

With the publication of "Ambition 2030", those men and women are right to be optimistic. The industry is planning for the future and is doing so with high ambition, because it knows that demand for our products is rising. We need to exploit those opportunities, and that is what the new food and drink strategy is about. Published earlier this year, "Ambition 2030" is a bold plan of action to grow the value of the industry to £30 billion by 2030. The Scottish Government supports that ambitious goal.

Over the past 10 years, we have worked hand in hand with the industry. It has told us that, to fulfil its potential, it requires new thinking and new ways of doing things. That is what led to the £10 million investment that we have made to support the strategy.

"Ambition 2030" is founded on three pillars: people and skills; innovation; and the supply chain. No less than 115,000 people are already employed in the industry across the country and we believe that there will be 27,000 new opportunities over the next decade. Therefore, it is vital that we have people to meet that demand. Over the next year, a number of measures will be taken, including education programmes, recruitment campaigns and a new national mentoring programme.

The world is changing. Increasingly, consumers want healthier food. That presents many opportunities for our businesses, but innovation is required. We have launched a single gateway for advice and support called "Make innovation happen", which will be the platform on which, together with our excellent research institutions, we will build more action.

The bedrock of the industry is, of course, our primary producers. It is important to remember that and to explicitly accord credit to our farmers, crofters and fishermen. It is very easy to neglect to do that, and that omission has been noticed in the past. I want to correct that and to make it clear that it is our farmers, our fishermen and our crofters who produce the high-quality food and drink that we celebrate. We should never forget that and should value and cherish what they do in the times ahead.

The supply chain does not always function as it should. Our farmers must get a fair share of the margin. We need processors, retailers and food service companies to build on their good work and to deepen their commitment to that. That will be a key part of the sector action plans that will be developed, starting with fruit and veg and seafood.

At the heart of the strategy is a clear focus on markets. Efforts in international markets are bearing fruit—there were record levels of exports in 2016. We also have a network of in-market specialists in 11 international cities. They are individuals whose job it is to be members of a sales force for Scotland's food and drink around the world. I wanted to meet them and, when I did so recently, I was very impressed by their professionalism and their passion for Scotland, as well as their market knowledge.

Only last weekend, our specialist in the USA secured a two-month showcase of Scottish products in the high-end retail store Bristol Farms. I believe that they have also introduced Californians to oatcakes, which had not occurred hitherto. Our specialist in France recently secured a listing of Scottish cheeses by the famous French cheese wholesaler Desailly—I congratulate Clarks Speciality Foods on helping to secure that—and our specialist in Shanghai secured a listing of shortbread in more than 200 stores of a large coffee chain across China. There are many more such achievements and our in-market specialists are helping to sell Scotland all over the world.

That good work will continue, but we must focus on the UK and our home market. Many of our businesses are doing well in the UK market, but there is more potential, whether through retail, food service or artisan markets.

Scotland Food & Drink is developing a UK market strategy, which builds on the things that have worked well in export markets. It will include placing staff directly into the buying teams of retailers and food services, because we know that that works. However, to be successful across the UK and in international markets, we need to have a sound foundation at home.

Interest and pride in our food and drink are flourishing: Scottish shoppers are increasingly looking for local produce; schools and hospitals are sourcing more locally; and visitors are more interested in our food and drink. We need to do two things. First, we need to ensure that there is a sustainable and productive farming sector that underpins the food and drink industry, and our four agricultural champions are taking forward work to help achieve that.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife (Green)): I welcome the establishment of the four champions, but does the cabinet secretary not

think that we need to add in a champion for environment, landscape and all the amazing environmental works that Scottish agriculture delivers?

Fergus Ewing: We already have champions in the environmental group, which my colleague and friend Roseanna Cunningham met at the summit last year and which is to meet again shortly. Of course, as I am sure the member knows, we also have on the National Council of Rural Advisers the agricultural development officer of the Soil Association Scotland, which is at the very heart of the environment.

The champions' work has a broad focus on agriculture, but it will also consider the wider rural, environmental and economic impacts. That complements work that is being taken forward by other stakeholder groups such as I just mentioned—the environment and climate change roundtable, whose membership includes RSPB Scotland, WWF Scotland and Friends of the Earth Scotland.

Secondly, we need to increase demand for locally produced food and drink. Our programme for government set out a number of commitments to support that and today I published a paper providing more detail of the range of actions that we will take forward with industry.

Those cover three main areas. The first is public food. Progress has been made to increase local sourcing in schools, hospitals and prisons. Forty-eight per cent of what is sourced is Scottish, an increase from 41 per cent in 2007—progress made. Our colleagues in the national health service and Scotland Excel are committed to doing more and together we have identified the actions that will have the most impact.

There will be a focus on supplier development. Our programme will support 30 businesses with real growth potential to better compete for public sector contracts and exploit other market opportunities. Building our businesses' capability is key if we want them to grow and diversify.

Our expansion of the food for life programme across schools has the potential to transform local supply chains. Our new investment of £1 million over the next three years will have local sourcing at its heart.

That requires support from local authorities and I will personally continue to work with them to encourage greater take-up, and I hope that other members will add their support, too.

Secondly, we will build on the good work that has been done to enhance the experience for visitors and tourists, including by innovative business, such as in the Highlands and Islands, in Rhoda Grant's constituency, where the Black Isle

Brewery and the Cairngorm Brewery have increasingly played a part in tourism as well as food and drink.

Last year, more than 14 million visitors came to Scotland and that number is rising. Globally, food tourism is a growing industry. We will work with VisitScotland and, in March, we will publish the first national food and drink tourism action plan, which will set out actions across a number of areas including expanding the food charter across the hospitality industry and visitor attractions and enhancing the taste our best quality assurance scheme awarded to restaurants, cafes and hotels.

Thirdly, we will showcase the very best of Scotland's regions through a series of events, targeting support to local producers. One of our strengths is the diversity of our regions and their unique food production so, over the next two years, we will create six regional showcasing events to promote the regions' finest produce to domestic buyers. Those events will be a celebration of local producers, connecting businesses with buyers, and such events are very successful. We will also launch a new regional food fund to give small producers an opportunity to access grants to generate interest.

I will comment briefly on the amendments and, as is always the case, I want to be as consensual as possible. I have decided that we will accept the Labour amendment to ensure that more beer is displayed in our shops and supermarkets, and I commend the progress that Brakes has made in supporting craft brewers and the success that it has already achieved.

I would like to have supported the Tories' amendment—honestly—as we want to support more productive and profitable farming, and much of our effort is devoted to that. However, the bit about business rates at the end of the amendment is a bit unclear. In any event, I know that the Tories will welcome the fact that we have not supported the Barclay recommendation to put agricultural buildings on the valuation roll, nor have we supported the recommendation to make food processing in farms rateable. That is common ground. The vagueness at the end of the amendment was a bit of a shame, because I am such a consensual chap.

I turn to the amendment from Mr Rumbles, whose heart is in the right place—we all know that—but whose interpretation of the previous amendment that the Parliament passed is somewhat idiosyncratic. In that amendment, he called for an “independent group”, which is what we have, but his new amendment says that we must have a group of stakeholders. However, if there is a group of stakeholders, it is not really an independent group. Moreover, I have demonstrated that we have a wide range of people

on the group, covering the forestry, environment and tourism sectors, and members will see that if they look at the CVs of the excellent people on the group.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I want to be consensual, too, cabinet secretary, but you must wind up and move your motion.

Fergus Ewing: I will always support you, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is not moving the motion.

Fergus Ewing: I move,

That the Parliament acknowledges the growth in Scotland's food and drink industry since 2007 and the contribution that it makes to the economy; supports the aim of Scotland's national food and drink strategy, Ambition 2030, to double the value of the industry; recognises the importance of growing markets for Scottish produce internationally, across the UK and in Scotland; encourages everyone to play their part to support and promote locally-produced food and drink; pays tribute to the farmers and fishermen who work tirelessly to produce the raw materials that underpin the industry's success, and supports Scottish Food and Drink Fortnight and the aim of the campaign to encourage more people to change one thing and consume more Scottish produce.

15:32

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I refer members to my register of interests.

The cabinet secretary was in an ebullient mood when he started speaking, but he finished slightly less ebulliently when he said that he is unable to support our amendment. Perhaps if he listens carefully to what I am about to say, he will find it easier to do so.

Before moving my amendment, I will make a statement in my capacity as convener of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee. The committee unanimously agreed yesterday that we would, given the importance of food and drink to Scotland, focus part of our scrutiny of this year's budget on that area. That is an acknowledgment of the importance of the subject.

A fair time ago, Scottish cuisine had become something of a joke among comedians. Thanks to characters such as Rab C Nesbitt, it appeared that the traditional Scottish dining experience started and ended at the deep-fat fryer, so I am very happy that Scottish food and drink has earned itself a vastly more positive reputation in the past 10 years. Whether it is the beef and barley that come from Strathspey, the soft fruit that comes from the alluvial plains of Perthshire, the distinctive sheep and cattle that come from the Highlands, or the fish that are caught by our fishermen, we have one of the best natural larders in the world and we

need to use it wisely. We need a sustainable harvest that will not deplete the environment.

I welcome the progress that has been made since the strategy was launched in 2007. Much of that can be put down to the design of the Scotland Food & Drink partnership, which is a collaborative model that has brought together the Government, public agencies and industry. There is a good lesson to be learned from that partnership. It has struck the right balance by ensuring that the Government knows, and is told, when to step forward and when to stand back, which gives the sector the freedom that it needs to allow industry to lead innovation. The Scottish Government must remember that, when it designs other schemes to support rural businesses. My plea to the cabinet secretary is that we do not repeat the administrative burdens that we have seen in the beef efficiency scheme.

Credit should be given where credit is due. The achievements of Scotland Food & Drink include turnover being increased by 44 per cent, exports up by 56 per cent and an industry that is worth £14.4 billion a year. Such economic growth will always find cross-party support.

That success does not mean that all is perfect—far from it. If we look carefully at the statistics, there are one or two concerning trends. Annual turnover peaked in 2014 and has fallen from £14.4 billion to £13.5 billion in 2015, and employment in the sector has fallen. Therefore, the renewed purpose in Scotland Food & Drink's growth strategy could not have arrived sooner, to my mind. We welcome the ambitions that are stated in the new growth strategy to resolve the skills shortages in the sector and to double annual turnover by 2030. Those laudable targets can be reached—but only as long as the Scottish Government focuses on and delivers in the following areas.

First, the Scottish Government must do more to ensure that farm-gate prices are realistic. To paraphrase the words of Andrew McCornick, the president of NFU Scotland, farmers, growers and crofters need to benefit from the huge growth that has taken place in the food and drink industry. However, they do not—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry to interrupt you, Mr Mountain. I am getting strange signals. Can anyone tell me what is wrong?

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): There seems to be something wrong with the sound.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We will ask broadcasting to look into that. I am sorry about that, Mr Mountain. Please continue. I will give you a bit of extra time.

Edward Mountain: I hope that you did not miss my words, Presiding Officer. I can start again, if you would like.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No. Please, no. We heard you. [*Laughter.*]

Edward Mountain: Thank you, Presiding Officer. I will continue where I left off. Since 2011, farm incomes have fallen by 75 per cent, and 59 per cent of farmers make less than the minimum agricultural wage an hour. The dairy industry is perhaps the best example; dairy farmers get a very low gate price that does not reflect the effort that they put in.

Without realistic prices for produce, farmers cannot invest and increase production to supply the needs of a growing food and drink sector. We must ensure that our farmers and fishermen get a fair price for what they produce. The processing and retailing industries must understand that they need producers, so they must reward them or production will surely stall and shrivel.

I welcome the fact that the new strategy has identified that profitability must be unlocked through the supply chain. It is always easy to declare ambitions, but much harder to deliver on them. We need more detail on how those will be achieved.

The “Bank of Scotland Food and Drink Report” for 2017 stated that 62 per cent of Scottish firms

“would be prepared to pay a higher price to primary producers based”

in Scotland

“to guarantee security of supply and maintain the provenance of their products.”

We need to know how the Scottish Government will ensure that that happens.

That brings me to my second point. The simplest way to ensure that farm businesses can be more profitable is to create an environment that stimulates economic growth. That will not be possible under a business rates regime that, to my mind, disadvantages the hospitality and the food and drink sectors. The Government cannot have its oatcake and eat it. Restrictive business rates are incompatible with high economic growth. I urge the Scottish Government to look again and to try to take more action to reduce high business rates for the hospitality and food and drink industries.

Thirdly, the Scottish Government and local government must make greater strides in supporting producers by sourcing quality Scottish food and drink. If we are serious about making Scotland a good-food nation, we must ensure that the public sector leads the way in championing high-quality local produce and delivering it to our

schools and hospitals. That has been talked about in this Parliament since 2007; we do not seem to have progressed much. The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 paved the way for the public sector to deliver on its promise to source and serve local Scottish produce. It is time to deliver. The Scottish Government has talked the talk; it is time to walk the walk and get results.

The Scottish Conservatives welcome many of the ambitions in the 2030 strategy for the Scottish food and drink sector, but the Scottish Government must understand that to achieve the targets that we all want and which Scotland needs, we must ensure that primary producers are rewarded and are profitable, that business rates for the sector do not stifle growth, and that local produce becomes the first choice of us all—not only at home, but in schools, hospitals and wherever else the public and private sectors are supplied.

I move amendment S5M-07641.3, after “the UK and in Scotland;” to insert:

“calls for an approach that ensures an increase in production and profitability from the farm gate to the end of the supply chain; urges the Scottish Government and local government to support producers by sourcing quality Scottish food and drink; calls on the Scottish Government to take action to reduce the high business rates that disadvantage the food and drink sector;”.

15:40

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Food and drink are hugely valuable to the Scottish economy. We have worldwide recognition for the quality of our produce. We must protect and build on that reputation because it leads to a premium price for our produce and so to a better deal for all our producers.

We have iconic products such as Scotch whisky, the Arbroath smokie, Orkney Scottish island cheddar and the Stornoway black pudding, which I had a small hand in protecting. Those premium products have rightly earned their place in the foodie hall of fame—so much so that they need to be protected from those who would imitate the brands, and thereby damage their status. Protection has been one of the benefits that we get from being part of the European Union. The process begins in the member state and ends up with European protection. I wonder what thought has been given to continuing that protection beyond Brexit, as part of any new trade agreements with Europe and the wider world? Loss of protection for such brands could, by impacting on the premium that they currently earn, have a financial impact on the industries that have built a reputation for excellence.

Much of our food is recognised as excellent because of our environment and our drive for

sustainability. That our fish and meat come from the most natural of origins is recognised the world over. Again, much of that has been achieved by adhering to European legislation for environmental protection. Again, we must not allow that to be threatened by Brexit. We need to maintain and build on those standards of excellence.

We must also showcase our food locally. Not so long ago, it was difficult to source local produce in shops and restaurants. That has changed, and local produce is becoming more available in restaurants, but there is still work to do to make it available in shops so that local people and visitors alike can enjoy it.

I turn to our amendment. Too often, tied pubs are limited in what they can sell. They are normally forced to sell the brand of beer that is produced by the brewery that owns the pub, but that does not necessarily meet customer demand. The beer is often sold to the licensee at an inflated price, thereby cutting the licensee’s profit margins as well as their customers’ choice. We have all seen tourists asking for a local beer in a pub and witnessed their disappointment at the lack of that choice. Many beer drinkers are akin to foodies when it comes to trying the local beer as part of their holiday experience. If it is not available, they will go elsewhere. It also leaves them with a bad impression of the whole area that they have been visiting.

We also miss the opportunity to showcase our local beers, which could lead to their expansion by opening up different markets. Scotland has a growing industry of artisan breweries. We should be helping them to grow their market share. My colleague, Neil Bibby, is looking to legislate against the excesses of tied pubs with the aim of providing more choice for customers and more leeway for licensees. I hope that he will take time in his winding up speech to explain a little more about what he is proposing in his bill and how it will benefit all those who are interested in protecting our pubs and the traditional social setting that they provide. Our amendment today does not go as far as Neil Bibby’s proposed bill, but it does ask Parliament to agree that Scottish beer should have a bigger share of the market.

I turn to the other amendments. We agree with the Conservative amendment that we should be doing all that we can to remove the barriers to growth. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution has said that he will, in the forthcoming budget, consider the range of recommendations arising from the Barclay review. Therefore, although we have some sympathy with the position that was set out by Edward Mountain, we will await the budget with interest and will not support the Conservative amendment, at this time.

The Liberal Democrat amendment points out the limited membership of the National Council of Rural Advisers, about which we have also been critical. I cannot understand a cabinet secretary who represents Inverness and Nairn appointing a council of advisors of whom none lives north of Perth. If he knows anything about his constituency, he surely understands that the challenges to farming, crofting and the food and drink industry are very different the further north we go.

Fergus Ewing: The council is, as Parliament asked, independent, so it does not cover every area, every sector, or every stakeholder interest. However, it includes as its co-chair Lorne Crerar, who—as Rhoda Grant well knows—is the chair of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, has a home in the Highlands, and has impeccable knowledge and expertise about the whole range of the rural economy in the Highlands and Islands.

Rhoda Grant: Lorne Crerar may have a home in the Highlands, but he is not normally Highlands and Islands based, and he is not part of that industry. What the people in the Highlands and Islands are missing is somebody who works in the food and drink industry, in farming or in crofting, who knows how difficult it is on the front line and who can bring that knowledge and experience to the council. Because of that, we will support the Liberal Democrat amendment tonight.

We have talked about excellence and our premium produce; we also need a food and drink strategy that looks at people's right to food. Too many people are feeding their families out of food banks—not just people on benefits, but people who are in work, too. We need to eradicate the need for food banks. People need an income that allows them to eat a nutritious diet.

Too often, we see unhealthy food being cheap and available while healthier alternatives are way out of the reach of some families. We see a growth in health conditions, that we thought were long gone, due to malnutrition—something that our grandparents thought they had eradicated, and which they would be disappointed to see coming back. A living wage and social security benefits at a level that allows parents to feed their children are surely things that we must all aspire to. Although we can rightly boast about our wonderful produce, we need to make sure that all our citizens benefit from it.

We have a similar debate to this every year during food and drink fortnight. Normally, it is a nice debate that gives everyone the opportunity to highlight excellence in their constituencies. However, this year, our producers are facing real challenges around common agricultural policy payments and Brexit. It is crucial that we find solutions to those challenges in order to put the

valuable food and drink industry back on a stable footing.

I move amendment S5M-07641.1, to insert at end:

“, and believes that there is particular scope to increase the share of Scottish-brewed products in Scotland's pubs.”

15:47

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): As the three contributors to this debate so far have mentioned, Scotland's food and drink industry is a real success story.

There are so many aspects to our food and drink industry that in the short time that I have available I want to concentrate on one important element of it: the Scotch whisky industry. At the moment, that industry adds some £5 billion to Scotland's economy. It is particularly important to our rural areas, providing some 7,000 local jobs in areas where there may not be a vast array of alternative employment opportunities.

Over my years as a member of the Scottish Parliament from the north-east of Scotland, I have had the pleasure of visiting several distilleries in my area—including, most recently, my local distillery at Kennethmont in Aberdeenshire. It is not just about the number of direct jobs that are supported by whisky production but the added value to the tourism industry that it provides. It is a good thing that more and more distilleries are adding visitor centres to capture the tourist market. That has to be a good development for all concerned.

Having acknowledged the success story of our Scottish food and drink industry by highlighting the contribution of Scotch whisky, I turn my attention to the future of the food and drinks industry as a whole. I make no apology for now focusing on what I have been asking the cabinet secretary, who is responsible for rural development, to do for the past 15 months and to which my amendment refers.

As soon as the people of the UK voted to leave the European Union some 15 months ago, I urged the cabinet secretary to set up a group of experts to design a bespoke system of agricultural support for the future of our industry without delay. I was pleased when, in a debate back in January of this year, Fergus Ewing accepted my amendment calling for the setting up of such a group. However, I find it amusing that Fergus Ewing has just said that I misinterpreted that amendment. It was my amendment, so I do not think that I misinterpreted it. Could it be that it is the cabinet secretary who does not listen properly?

When the cabinet secretary announced his National Council of Rural Advisers at the Royal

Highland Show on 22 June, I was somewhat disappointed to see the very narrow field and backgrounds of the people whom he chose. All those people are worthy in their fields, and I have no criticism of any of them being involved in the process—

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): But—

Mike Rumbles: Yes, there is a but—and it is a big but. What a missed opportunity. Not only has it taken a year to establish such a group, which has wasted valuable time, but Fergus Ewing chose the group's members from a very narrow field. Where are the people from our environmental organisations, consumer groups and other non-farming producers, such as those from crofting, which Rhoda Grant mentioned? If we are to design a bespoke system of agricultural support for our food and drinks industry post-Brexit, we need to ensure that everyone has buy-in into it. If we choose people for a council of advisers from very similar backgrounds in the agricultural or farming industry to design the new system, we are setting ourselves up to fail in that essential task, and I do not want us to do that.

Fergus Ewing: I think that I agree with Mr Rumbles's sentiments, but I do not agree that the membership of the National Council of Rural Advisers is narrow in any way. I respectfully suggest that Mr Rumbles should look very carefully at the curriculum vitae of those people, who display distinction and eminence in a large number of areas. Although there are several farmers on the council, farmers look after the landscape—they are the custodians of the countryside. To say that there is somehow an artificial divide between farmers and environmentalists is a tad unfair to farmers individually and collectively.

I reassure Mr Rumbles that I have written to 236 stakeholders to ask them to contribute to the work. Scottish Environment LINK has already done so. It is for the independent group to decide how to take forward its work when I meet it next week and to decide what to do, but I believe that it will be likely to engage with the stakeholders.

Mike Rumbles's amendment back in January did not say that the group should comprise stakeholders; it said that we should involve stakeholders. That is what we have done, that is what we are doing, and that is what we will do.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): I can allow you some extra time for a long intervention, Mr Rumbles.

Mike Rumbles: Thank you very much, Presiding Officer. That was indeed a long intervention from the cabinet secretary, and I am happy that I took it.

I have in my hands the curricula vitae of all the members of the council. If anybody cares to read them, they will see that all those people are distinguished. I have already said that I have no criticism of the people who are involved in the council, but if we examine those curriculum vitae carefully, we see that they come from a very narrow field.

Fergus Ewing talked about an “artificial divide”. There is no artificial divide, but we need inclusivity. We need consumer groups and environmental groups, not just the focus that exists.

I urge Fergus Ewing to enter into the spirit of what I thought he had accepted back in January—that we need the contributions of experts from as wide a field as possible, which would certainly include producer groups, environmental organisations and consumers, to advise him on what is needed for the future of our food and drinks industry. It is not yet too late to enlarge the National Council of Rural Advisers to encompass experts in those fields. I am not arguing that people should be dropped from it—far from it; I am saying that the cabinet secretary needs to include people.

We all want the process to succeed. Nobody in the chamber wants it to fail, and the best way to make it succeed is to listen to others and to what all the groups that are involved have to say. If we all get buy-in, we will succeed.

I urge the cabinet secretary to change tack. Too much time has been wasted in the process. We need action from the cabinet secretary. I urge him to change his mind for the good of the food and drinks industry. We all want to see it succeed.

I move amendment S5M-07641.2, to insert at end:

“; considers that the National Council of Rural Advisers does not meet the expectations agreed by the Parliament through amendment S5M-03463.2 (The Future of Funding for Rural Development) on 19 January 2017, and urges the Scottish Government to expand this to include the broadest possible range of experts and stakeholders, including producers, environmentalists and consumer groups, in designing the bespoke system of agricultural support that Scotland will need, particularly in the event of Brexit, for the Food and Drink Strategy to be a success.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We will now move to the open debate. Speeches should be up to four minutes, please.

15:54

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): Earlier this week, I visited Grewar's farm shop in my constituency to mark this year's Scottish food and drink fortnight. It was a very appropriate choice. The word “innovation” features repeatedly in the

“Ambition 2030” strategy, and Grewar’s is a farm business that epitomises innovation.

In October 2014, Grewar’s installed its first vending machine at East Ardler farm to answer local demand for its potatoes. Customers, utilising an accompanying suggestion box, were quick to ask for a wider variety of fresh produce direct from the farm, so carrots, onions, broccoli and free-range eggs were quickly sourced from neighbours, friends and family to broaden the range. Three further vending machines were installed, at Dronley farm, where the shop was established in 2015, and in the Overgate shopping centre in Dundee and the St John’s shopping centre in Perth.

For me, the best bit is that the farm shop, which also offers a range of Scottish craft gins, vodkas and beers, makes an absolute virtue of the food miles that are travelled by the products on sale, providing a distance breakdown for each of the many items, which have been sourced from within a 20-mile radius. Those who visit Grewar’s know that they are not just buying top-quality Scottish produce but supporting local businesses and sourcing products that have not travelled many tens, or indeed hundreds, of miles or, worse still, left Scotland to be packaged before being returned here.

Another innovator, or entrepreneur if you like, in my constituency is Kim Cameron, the driving force behind the Gin Bothy and Cider Bothy products. The strategy talks of the need for collaboration. Kim initially bought in gin from a business in Perth, but she is now working with Graeme Jarron of Ogilvy Spirits, which is based in nearby Glamis, to produce her own base spirit and has expanded the business to establish the Bothy Larder on the outskirts of Kirriemuir, where visitors can experience gin tasting in a bothy setting, with all the traditional trappings.

Grewar’s and Kim Cameron are not resting on their laurels. Mirroring the ambition of the strategy, both have plans to expand and in so doing tap into the tourism market. Scotland is blessed with many such innovators in the food and drink sector, and I am sure that, as the afternoon unfolds, we will be reminded of that in the contributions from colleagues.

Of course, however, innovation often needs to be enabled, and I want to acknowledge the role of national and local government in that. Scotland Food & Drink, my colleague Richard Lochhead, who served as rural affairs secretary in the previous session of Parliament, and now Fergus Ewing deserve enormous credit for facilitating the growth of the sector. However, I also place on the record my appreciation of the work that is done in my constituency by Angus Council officials Alison Smith and Hilary Tasker, who have not only

facilitated but driven the boom in food and drink there.

The latest manifestation of the council’s support for the county’s food and drink offering is the taste of Angus food charter, which aims to promote the use of local food through cafes and restaurants, public bodies, community groups, shops and individuals. It sets out to support local food and drinks businesses and farmers to create a healthier food culture in Angus, resulting in the availability of higher-quality and tastier food for residents and visitors alike. Anyone can sign up. All that they need to do is pledge to make small or large changes in the food that they buy, sell, cook or eat, thereby strengthening among other things the local economy, shorter supply chains and environmental sustainability.

The strategy talks of the need to unlock the sector’s potential by looking outwards and inwards. We are going great guns in Angus in terms of businesses that are selling beyond Scotland—in some cases, well beyond Europe—but, alongside that, we are seeking to raise awareness closer to home of what is on offer on our doorstep. With the tourism boost that is expected to follow the opening of the V&A in Dundee, we are gearing up to ensure that visitors to Angus are sampling the best of our food and drink offering, with all the spin-off benefits that that could have.

We are also meeting the continuing challenges that are noted in the document around deepening collaboration, diversifying markets and customer bases, supporting resilience in the sector and driving forward sustainability. Achieving the growth ambitions of the strategy will require all parts of Scotland and every sector to raise their game still further. Angus is ready to do that.

15:58

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I am delighted to speak in this important debate, and I thank Fergus Ewing for setting me on a path by raising my interest in public food procurement. It was during one of the many Brexit Tuesday debates last year that, when I dared to suggest that perhaps we should take the opportunity to look at the sourcing of food and drink in public procurement, the cabinet secretary got to his feet, puffed out his chest like all great orators do, and cooed:

“Has Mr Whittle heard of Scotland Excel and is he aware of its work? Does he appreciate that a great many farming businesses ... recognise that Excel and its procurement policy ensure that, to a great extent, food produce is bought in Scotland from Scottish producers and farmers?”—
[Official Report, 27 September 2016; c 52.]

I am not sure whether the cabinet secretary did not know the details of the Scotland Excel contract

or whether he was hoping that I would take a telling, drop the issue and leave with my tail between my legs. However, suitably chastised, I took some time to investigate where the food that we serve to our children in schools and patients in hospitals is sourced, only to discover, as was ultimately reported on the BBC, that large quantities of food and drink that are eminently available from our food producers are imported from around the world. Chicken is imported from Thailand, and flash-dried mashed potato, root vegetables, fruit, meat and dairy produce are among the many products that are imported.

It seems that, although we legislate to ensure that our farmers produce the highest-quality food and pay the living wage, and although we charge them with custodianship of the countryside and demand the highest standards of animal welfare, the Scottish National Party Government procurement policy, through Scotland Excel, prefers cheaper produce that is not subject to the rules that we impose on our food producers.

Fergus Ewing: In my opening speech, I said that we have substantially increased the proportion of locally sourced produce that is procured in the public sector, from 41 to 48 per cent. Of course, that is not enough, but we are making considerable progress. Surely we can unite in agreeing that the task now is to do even better.

Brian Whittle: I thank the cabinet secretary and look forward to seeing the evidence to back that up.

We have an opportunity here to scrutinise the health of our rural economy and, as part of that scrutiny, we should focus on what can be done to support the fishermen and farmers within our own borders, wherever possible.

We should also think about how our food is processed and packaged. Too much is shipped out of Scotland to be processed and packaged, only to be imported for consumption. Surely we need to look at developing processing and packaging capability within our own shores.

Such an approach not only presents a better opportunity for our rural economy to establish the stability that it craves but has a major part to play in the long-term health strategy that Scotland so desperately needs. It is an obvious direction of travel for any Government to ensure that locally produced, high-quality food and drink make their way to school and hospital kitchens and dining halls.

In this debate, we are rightly highlighting the high quality and high standards of the food that is produced in Scotland. We are rightly proud of our global reputation in the food and drink sector. Why, then, has the Scottish Government been

less than emphatic when it comes to putting that produce on Scottish tables? It is not just about what we eat at home; it is about our schools and hospitals and even our prisons—places where delivering nutritious, high-quality, locally sourced meals can have an impact on things such as health, attainment and mental health.

We know that it can be done. East Ayrshire Council has a focus on local food procurement, but that is very much the exception rather than the rule.

We hold our farmers to a high standard, and we hold them up to the world for their excellence, but while the world is impressed, our farmers are struggling to get their produce into the schools that are a mile down the road.

Food and drink are unquestionably a key part of the Scottish economy, and they play a role in Scotland's health and even in Scotland's identity. I urge the Scottish Government to take this opportunity to review its procurement policy, for the benefit of our fishermen and farmers.

16:02

Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): "Ambition 2030", Scotland's food and drink strategy, is deliberately ambitious. Our food and drink sector is currently worth £14.4 billion, with whisky and salmon being our two biggest exports, and the strategy aims to double the value of the food and drink sector by 2030.

How do we do that? It is not without its challenges, but the key lies in collaboration. Thanks to the Scotland Food & Drink partnership, which has been operating for 10 years, joint working in the industry has become commonplace—and the approach is working. No longer do farming, fishing and other food and drink producers work alone, in silos. They convene at trade shows throughout the EU and the world. They market themselves differently. They are Scotland plc. Scotland's market is being promoted on the international stage.

As I said, the strategy is not without its challenges. The issue of skilled workers in the food and drink sector needs to be addressed. Traditionally, attracting young people to work in the industry has been a demanding task. As the cabinet secretary said, Skills Development Scotland estimates that there will be 27,000 job opportunities over the next 10 years in a range of roles, from practical, hands-on jobs to managerial posts.

The question for many constituencies, including mine, is how to fill those job opportunities, particularly given the challenges that are presented by the UK leaving the EU. Scotland

Food & Drink and Skills Development Scotland launched a skills investment plan in January, which considers how we can fill those job vacancies and work with local schools to educate our young people about growing and cooking food and about the careers that are available in the industry.

I was delighted to hear the Minister for Employability and Training, Jamie Hepburn, announce last week a foundation apprenticeship in food and drink. I had asked James Withers about that at the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee on 31 May. It is essential to show our young people that a career in the industry is valuable and rewarding.

One of the aims of the strategy, which is also one of our manifesto commitments, is to move towards becoming a good food nation with the introduction of a good food nation bill. We want to see healthy locally grown produce available for all. We want schools to have allotments and grow, cook and sell their own produce, learning about where their food comes from and how it is produced. We want local healthy choices in our schools, hospitals and other public places, with ethical sourcing and fresh seasonal, local, sustainable produce. We want to inspire future generations to be proud of, and to contribute to, Scotland as the land of food and drink. As the strategy says, the key areas of a good food nation are health and wellbeing, environmental sustainability, local economic prosperity, resilient communities and fairness in the food chain.

I have met and will continue to meet producers, community groups, non-governmental organisations and individuals to discuss this bill. I spoke about it at the SNP conference last year, and I met Jamie Oliver a couple of weeks ago to discuss possible ways forward and how Scotland can and does do things differently. As Councillor Heather Anderson said, the attainment gap can be closed only by closing the nutrition gap.

The issue is about land use, social justice, education and health. The good food nation bill could be one of the most exciting and important pieces of legislation that we pass in this Parliament. In the meantime, we need both public and private sectors to come together to continue to grow the industry and to realise our 2030 ambition.

16:07

Mairi Gougeon (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): It is an absolute pleasure and delight to take part in this debate on food and drink, because it is impossible to talk about this sector and not to be excited by all the opportunities.

As a councillor with Angus Council, I had responsibility for economic development for the local authority, with the pleasure of working with the team that Graeme Dey mentioned—Alison Smith and Hilary Tasker—to encourage people and businesses to visit, invest in and live in the region. A massive part of that work was to promote and sell the best of our products to the rest of Scotland and beyond, such as Glencadam whisky, from my home town of Brechin, and the Forfar bridie, which I described to a foreign audience as a meaty puff of heaven. If anybody has still not tried one and would like to do so, please contact me and I will sort you out. I now represent part of Aberdeenshire and have even more to shout about in that region. We have, quite simply, some of the best produce to be found anywhere in the world, and that is why I welcome the motion.

I would like to focus on what we can do locally, within our communities, to strengthen local food supply chains. Although international markets are, of course, vitally important, we have to strengthen the links between our farmers, fishermen and primary producers and our communities, making local products far more readily available and easy to find, so that people know about and choose local produce.

That has been the ambition of an innovative collective launched last year in Angus called the Food Life. It is a group of farmers, retailers, food vendors and educators that aims to promote the produce of the region to those who live there and to visitors. The group promotes not just the products but our health and the encouragement of a healthier way of life. To do that, it educates and conducts pilot schemes and research. We cannot consider food just in terms of our rural economy alone; it feeds into many areas. Health is a vital part of that, and I am glad that health has been mentioned a few times today. We could do more to make those links clearer. I was pleased to hear Rhoda Grant's points about food banks, to make sure that people who can least afford food and who have to use food banks have access to fresh healthy local produce.

As well as holding its own markets and food events, the Food Life looks at how to connect businesses to the local food supply chain. I was glad to hear some of the issues that Brian Whittle raised, because one massive stumbling block in achieving that has been the procurement process. Local companies with healthy, fresh offerings can reach a block when trying to provide their product to, say, local schools, and more needs to be done to address that. I welcome some of the comments that the cabinet secretary made in his opening statement. We should be making it easier for local food producers to get their products into our communities and through the barriers that exist in

local authorities, arms-length organisations and the NHS.

We cannot talk about the importance of the food and drink sector without talking about some of the challenges that we face with Brexit. There is the rural development programme, which is worth £1.3 billion to Scotland, not to mention the importance of the European maritime and fisheries fund to coastal communities. With those funding streams guaranteed only for the immediate future, we need to know what will come in their place. We also need to know what will happen if we are not in the single market or the customs union. How will that affect getting our product to the market?

Beyond that is the issue that hangs over the EU citizens who come to work in various areas in food and drink, because it is a sector that needs people. In Angus alone, more than half of all people who work in the agricultural sector are expected to retire in the next 10 to 15 years. We need high levels of new entrants just to maintain the employment levels at the moment, let alone what we could need further down the line.

We are all lucky to be here representing constituencies and a country that are home to some of the best produce in the world. We have the product and the ambition is there; we just need to navigate some of the coming political obstacles to make this a real success.

16:11

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I declare an interest as a farmer and food producer and I remind members of my interest in the development of farmers markets in Scotland. I am a paid-up member of NFU Scotland.

I welcome this debate on Scotland's food and drink strategy, "Ambition 2030", and I congratulate the Scottish food and drink industry on its remarkable success thus far. Our whisky industry leads the charge of success and the enormous diversity of its product is one of its key strengths. Our fish farming industry has boosted output and profitability in the past year and sustains around 7,000 jobs in the most remote and peripheral parts of Scotland, which is vital in socioeconomic and food production terms. Our livestock farmers deliver world-class beef and lamb and sustain our landscapes and our environment. Congratulations to the industry on what it has achieved thus far are the order of the day.

However, the point that I want to make to the cabinet secretary is that the very real threat to this remarkable success story is the lack of profitability for the primary producer in the supply chain. I welcome the cabinet secretary's remarks in that regard.

Abattoirs across Scotland are having difficulty sourcing quality cattle because suckler herds are not profitable. Butter has now reached £6,000 per tonne because dairy farmers have not had a decent return from the market for too long, which Edward Mountain alluded to. Sheep farming lacks profitability, too. Those sectors are all gradually reducing their output, which is a real risk to processors and retailers, who so value the primary products that give them their provenance and marketing story to tell, but who nonetheless are not yet giving a fair share of the margin to the primary producers.

On a more positive note, I believe that there is a significant job to be done in developing the regionalisation of our food product. The French have been doing that for years. In France, the concept is elegantly known as "terroir", which roughly translated means "of the land" or "of the region". Wine from Bordeaux is different from wine from the Rhône, while cheese from the Haute-Savoie is different from cheese from Brittany, and the diversity of product, which I noted is a strength of our whisky industry, gives the French food and wine retailing market its strength and reputation.

My point is that we could and should develop that concept in our food industry in Scotland. Established brands such as Ayrshire tatties, Arbroath smokies, Stornoway black pudding and many others are the building blocks to develop that concept. The reality is that regional diversity adds to the food-buying choice and experience for our customers at home and abroad, as well as adding provenance and therefore value to what is being sold. I welcome Fergus Ewing's intentions in that regard, which he announced this afternoon.

Developing the purchasing experience for our customers gave farmers markets the boost that allowed them to become established again in Scotland, and that enhanced experience should be further developed by creating covered producers markets, as found in almost every sizeable town in France and Spain. We should use the magnificent food hall at the Royal Highland Show as a template and create co-operative ventures through the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society on permanent sites in Glasgow and Edinburgh. We need to get the ball rolling and shorten the supply chain from farm gate to plate. Gail Ross is absolutely right to suggest that that should be done by more co-operation and collaborative working.

In addition, there are barriers to be removed, such as the punitive levels of business rates that are levied on our livestock auction markets and processing plants. As others have said, there are too few new entrants coming into the farming and processing sectors, as unemployment falls and competition grows, to persuade willing young

people to make a career, perhaps through apprenticeships, in our dynamic food producing, processing and retail sector. However, those are obstructions that can be overcome, and the willingness of the industry to play its part is a credit to it. Now, Government must do its part to further remove barriers to growth and help create an incentivised fiscal framework to allow that track record of success to continue.

16:16

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I remind the chamber that I am the parliamentary liaison officer to the cabinet secretary, Mr Ewing. As Scotland's food and drink industry is closely linked with tourism, I also refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am part-owner of a bed-and-breakfast.

Scotland's food and drink industry is vital to the rural economy, and I am delighted to welcome the Scottish Government's ambitious plan to expand it further. Building our nation's brand will be key to achieving that aim. Many people are becoming increasingly aware of how important provenance and sustainability are to the industry. I recently read a survey from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that showed that, although seven out of 10 people said that buying sustainable food is important, only 30 per cent of those folks buy sustainable produce. The key reason for that is that one third of those people are not sure how to choose sustainable food products and are confused by labelling. That indicates the importance of education and clear labelling, including country of origin labelling. The issue of country of origin labelling was raised with me by NFUS leadership this summer.

In response to Madame Gougeon, I say that the South Scotland region also has fantastic produce, which is produced by extremely talented and innovative people whose invaluable contribution to the local economy is to be credited. I thank them all. In many cases, those products have international appeal because of their quality, provenance and taste, and I would like to highlight just some: Galloway beef, from one of the world's longest-established breeds of beef cattle; Loch Ryan oysters, from Scotland's oldest oyster fishery; and award-winning beer from Sulwath Brewers. Members might be surprised to learn that Garrocher tea garden is growing and blending tea in Dumfries and Galloway. Our award-winning dairy produce is wide-ranging, from fresh milk and amazing ice-cream to specialist cheeses and yoghurt. It would be remiss of me not to mention Ayrshire tatties, but John Scott got there first.

I look forward to sampling all those products and many more at the upcoming Kirkcudbright food

festival next month. However, before that, I have the Stranraer oyster festival this weekend, as part of the food and drink fortnight. At that event, the first of its kind in Scotland, my friend Hardeep Singh Kohli will, he has promised, teach me how to properly eat oysters. With the rebirth of Bladnoch and with Annandale, the south-west also has whisky distilleries—I remind everyone that that is Scotch whisky, not UK whisky. It also has a brand-new gin distillery, run by the Crafty crew at Newton Stewart. We have some great produce in our neck of the woods. I would be happy to take the cabinet secretary on a wee D and G tasting tour next summer, if he cares to come.

Key to unlocking the £30 billion potential of the sector is supporting the workforce—our farmers, fishermen and fisherwomen, growers, pickers and all those working in our agricultural sector. Like many colleagues across the chamber, I am sure, I spent the summer recess visiting farms and attending agricultural events and speaking to the farmers at the front line. I found that the future of staffing on many of the dairy farms is a huge concern. South-west Scotland has 48 per cent of Scotland's dairy farms and many of their employees are EU citizens who have chosen to stay and make their home in Scotland. Those workers are worried about the future because the UK Government does not identify the rural workforce as skilled, but those people are skilled. I spoke with Andrew McCornick recently on this matter and he told me that the NFUS considers those agricultural workers to be competent and skilled, with which I agree.

As we face the hard and worrying realities of Brexit, we must do everything possible to support our rural industries to become more sustainable and resilient, which is exactly what I plan to do as we work towards achieving the Government's plan for Scotland's food and drink to 2030 and beyond.

16:20

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Let me say at the outset how supportive I am of the publication of "Ambition 2030". It is great to see that level of partnership working within the food and drink sector, and the bodies involved are to be commended for their commitment and recognition of the benefits of working together. I am immensely proud of Scotland's farmers, fishermen, food manufacturers, distillers and brewers, innovators and retailers for the hard work that they do and the contribution that they make to our daily lives, as well as to our culture and our economy.

As an MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife, I get ample opportunity to recognise excellence, with a high number of food producers and retailers on my doorstep. Our businesses are often highly placed

in food and drink awards. Most recently, I was delighted to see Tom Courts Burntisland Butchers being announced as a finalist in the UK butcher's shop of the year awards, and I wish them all the best in the competition. They are a great example of a high street retailer and have been part of the revival of Burntisland High Street, which now has a fruit and vegetable shop and a fishmonger, alongside other independent retailers.

"Ambition 2030" recognises the progress that has been made over the past decade, when we have seen the food and drink sector grow into an increasingly important part of our economy. That mirrors an international trend and a greater interest in provenance, health, reputation and innovation in food and drink. The sector is an important part of our international image and it has shown the effectiveness of collaborative working. I support its efforts to grow sustainably and take advantage of opportunities. I could go on praising the sector—the Food and Drink Federation's reception last week gave me a chance to talk to its members about new products, strong brands and the innovative techniques that they are pursuing.

"Ambition 2030" also recognises the importance of flexibility and the need to address challenges. In the short time that I have, I will raise a few issues that we need to be alert to. "Ambition 2030" recognises the importance of reputation. That is a strong asset and the horsemeat scandal of a few years ago was a wake-up call to everyone. We have a strong food and drink sector, but it is reliant on our having confidence in the regulatory system. There have been big changes in the number and practices of meat inspectors, and we know that the number of environmental health officers has reduced. They work under pressure and are more often reacting to situations than doing more preventative work. We do need a balance, and I appreciate that, by and large, the risks are low, but a threat to reputation can be very damaging to the sector, so we need to ensure that our systems are robust.

Of course, Brexit will have a significant impact on the food and drink sector. The future is uncertain, and I recently heard a report on the need for our dairy farmers to diversify. Most of our dairy products are imported, so there will be a need to increase our production of different products. We do not yet know the extent of Brexit, and in relation to many of our key products, such as whisky and salmon, we operate in an international market.

In all the discussion around immigration and the movement of people, we need to recognise how reliant the agricultural sector is on European workers. Producers find it difficult to employ Scots to do those jobs. I hear continually from food manufacturers that they struggle to recruit to the

food processing sector, even though they are paying fair wages and offering attractive terms. We need to ensure that the sector offers attractive careers and I am pleased to see the emphasis on that in "Ambition 2030". However, we need to emphasise to the UK Government the importance of the EU workforce in the sector at all levels and to accelerate programmes to present it as a positive career choice.

Finally, "Ambition 2030" recognises the need to work with the Government and industry to support improvements in diet and nutrition. I know that a lot of work has been done on reformulating products, which is welcome, but we need improvements in, and consistency on, healthy eating messages and food labelling.

Although this is largely a celebratory debate, I always find it challenging to talk about food abundance in Scotland when I am aware that the number of people who suffer from food poverty and rely on food banks is increasing. Of course, that is about poverty and not about the food sector, but we need to value a food sector that offers quality and affordability, while recognising that many of the products that we celebrate today are not always within every family's income bracket and that the benefits of a good food nation should be available to everyone in Scotland.

16:25

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): The motion celebrates the achievements of Scotland's food and drink sector and the huge contribution that it makes to Scotland's economy, and it recognises the sector's ever-growing international reputation for quality. In supporting it, I have, of course, a fantastic local story to tell about the part that Ayrshire plays in that growing reputation for world-class food and drink.

Only last weekend, I had the privilege of attending the Newmilns food festival in the Loudoun valley, which is a wonderful part of my constituency. I was astounded at the size of the festival, which is in only its second year—more than 4,000 visitors came into the tented village in the local Jamieson park.

The visitors were able to enjoy a wide range of locally produced food, including chilli from Fenwick, ice creams from Galston, speciality canapés from businesses in Kilmarnock and amazing cake creations from Newmilns. There were many hot-food demonstrations from a number of creative local businesses, with tasting sessions and the chance to wash it all down with ethical ales from Mauchline. Scotland was well represented, with stalls from all over the country showcasing fantastic produce in fish, meats and cheeses, and there were even some interesting

gins, which seemed to be attracting the attention of several visitors.

Transport was provided to bring people to the event, and local people acted as stewards for the day to help to deliver a spectacular event that has certainly put Newmilns on the good-food map of Ayrshire. The organisers—who were all volunteers—and the contributors are to be congratulated on their efforts. That same weekend, in Kilmarnock, we had our European market, which also principally showcased quality local and European foods. We know that that market attracts about 40,000 visits to the town centre to enjoy that experience.

I started with those local stories because they typify the excellent work that is going on in this crucial sector of our economy. None of it is a happy accident; we can trace the reasons behind the success of those events to some of the impressive work that has been carried out in East Ayrshire for a number of years.

East Ayrshire has been a pioneer in localising the supply chain for and procurement of food since 2003. By focusing on cooking from fresh, using local produce and linking that to employment, food education, healthy eating and even reducing CO₂ emissions, East Ayrshire's approach in effect became the benchmark for good practice, particularly in school meals provision, not just in Scotland but across Europe.

When the food for life programme emerged, East Ayrshire was one of a handful of bodies in the public and private sectors in the UK to be awarded the gold standard for quality school meals, and it has consistently met that standard for 10 years. The gold standard is awarded to a service that demonstrates that its spend is split among organic produce, fair trade products, Quality Meat Scotland products and outdoor-reared pork and that it meets a few other criteria. The fair trade component means that the approach is not about exclusively using 100 per cent local produce—there is also a commitment to support fair trade nations by using the products that they can supply. We can find several commendations for the work that East Ayrshire has done from no less an organisation than the United Nations, in its various documents on the power of public procurement, which include commitments to sourcing from fair trade nations and are not all about exclusively local sourcing.

I was pleased to hear the cabinet secretary mention that, as part of the programme for government, there will be further investment of more than £1 million in the food for life programme, to encourage all 32 of our local authorities to achieve that catering hallmark in their schools.

The national strategy sets a very ambitious target of doubling the value of the industry in just beyond a decade. About 115,000 people work in the industry in Scotland, and there is the prospect of another 20,000 jobs coming soon, over the next decade. Colleagues have touched on the risks to the strategy's success if we do not solve the impending labour issue that concerns the many thousands of people who come from Europe and work in the sector in Scotland. In much the same way, thousands of Scottish and UK citizens also work in Europe.

Let us hope that we can persuade the UK Government to recognise in its deliberations with our European partners that that is a crucial mutual benefit that enriches all our cultures and benefits all our economies equally. I am confident that, if we achieve that, Scotland's reputation as a world-class producer of food and drink will continue to go from strength to strength.

16:29

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): I am always glad to make a speech about Scotland's food and drink, because it gives me a chance to talk about the great town of Paisley. Far be it from me to be parochial, but members will be well aware of my pride in my home town.

It is always good to remind the chamber of our town's contribution to Scotland's many successes. I listened carefully to Willie Coffey and, in particular, John Scott when they talked about farmers markets and Ayrshire farmers, but one important aspect that Mr Scott did not mention when he talked about his work was the famous Paisley farmers market, which is full of produce from Ayrshire and Ayrshire farmers.

I want to mention Porrelli ice cream, which is the home of luxury Italian ice cream. The company, which is a previous winner of Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce's family business of the year, was set up in 1925 when Gerardo Porrelli emigrated from southern Italy to Scotland. He settled in Paisley and brought with him ice cream that used traditional recipes from his homeland. The business now produces 6,000 litres of high-quality Italian ice cream every day in its state-of-the-art facility in Paisley and provides that quality product to the catering trade, frozen wholesalers, cash-and-carry operators and multiple retailers.

Porrelli is one of many successful small businesses in Paisley, which has seen an increase in good-quality food and drink venues, partly because of the excitement that its bid to be UK city of culture has generated. Many of those small to medium-sized enterprises will play an important part in regenerating Paisley town centre and, importantly, helping to bring people back into it.

Others can have their massive chain stores—I will support the local independent businesses in my area.

With regard to drink, we have the small specialist brewer Kelburn Brewing Company, which provides an award-winning product. The business is based in Barrhead, but the owners' hearts will remain for ever in Paisley, as they live in my constituency. The brewery, which is run by Derek Moore, his son Ross and his daughter Karen, is constantly competing and regularly winning prizes in various ale festivals throughout Scotland.

Our local airport, which is—paradoxically—called Glasgow international airport, now promotes Scottish products to the record-breaking numbers of visitors who go through it. Paisley town hall also hosts Scotland's largest real ale festival. Being Paisley's MSP can sometimes be a difficult job, but that is one occasion that I relish.

Food and drink in Scotland is not just about larger multimillion-pound companies but about supporting small independent companies. That is why I welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to investing in a new targeted supplier development programme to enable more food and drink suppliers to compete for public contracts, which is an issue that often comes up with smaller businesses. The Government has also committed to facilitating attendance at trade fairs, such as the showcasing Scotland event, and encouraging the attendance of public sector buyers and catering managers. It also wants to ensure that the supply chains for manufacturers and buyers work more closely together.

I could have mentioned a number of food and drink brands that owe their existence to the town of Paisley, but instead I wanted to lead with a small family business of Italian descent that has served and employed Paisley buddies for 92 years. As we look forward to what Scotland can achieve in the worldwide food and drink industry, we must remember the smaller companies that continue to produce excellent-quality product here in Scotland. [*Applause.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There was a bit of a delayed reaction to that speech.

We move to the closing speeches, and I hope that anyone who contributed to the debate but who has since left the chamber is running here now.

16:34

Mike Rumbles: We have had a good debate. I know that we say that a lot, but generally it has been good. All the contributors took the opportunity—rightly—to highlight the successes of

our food and drink industry in their constituencies and regions.

In my summing up, I will comment on some of the contributions. Of course, I cannot mention everyone. First, I would like to agree with Fergus Ewing, although he is not in the chamber to hear me say that. [*Interruption.*] I see that he is at the back of the chamber—he probably cannot hear me, anyway.

I would like to agree with Mr Ewing; in fact, I would like to agree with him all the time, but that is not possible. He said that the bedrock of our industry is the primary producers: our farmers, our fishermen and our crofters. Of course it is, but it is about more than that, and that is the focus of my amendment. We all want the Government's food and drink strategy to succeed. That is why we need to ensure that our producers, environmentalists and consumers are involved in the process of designing a new bespoke system of agricultural support.

In a well-crafted and measured speech, Edward Mountain championed high-quality local produce, and the Liberal Democrats will support his amendment at decision time.

Rhoda Grant said that we need to showcase our local produce. Too often, our pubs are limited in what they can sell. Her amendment, which is designed to increase the share of Scotland-brewed products in Scotland's pubs, is good. The Liberal Democrats are happy to support the Labour amendment.

Graeme Dey was right to take the opportunity to highlight the success and innovation of the food and drink industry in his Angus constituency.

Brian Whittle was absolutely right to say that our food and drink strategy should have a lot to do with our health strategy. Nutritious food should be provided to our hospitals and schools, for instance.

Gail Ross said that the need for skilled workers in the food and drink industry must be addressed. We need to think about how we can fill those job opportunities, especially now that we are leaving the European Union. We need to show our young people that a career in the industry is a valuable and rewarding one.

Mairi Gougeon—I hope that I pronounced that right—

Mairi Gougeon: That was perfect.

Mike Rumbles: Mairi Gougeon was clearly excited about promoting and selling local produce from her Angus North and Mearns constituency. She was so enthusiastic about the task that she was smiling—as she is now—almost throughout her speech. She mentioned that she represents

the Mearns. As someone who used to be the constituency member for the Mearns before the Boundary Commission for Scotland came along, I concur with her on what a great place it is.

I hope that Parliament will support my amendment to the Government's motion. I hope that, in a future debate in eight months' time, the cabinet secretary will not turn round and say—as he did earlier in the debate—that I misinterpreted my own amendment. The amendment in my name that Parliament agreed to in January was not prescriptive, but it was clear, as is my amendment for today's debate.

The cabinet secretary's National Council of Rural Advisers does not meet Parliament's expectations as agreed to on 19 January. My amendment urges the Scottish Government to expand the council of advisers to include

“the broadest possible range of experts and stakeholders, including producers, environmentalists and consumer groups, in designing the bespoke system of agricultural support that Scotland will need, particularly in the event of Brexit, for the Food and Drink Strategy to be a success.”

We must design a new system and make sure that everyone buys into it. Only in that way can a new system be designed that will succeed.

My amendment should be clear enough. In my view, it cannot possibly be misinterpreted.

16:38

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): I refer to my entry in the register of members' interests.

I welcome the opportunity to close the debate on Scotland's food and drink strategy on behalf of Scottish Labour. I agree with Mike Rumbles that it has been a very good debate. We have had a wide range of contributions, every one of which has been excellent. Members have talked about local produce that they have a knowledge of, and I must say that I am feeling quite hungry after all the chat about food.

George Adam made an excellent point about Porrelli's ice cream from Paisley. Among a number of others who made important contributions, Rhoda Grant made excellent points about food poverty, Brian Whittle spoke about local procurement, Gail Ross and Claire Baker talked about nutrition, and Willie Coffey mentioned fair trade.

A key point that we can all agree on is that Scotland's world-renowned food and drink is as integral to our culture and our identity as our music, our sport and our heritage are. As Rhoda Grant said, we know that Scotland already produces some of the most sought-after natural produce in the world. We export food and drink far and wide and people come from far and wide to

experience it here in Scotland. Scotland's coastal communities also produce quality fish and shellfish, and we are now one of the largest seafood producers in Europe.

With such impressive natural resources, it is little wonder that food and drink is our fastest growing export sector, but we should not just pat ourselves on the back; we can and must do more. The food and drink strategy acknowledges that. It aspires to build on Scotland's developing reputation as a land of food and drink and to grow tourism as well as increase sales and exports.

As has been said, the strategy has an ambitious target to double turnover in the sector by 2030, which would make food and drink Scotland's most valuable industry. As we have heard, collaboration is vital to achieving that aim.

The strategy is right to say that the industry must deepen collaboration along the whole supply chain, from end to end, and that we must diversify our markets and our customer base, as that will support resilience in the sector. I will say more on those points in relation to the brewing industry later.

A number of members, including Claire Baker, Rhoda Grant and Mairi Gougeon, mentioned Brexit and were right to raise concerns about the impact that it could have. We believe that we need to see a Brexit deal that prioritises jobs and the economy.

It is well established that whisky is Scotland's biggest export, currently accounting for 80 per cent of Scotland's food and drink export market. It is vital that the interests of the whisky industry and others are represented in the Brexit negotiations.

As well as producing whisky, the brewing and distilling industry in Scotland continues to manufacture new products. Scotland is becoming a world-leading producer of craft beers and boutique gins. In the past year alone, there has been a 50 per cent spike in gin producers, while the brewing industry saw the growth of 20 additional small or micro breweries. There are now over 120 breweries in Scotland producing a wide variety of specialist beers, including Arran Brewery, Loch Lomond Brewery and Kelburn Brewing Company, which George Adam mentioned, in my region. No matter what part of the country someone chooses to visit, they are never far from a good local beer.

The purpose of Labour's amendment is to agree that we should increase the share of Scottish brewed products in our pubs. It is important that the Scottish Government and other agencies take measures to encourage pubs to sell locally brewed products. One of the measures that we propose is to reform the tied pub sector in Scotland. As Rhoda Grant said, the contractual agreements

between pubs and their pub company owners can require that they stock certain products, which are often multinational brands, which means that they cannot source beers directly from local brewers.

The Campaign for Real Ale and others believe that that model unfairly disadvantages smaller local brewers that find themselves blocked out of the tied pub sector. It has been estimated that more than £30 million could be leaving the Scottish economy every year as a result of the tied pub model.

I have proposed a member's bill on tied pubs, because there are basic issues of fairness for publicans that we should address, but I also believe that if we are serious about giving Scottish consumers more choice and supporting jobs in the brewing industry, we should reform tied pubs. We should allow pubs the freedom to source locally brewed products on the open market and help them to support our local economies. I am pleased to say that my proposal has already received backing from CAMRA, the Scottish Licensed Trade Association, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Scottish Tourism Alliance and GMB Scotland, as well as many tied publicans and brewers in constituencies across Scotland. They all believe that such a proposal would be good for Scotland's brewers, pubs and economy. I hope that it will receive cross-party support in this chamber.

In closing, I will quote the strategy, which states:

"Political upheavals, like Brexit, bring uncertainty. They always do. But we can't sit back and wait for calmer waters. Our competitors won't do that. There is much in our world that we can't control, but also much that we can."

That sums up not only the strategy but the tone of members in the debate today.

16:44

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):

I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

This has been a good debate. On the whole, it has been consensual and good humoured and it is timely, coming as it does during food and drink fortnight, when we celebrate and promote Scotland's reputation as a source of some of the finest food and drink found anywhere in the world.

We have a fine story to tell. The Scotland Food & Drink partnership, which was launched in 2007, is a partnership organisation founded by industry and the public sector and led by a young, talented and energetic chief executive, James Withers.

In the 10 years to 2017, it has had great success in growing our food and drink sector and in raising the profile of the industry. Since 2007, industry turnover is up 44 per cent to £14 billion

and exports have risen by 56 per cent to £5.5 billion. The sector employs 119,000 people and it has grown at twice the rate of the rest of manufacturing in Scotland.

The ambitious target now is to build on that successful base and to double the turnover to £30 billion by 2030. We have had past success, but our ability to meet the new target is dependent on continuing the model of collaboration right across the supply chain, sharing progress and best practice to help smaller businesses to grow, unlocking new marketing opportunities and uniting behind a joint mission to grow business.

Our reputation and our brand have been our strongest assets. Scotland is seen around the world—rightly—as a producer of the best food and drink, and that is underpinned by our focus on provenance and quality. In his speech, Brian Whittle stressed that and argued that the Scottish Government must do more to supply our fine food to our schools, hospitals, care homes and so on.

Diversity is another of our assets. We are blessed with a diverse natural larder and a diverse business base. We are fortunate to have some of the richest fishing waters in the world. Our fine fish, crabs and lobsters are in great demand, and farmed salmon—our biggest food export—is found on the finest menus worldwide. Our fishermen are at last enjoying good catches and good prices, and there is an optimism in the sector that has not been seen in many years.

We also have whisky, which is worth £5 billion to the economy. Exports of whisky are worth £4 billion, accounting for 80 per cent of our food and drink exports, and whisky is the UK's largest net contributor to our balance of trade. Whisky production supports 40,000 jobs around the UK and employs 7,000 people in remote rural parts of Scotland. The whisky industry spends £1.7 billion on its supply chain and 80 per cent of that is spent in Scotland. Whisky is a great success story—

Mike Rumbles: Hear, hear.

Peter Chapman: Absolutely. It is a success story and its future is bright as the premium alcoholic drink around the globe.

Members might be surprised that I have not yet mentioned farming. Of course, our farmers are a vital part of the food and drink success. Farmers produce much of the raw material on which the rest of the chain depends, which includes malting barley for whisky; beef, lamb and pork, which are produced to some of the highest ethical and welfare standards in the world; dairy products, such as cheese, yoghurt and butter; and fruit and veg. Those products find ready markets at home and abroad, and are celebrated for their great taste.

We have many of the finest farmers to be found anywhere. They are skilled, hard working, innovative and determined, but their hard work and skill are poorly rewarded. That truth was recognised by my colleagues John Scott and Edward Mountain, as well as by the cabinet secretary Fergus Ewing. Much more of the success of our food and drink sector needs to flow down to the primary producers who supply the raw materials on which it all depends. I am fed up saying it and I wish it were not true, but official Government statistics tell us that the average income for Scottish farmers was only £12,600 last year. That is after receiving their CAP support and is a pittance for all that hard work and innovation. It is well below the minimum wage for a 40-hour week, let alone the 60-hour or 70-hour week that most of our farmers work.

We have had many rows across this chamber in the past 18 months about information technology systems and delays in vital CAP money, but every farmer would forgo that money tomorrow if he could only get a fair return from the market place. I wonder whether that will ever happen. I hope to see it happen, but I do not know whether it will.

I am enthusiastic about the £30 billion target by 2030. By growing our food and drink industry, more will be demanded of our farmers. Supply and demand tell me that that should result in better prices.

Exports have been a success for our industry, but we must never forget that our biggest and best market is our home market in Scotland and the rest of the UK. Of the beef that we produce here, 90 per cent is exported, and 90 per cent of that goes to England. Our internal single market is vital and we need to remember that during all the talk about Brexit.

This has been a good debate. It has been consensual and optimistic for the most part and I have enjoyed listening to and taking part in it. If only I had a dram to add to my glass of water, the toast would be: "Here's to future success."

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is a habit that we will try not to get into. [*Laughter.*]

16:51

Fergus Ewing: I do not know whether I will get into trouble for saying this, but that is an unfortunate ruling, Presiding Officer. [*Laughter.*]

This has been an excellent debate, as many members have said. It is great to see not only recognition across the chamber of the great success story that is Scotland Food & Drink, but support for its new strategy, "Ambition 2030". Such broad support for the strategy bodes well in terms of helping us to achieve it.

I was also pleased to hear so many members pay tribute to producers and local business—in particular, the farmers and fishermen who are often left out of the narrative. That was not the case today, as Mr Chapman and many others illustrated.

I was pleased that Mr Rumbles focused on the whisky industry, which is a great success story for Scotland. That success is being experienced not only by the big boys, as it were, but by the craft distillers, in the rural flourishing of distillation of fine Scottish gins. I am delighted that bodies such as HIE have managed to support in a concrete way the creation of the new distilleries around the country, but particularly in the Highlands and Islands, which I especially welcome. I was pleased that James Withers and his team at Scotland Food & Drink had tribute paid to them. I echo that tribute.

I will quickly run through some of the Scottish Government's specific support for the sector. It includes £65 million that has been allocated through our food processing and marketing co-operation grant scheme, which has supported 220 projects, and £85 million that has been allocated through the European fisheries fund to support 1,000 seafood and fisheries projects. Last Monday, I visited Scrabster to give financial support to the ice factory there, which will help Scrabster to maintain and strengthen its position as the UK's second-largest white-fish port.

We have allocated £3.5 million to support the delivery of the Scottish export plan, led by Scottish Development International, and £3 million to support connect local, an advisory service for microbusinesses. We have invested £3 million in education-related projects, including the successful food for life programme that is operating in schools across Scotland with—as Willie Coffey said—East Ayrshire leading the way in that regard. I will be celebrating the 10 years of success with those involved in the programme in November.

We have allocated £1 million in community funds to support producers and communities in celebrating local food through events. Mr Scott made a good point about looking to regionalise our effort generally in that regard. We will look at that carefully and would be happy to work with him on that.

We have made a £10 million investment with industry to support the delivery of "Ambition 2030". We have worked with retailers, businesses and primary producers. Credit is due to many of them. For example, the Co-op and Morrisons are committed to sourcing 100 per cent of their fresh meat from the UK and Scotland. What a good example that is. I hope that the other supermarkets will look carefully at their approach.

The difficulty in such sourcing is, as I think that we are all aware, often practical—the difficulty in getting enough meat on the shelves from producers reliably day after day. Bidfood is committed to doubling the value of Scottish range, and Aldi has reduced its payment terms to suppliers from 33 days to 14 days, which is benefiting 90 small businesses in Scotland. That is a great thing. Marks & Spencer has committed to stocking Scottish lamb all year round.

Brian Whittle mentioned local sourcing and made an interesting and valuable contribution to the debate. Of course some things are difficult to source, as was highlighted by the BBC. For example, poultry is typically more expensive in Scotland and supply is not sufficient for our needs—not even for the supermarkets. That is a practical matter that constrains our ability to supply all our needs.

Brian Whittle: Does the cabinet secretary agree that it is a supply and demand issue? If demand is created, our Scottish farmers will supply to it.

Fergus Ewing: I am a supporter of a regulated market, but the point is that not enough Scottish chicken is produced to meet demand. Much of it is bought by the main retailers and even they cannot get enough. However, discussions are on-going with primary producers with the potential for upscaling production, which is something that we both wish to see, I think.

Not much Scottish cheese is bought by the public sector. Much is imported from Ireland because of cost. Ireland has a wide range of commodity, or cheaper, products whereas Scotland produces more high-value and premium cheese. Again, I know that that situation is being looked at carefully.

The point that I am making is that those are partly business and commercial matters in which practical considerations apply. I do not think that we can make it mandatory to buy Scottish or British: that would not be practical. Scottish fruit and vegetables are excellent and of high quality, but they are not available all year round. One must bear in mind the practicalities.

However, on local sourcing, we have done a number of things. Mairi Gougeon talked about the importance of obtaining accreditation status for businesses that can get into procurement contracts. We have a programme that is working intensively with 30 businesses to increase their capacity, and we are investing £100,000 in that.

The expansion of the food for life programme, through investment of £400,000, will be a key factor in driving more local sourcing. We are doing a number of other things to promote local sourcing of food.

In marketing, our 2017 national “Showcasing Scotland” event is being held in Perthshire in a couple of weeks. More than 160 businesses will showcase their products to more than 120 international and domestic buyers. We will replicate that model by having regional showcasing events across Scotland. More details of that will follow in due course.

Our success abroad has been considerable; I gave some examples earlier: there are others. In the USA, Mull of Kintyre cheddar was launched to more than 1,100 Publix stores in the south-east states. In Hong Kong, a Scottish gin company is expected to sell £1.5 million-worth of its product during the next three years.

John Scott: Will the cabinet secretary agree that an enormous opportunity exists for Prestwick airport to be one of the freight hubs in Scotland for exporting our high quality produce as opportunities grow?

Fergus Ewing: I am happy to agree with John Scott and happy to work with him thereanent.

We also want to focus on the UK market of £50 million in England and £10 million in London alone. It is an important market, so Scotland Food & Drink is to publish an action plan setting out a range of further measures.

Brexit has been mentioned by many members. The threat of the loss of essential skilled and unskilled labour from the food and drink industry is clear. In the soft fruit and veg sector 15,000 non-UK seasonal workers are employed on Scottish farms. Angus Soft Fruits has expressed concern about that. In the bakery trade, one-third of workers are EU nationals. In seafood processing, 70 per cent of workers come from the EU. A survey from the Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers shows that 52 per cent of the industry’s unskilled workforce and 44 per cent of its skilled workforce come from the EU.

John Scott quite rightly mentioned the sustainability of Scottish abattoirs and the amount of livestock that they receive, but there is also the fact that 90 per cent of the official veterinarians who are necessary for the functioning of abattoirs come from the EU. I do not want to make political points in the debate, but there is a real worry about the continued availability of labour and, to be frank, the sooner we have clarity on the issue, the better.

This has been an excellent debate. I am grateful to all the members who have contributed, and I look forward to seeing even greater success in Scotland’s food and drink sector.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S5M-07641.3, in the name of Edward Mountain, which seeks to amend motion S5M-07641, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on Scotland's food and drink strategy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 32, Against 64, Abstentions 15.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-07641.1, in the name of Rhoda Grant, which seeks to amend motion S5M-07641, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-07641.2, in the name of Mike Rumbles, which seeks to amend motion S5M-07641, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 53, Against 59, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-07641, in the name of Fergus Ewing, as amended, be agreed to.

Meeting closed at 17:03.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament acknowledges the growth in Scotland's food and drink industry since 2007 and the contribution that it makes to the economy; supports the aim of Scotland's national food and drink strategy, Ambition 2030, to double the value of the industry; recognises the importance of growing markets for Scottish produce internationally, across the UK and in Scotland; encourages everyone to play their part to support and promote locally-produced food and drink; pays tribute to the farmers and fishermen who work tirelessly to produce the raw materials that underpin the industry's success, and supports Scottish Food and Drink Fortnight and the aim of the campaign to encourage more people to change one thing and consume more Scottish produce, and believes that there is particular scope to increase the share of Scottish-brewed products in Scotland's pubs.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* for this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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