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Tuesday 24 April 2018

Session 5



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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 24 April 2018

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leaders are Majors Lynn and Raelton Gibbs, who are divisional leaders of the Salvation Army's west Scotland division.

Major Raelton Gibbs (Salvation Army): Thank you for the opportunity to address members, which we consider to be a privilege. For 13 years, Lynn and I have been in the best club in the world. You may ask: which one? It is the grandparents' club, and we have recently welcomed our third grandchild into the world. How special and important are positive family relationships?

Reading to our children and grandchildren has always been a joy, and one of their favourite stories from the Old Testament is the story of Noah. Initially, they had the excitement of the animals coming in two by two, but then there was the beginning of understanding of how, in obedience, Noah built the ark, which to everybody else around was an act of madness. Only when the rain came did everybody think that Noah might not have been so crazy, but it came too late for them.

We were in danger of having similar thoughts to that crowd of people when we learned that the Salvation Army in west Scotland was building a boat in the middle of inner-city Easterhouse in Glasgow. On the face of it, that seemed to be a similar act of madness; why on earth did they want to do it?

Major Lynn Gibbs (Salvation Army): The rains came—we saw quite a lot in Glasgow, although though not to the same extent as Noah—and we witnessed that the building of the boat in a garage brought together a group of people who had been struggling to cope and to come together. It gave them hope and a reason for change, which resulted in their developing a community and supporting one another. They have formed a walking club and a fishing club, and they have formed positive relationships—one couple is now engaged to be married—and achieved things that they thought would never be possible. One gentleman started to sing in a choir and was thrilled to have the joy of singing here at the Parliament in a homelessness choir.

We got involved and listened to some of the people there, and it was no surprise to learn that the project had little, if anything, to do with a boat. It had more to do with honesty, acceptance, love, care and understanding. Those elements all make communities and the special, important relationships that we all need. Whatever perspective we come from, whether political, scientific or spiritual, we all work together to help people who feel hopeless—

Major Raelton Gibbs: —to give friendship to people who are lonely—

Major Lynn Gibbs: —and to give joy to people who are sad.

Major Raelton Gibbs: We can make a difference as individuals, but a greater impact will happen if we work together.

Major Lynn Gibbs: As the Bible tells us:

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

Major Raelton Gibbs: Thank you.

Business Motion

14:04

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-11824, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revised business programme for this week.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the programme of business for:

(a) Tuesday 24 April 2018—

after

followed by Topical Questions

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: Update on Negotiations on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill

(b) Wednesday 25 April 2018—

delete

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Justice and the Law Officers;
Culture, Tourism and External Affairs

and insert

1.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

1.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Justice and the Law Officers; Culture, Tourism and External Affairs

delete

6.00 pm Decision Time

and insert

7.10 pm Decision Time

(c) Thursday 26 April 2018—

delete

2.30 pm Stage 3 Proceedings: Civil Litigation (Expenses and Group Proceedings) (Scotland) Bill

and insert

2.30 pm Stage 3 Amendments: Civil Litigation (Expenses and Group Proceedings) (Scotland) Bill—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Motion agreed to.

Topical Question Time

14:04

Ferry Services

1. **John Finnie (Highlands and Islands (Green)):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports that widespread disruption to CalMac Ferries services is anticipated until the end of May. (S5T-01043)

The Minister for Transport and the Islands (Humza Yousaf): CalMac is, of course, trying its best to mitigate the impact on the network over the period to the end of May. It is redeploying vessels within the fleet to ensure that lifeline connections are maintained to the communities that it serves on the Clyde and Hebrides network.

The MV Clansman was expected out of dry dock on 11 March. However, damage to the propulsion system and rudder has led to a delay, with essential repairs being required.

Safety must, of course, be my and CalMac's top priority in delivery of services. However, I fully understand the frustration of the communities on the Clyde and Hebrides network, which rely on their ferry services. The frequency of services on some routes may, during the period of disruption, be reduced from normal, and services have been amended. CalMac has secured an extension from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency for the MV Hebrides's passenger certificate, thereby avoiding there being two major vessels out of the fleet at the same time, and the MV Loch Bhrusda will commence service on the Mallaig to Armadale route later today. I will continue to monitor the situation closely: I have spoken today to the chair and interim director of CalMac.

John Finnie: I obtained figures from CalMac this week showing that 3,852 cancellations in the past five years were the result of mechanical failures. The average age of the ferries on the Clyde and Hebrides routes is 23 years, and older vessels need longer periods of repair in dry dock. Lack of co-ordination between Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd, which owns and maintains the vessels, and CalMac is clearly a factor. Given the huge scale of the disruption, does the minister believe that the document that I have here—the "Vessel Replacement and Deployment Plan", which was developed by CMAL and CalMac in 2016 and published in January—is fit for purpose?

Humza Yousaf: Yes. The point of the vessels plan is to give us a road map for the coming years, in order to address the issue of the ageing fleet that John Finnie has rightly mentioned. We have seen a huge growth in island tourism, including a 37 per cent growth in vehicle numbers over the

past five years, which has been helped by the introduction of the road equivalent tariff scheme. I will happily sit down with John Finnie and hear any helpful suggestions on our vessel deployment plan.

This Government is investing in vessels, the latest of which are being built on the Clyde, as John Finnie knows. We have brought commercial ship building back to the Clyde. The sooner the vessels are completed—to time and on schedule—the better. As a short-term solution to some of the issues that are being faced on the Clyde and Hebrides network, I have asked CalMac to look at what additional sailings can be put on in order to mitigate some of the disruption that we have seen.

John Finnie: I thank the minister for those comments, but he will understand that frustrations remain, nonetheless. The Scottish Government's "Scottish Ferry Services: Ferries Plan (2013-2022)" recommended replacement of the majority of the CalMac fleet. However, CMAL is entirely responsible for design and procurement. Does the minister see possible roles for the public sector operator and the trade unions earlier in the procurement process, and what overall assessment has the Government made of the disruption to our island communities?

Humza Yousaf: I am certainly not averse to the suggestion that those groups should be involved in the procurement process at an earlier stage. It is a good idea and I will reflect on how we can do that. To go back to my central point, I say that we are investing in vessels: we have invested in about eight in our time in Government since 2007, and two are currently being built by Ferguson Marine. We have also committed that the next vessel will serve the Islay route. Helpfully, I have on my left Michael Russell, the MSP who represents that island.

We are continuing, and will continue, to invest, but John Finnie's point is not lost on me—there is frustration on the issue. A breakdown on the network can have quite catastrophic results. However, our and CalMac's immediate priority has to be to ensure that lifeline services continue. CalMac is very aware of particular pinch points, and it wants to ensure that additional sailings or capacity are put on wherever possible, when it comes to things such as the whisky festival on Islay or the world war one commemorations that are taking place. I will reflect on the points that John Finnie has made.

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): The Mallaig to Armadale crossing has been hit particularly hard by the domino effect of CalMac moving vessels around the network. That is a reminder of the difficult season of summer 2016, and it is costing local businesses and

residents. I am sure that the minister will agree that that is concerning. Will he raise that issue with CalMac and urge it to find an immediate solution for Skye and Lochaber residents?

Humza Yousaf: I entirely agree that there is frustration. I have met the various stakeholders in Mallaig and Armadale to discuss the matter on a number of occasions, including meeting the local MSP and the local MP.

In 2017, we were in a much better situation than we were in 2016, but it seems that we have, unfortunately, gone somewhat backwards. That is not an acceptable situation, at all. However, I hope that Kate Forbes is reassured by the news that I gave in my opening remarks that MV Loch Bhrusda will commence its service on the Mallaig to Armadale route today. That will help, of course, but we have to look at the longer-term solution for Mallaig and Armadale. Consideration of what vessels we will build in the future will undoubtedly be part of that.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The minister will be well aware of the current disruption on the Oban to Coll and Tiree service, the Mallaig to Lochboisdale route and the Ardrossan to Campbeltown summer service. Will the minister explain why the Government has let the situation get completely out of hand, not least because islands and communities are now being pitted against one another in a competition for ferries?

Humza Yousaf: I do not agree with the premise of Donald Cameron's question. Mike Russell has raised with me the services that he mentioned on a number of occasions. We are working closely with constituency MSPs and MPs, and I was recently on Islay and Jura to take part in a transport summit on some of these issues as well as issues that affect a number of our other islands on the Clyde and Hebrides network.

Donald Cameron has a very simplistic and immature response to a serious and complex issue. As I have already explained, there has been a huge growth—37 per cent—in vehicle traffic on our ferries over the past five years, which is great, as more people are travelling to our islands. We have to invest in ferries; we have built eight, and another two are being built at Ferguson's. We cannot magic them up overnight, but we can look out to the open market to see where we can charter additional tonnage. We should do that, and we are doing it. Equally, it comes at a cost, and the vessels have to fit into the ports and harbours. We can also, of course, consider additional sailings, and we and CalMac are actively doing that.

On the idea that one island is being pitted against another, I counsel Donald Cameron to

avoid using such language in the future, as that is not happening. We are trying to ensure that lifeline services can be preserved in the face of disruption, and I hope that we can find solutions to that.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

The minister will be well aware of my high regard for CalMac, but the CalMac community board recently expressed concern about disruption that has been caused by ferry failures in the fleet. Does the minister share my assessment that the age of the vessels is a key concern? We heard about that from John Finnie. Eight vessels are more than 30 years old, and half are more than 25 years old. Will the minister discuss with CalMac and CMAL the fleet's resilience and the related issue of maintenance and dry docking?

Humza Yousaf: I thank David Stewart for the tone of his question, which was in stark contrast to the one that we heard from Donald Cameron. David Stewart understands the complexities of the issue.

The ageing fleet is an issue for us. We have invested in vessels more than even previous Administrations did, and we will continue to invest in them. David Stewart is absolutely right. The point that he made about dry docking demonstrated again his understanding of the issue, which I appreciate. As the age of a vessel increases, it may well have to spend longer being maintained in dry dock, and CalMac has to factor that in to minimise disruption. CalMac is having a conversation about that.

As well as investing in additional tonnage, vessels and sailings, we are actively looking at how we can spend money to refit, refurbish or even re-engineer vessels to sweat out the assets for even longer. All those things are part of the mix of solutions, but none comes without a price tag, of course, and many are not overnight solutions.

Doctors (Early Retirement Rate)

2. **Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports that the number of doctors who are seeking early retirement has doubled in the last eight years. (S5T-01044)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): Under this Government, national health service staffing and doctor numbers have increased to record high levels. In fact, in the past eight years, the number of doctors who work in our NHS has increased by more than 1,800, which is an increase of over 17 per cent.

Although the recently shared figures on early retirement are for NHS staff in general rather than doctors specifically, we know that a number of factors can lead to someone choosing early

retirement. For example, we have heard previously that the United Kingdom Government's reduction of the lifetime allowance for pension tax relief in recent years has led a number of general practitioners to take early retirement.

We have outlined a number of actions through part 1 of our national health and social care workforce plan to increase the number of opportunities for people to train as doctors; we have also created an additional 140 medical training places since 2017. We will build on that when we publish part 3 of the plan for primary care next week, which will reiterate our aim of increasing GP numbers by 800 over the next decade.

Anas Sarwar: Every day, we hear stories of NHS staff who are overworked, undervalued and underresourced. The figures show that, over the past eight years of the Scottish National Party Government, early retirements of NHS staff have doubled, and in the cabinet secretary's own backyard of crisis-hit NHS Tayside, they have more than trebled. That is shameful. I ask the cabinet secretary to stop the complacent responses and instead give Scotland a credible workforce plan. Can we have a credible workforce plan from a credible health secretary?

Shona Robison: Every day, our NHS delivers a fantastic service to the people of Scotland and patient satisfaction rates are at a record high.

I think that, in there somewhere, Anas Sarwar asked about the workforce plan. As I said to him in my initial answer, we have published parts 1 and 2 of the workforce plan and, next week, we will publish part 3, which focuses on primary care. That will lay out a comprehensive plan of how we will grow all parts of the workforce, including the medical workforce. Again, as I said in my original answer, we have created an additional 140 medical training places just since last year. All that taken together is a good news story.

If the NHS and social care workforce commission that Anas Sarwar established more than a year ago has any good ideas to propose when it eventually reports, we will look forward to having constructive input to the workforce planning debate.

Anas Sarwar: In reality, the problems are a result of years of mismanagement. The cabinet secretary mentioned NHS staff. She is right: we should thank our staff. However, that is not enough. NHS staff member after NHS staff member tells us about the pressure that they face every single day. As Dr Peter Bennie of the British Medical Association put it at the weekend, doctors are

"under pressure like never before".

That mismanagement was further highlighted this morning at the Health and Sport Committee, where it was revealed that NHS Lothian alone needs £31 million more just to keep services at existing levels. When will the cabinet secretary get her head out of the sand and recognise that we need meaningful action now and not the same old tired excuses? It is time for the cabinet secretary to step up or to step down.

Shona Robison: Every day, our NHS staff deliver a fantastic service. Anas Sarwar failed to mention that the BMA has acknowledged that we have more staff and resources. The BMA also—not unreasonably—pointed out that demand is also increasing. We are providing record funding to Scotland's NHS and we have recently announced further investment of more than £350 million in Scotland's front-line health boards, including additional investment in service reform and improvement of £175 million in order to meet the increasing demands of an ageing population.

As I have said, NHS staff numbers are at a historically high level. They have increased by 13,000 under this Government, with more doctors, nursing and midwifery staff delivering care for the people of Scotland. We are expanding those numbers with a further 55 undergraduate medical training places. As I have also said, we have created an additional 140 medical training places since last year, and we are committed to recruiting 800 more GPs over the next 10 years. Taken together, that is a good package of workforce planning measures.

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): Having recently visited Glasgow royal infirmary, I have nothing but praise for the staff there. It is time that we started praising staff more, instead of denigrating the workforce.

Anas Sarwar talked about staff shortages. Does the cabinet secretary share my concern about the potential impact of Brexit on the recruitment and retention of staff in our NHS?

Shona Robison: We are concerned that Brexit is already damaging the recruitment and retention of European Union staff. To mitigate that, we have committed to paying the settled-status fee for any EU citizen who is working in devolved public services in Scotland. That will help us to keep vital workers in the NHS.

Our NHS staff do a fantastic job, wherever they come from. The message is that we want to keep people working here, wherever they are from. They have a huge role to play in our NHS and they are most welcome. We want them to stay and we want others to join us.

Negotiations on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a statement by Michael Russell on an update on negotiations on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement.

14:21

The Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe (Michael Russell): Thank you, Presiding Officer; with your permission I will update Parliament on the negotiations that have been taking place between the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the United Kingdom Government on the EU withdrawal bill.

The negotiations have become particularly intense over the past few weeks. The joint ministerial committee on European Union negotiations met on 8 March and the JMC plenary met on 14 March. I spoke to David Lidington on the phone on 29 March, on 6 April and again last Saturday. I met David Lidington and Mark Drakeford last Monday and I spoke to Mark Drakeford several times in March and on Friday and Monday. I also wrote to Mr Lidington on Friday, and my officials have been in almost constant contact with Welsh and UK officials in the past month. I expect to meet Mr Lidington and Professor Drakeford again next week.

Accordingly, much effort has gone into—and will continue to go into—seeking and, if at all possible, achieving an agreed approach to the problems that the EU withdrawal bill and Brexit process have presented for the devolved Administrations.

Whenever this Parliament discusses Brexit, we should remember that the people of Scotland voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU. There were majorities for remain in every single local authority area. The Scottish Government remains as committed as ever to EU membership.

This week we have had yet more evidence of the unfolding disaster and confusion that is Brexit. The Prime Minister's refusal to countenance continued membership of the customs union, despite the evidence from her own Government of the damage that that will cause, is a result of the internal tensions in her party and has nothing to do with the best interests of any part of the country that she is meant to serve.

What is terrifying and appalling is that jobs, living standards and even the Good Friday agreement are all secondary concerns for the hard Brexiteers who now have the whip hand in Downing Street and, it seems, for those Tory

ministers who put their jobs before the livelihoods and future of their fellow citizens.

I know that many people were strongly of the view that, because of our country's democratic opposition to Brexit and particularly the hard Brexit that is currently favoured by the UK Government, this Parliament and this Government would have been entirely justified in taking a political decision to have nothing to do with the EU withdrawal bill.

As I told the Parliament in a previous statement, there was no consultation on the content of the bill prior to our seeing it in finished form. Moreover, when we saw the bill, it was clear that what was envisaged was nothing less than a crude power grab on the powers of the Scottish people as exercised by this, their Scottish Parliament.

However much we disagree with leaving the EU, legal preparations must, regrettably, be made for EU withdrawal. That is what the withdrawal bill seeks to achieve. Even if we were able to avoid Brexit at the 11th hour, that would still be case. Therefore, the huge, time-consuming task of ensuring that the statute books of the UK and Scotland can function properly following EU withdrawal is a necessary one.

This Scottish Government has risen to the task. Working with others—different political parties, Governments of different political persuasions and communities and interest groups across Scotland—we have all striven to achieve a better, more acceptable bill.

We have undertaken that work with only one absolute red line, which is this: all the preparations for Brexit can and must be done in a way that builds on and is consistent with the principles of devolution—principles that were endorsed overwhelmingly by the people of Scotland in the 1997 referendum.

That cannot come as a surprise to anyone. We have repeatedly made the point over many months. We said it in December 2016, in "Scotland's Place in Europe". We made the point in private to the UK Government before the withdrawal bill was even introduced, and we set it out in detail in September 2017 in the legislative consent memorandum for the bill.

On that issue, the Scottish Parliament has spoken as one, and its voice has been heard more powerfully because of that unity. In its interim report on the bill, the Finance and Constitution Committee unanimously called the bill's approach

"incompatible with the devolution settlement in Scotland".

It warned that clause 11, in particular, would

"adversely impact upon the intelligibility and integrity of the devolution settlement in Scotland"

and was

"a fundamental shift in the structure of devolution in Scotland".

Let me focus on the precise words of the committee's report for a second. What does it mean, to say that the UK Government's approach is

"incompatible with the devolution settlement"?

Well, it means that clause 11 subverts the principles of that settlement—principles that have given the people of Scotland a stable and effective Parliament for nearly 20 years, supported by all parties in this place, and that, throughout that time, have secured good government under different Administrations and in response to many political challenges. At the very heart of those principles is this non-negotiable truth: changes to the devolution settlement require the agreement of the Scottish Parliament. That is the foundation stone of section 30 of the Scotland Act 1998, under which orders that adjust the list of matters reserved to the UK Parliament must be approved not simply in Westminster, but here as well.

The Scottish Government intends to protect that essential principle of devolution but, before I turn to how we will do so, I want to indicate the matters on which we have made negotiating progress—and I am pleased to say that there are quite a few of them. I pay tribute to the work of David Lidington and Mark Drakeford, to our respective officials and to those in this Parliament who have supported and helped the process, which has been strengthened by having substantial cross-party support. I thank a number of members of the House of Lords—especially Lord Hope of Craighead and Lord Mackay of Clashfern, who have shown a keen interest in the matter and have worked hard on it, as have Jim Wallace, David Steel and Dafydd Wigley.

Mark Drakeford and I, in our conversation yesterday, confirmed that we would continue, going forward, to work together on these and on all the other Brexit issues and concerns we have in common. Together with the UK Government, we are agreed that there is an important and difficult job to be done in preparing our laws for EU withdrawal. We are agreed that, ideally, it would be done on a UK-wide basis, through co-operation and collaboration between the Governments of these islands. We are agreed that, on leaving the EU, it could make sense for there to be common frameworks applying across the UK in some areas that were formerly covered by common EU rules. Where such frameworks are in Scotland's interests, the Scottish Government is ready to discuss them. We have identified 24 areas in which we should be able to work together with consent from all the Governments involved. The Secretary of State for Scotland has also said—both to the UK Parliament and here—that

frameworks should not be imposed on the devolved Administrations. We agree with that as well. Taken together with the principles of devolution, those points are the basis of something that this Government could consider recommending to Parliament.

However, the key sticking point remains—as it always has been—clause 11 and the insistence of the UK Government on its right to take control of devolved powers. Let me set out to Parliament where we are at present on that issue. Tomorrow, we expect the UK Government to publish further amendments to clause 11. We have given them serious and respectful consideration but we, as a Government, are absolutely and unanimously clear that we cannot support any proposal that would enable the powers of the Scottish Parliament to be constrained without the agreement of the Scottish Parliament. The UK Government's latest proposals continue to give Westminster the power to prevent the Scottish Parliament from passing laws in certain devolved policy areas. While we expect the amendments to include the addition of a sunset clause, the restrictions on our use of such powers—our powers—would last for up to seven years. The UK Government says that that ban—or legal constraint—needs to be in place to prevent the Scottish Parliament from legislating on devolved matters, such as farming or fishing, while framework discussions are taking place. However, it has never proposed—and has indicated that it could not accept—such a legal constraint for England. Any constraint placed on the UK Government will, therefore, be purely voluntary.

Given the seemingly endless political uncertainty at Westminster, who can say what a future Prime Minister or UK Government will choose to do? However, during the period of restraint, the Scottish Parliament would lack the ability to ensure that our laws in those areas—environmental protection, for example—could keep pace with EU law. During the same period, Westminster politicians—or those who might replace them, of whatever political or constitutional hue—would have a totally free hand to pass legislation that would directly affect Scotland's fishing industry, our farmers, our environment, our public sector procurement rules, the safe use of chemicals and our food safety—the list is long, while our Parliament's hands would be tied.

It is also worth noting that although discussion and political agreement might have reduced the number of areas that might be subject to such restrictions to 24, under the UK Government's proposals there will be nothing in the withdrawal bill that limits possible restrictions in those areas. Again, we are being asked to take that on trust. How could we recommend giving consent to a bill

that would place Scotland in such a vulnerable position in these uncertain political times?

We understand that, in an effort to allay our concerns, the UK Government might also propose a further political commitment to the effect that it will not normally make such regulations without the consent of the Scottish Parliament. However, that would not form part of any legislative amendment. In any event, if we agreed to that, the terms of the UK Government's approach mean that it would still be for the UK Government and, ultimately, the House of Commons to determine what was normal and what was not. It would also be for Westminster to decide whether the Scottish Parliament was acting reasonably on any occasion on which it opted to withhold consent. In that respect, we cannot forget that the UK Government has gone out of its way during the Brexit process to remind people that it can legislate on any matter at any time. Indeed, in relation to the Sewel convention, the UK Government lawyers told the Supreme Court:

“Whether circumstances are ‘normal’ is a quintessential matter of political judgment for the Westminster Parliament”.

Let me cut to the chase. Notwithstanding the more benign language that is now being used, the effect of the UK Government's latest proposals remains that the Scottish Parliament's powers could be restricted for a period of up to seven years without its consent. That is not something that the Scottish Government could recommend that the Parliament approves.

However, there is still a way forward. In fact, there are two possible ways forward, which I have outlined to David Lidington. The First Minister has today outlined them to the Prime Minister. The first is to simply remove clause 11 from the bill. The Scottish and UK Governments could then agree on equal terms not to introduce legislation in devolved policy areas while negotiations on frameworks were taking place. In that way, the Scottish Government is offering exactly the same “certainty” that is being offered by the UK Government. We could do so, as we have indicated, within a written and signed document that showed that neither side would unreasonably withhold agreement.

We believe that if such a voluntary agreement is good enough for Westminster, it should also be good enough for Holyrood. That solution would also demonstrate equity of treatment, which would be in keeping with the repeated assurances that were made to the people of Scotland during and after the 2014 referendum, and as part of the 2016 referendum campaign.

If the UK Government rejects that reasonable proposal, we have another one: we could agree to abide by the present system. In that system, any

regulations that would prevent the Scottish Parliament from legislating on devolved matters for a temporary period of time must be introduced only when that is agreed to by the Scottish Parliament. That means that amendments to clause 11 must make it clear that absolute Scottish Parliament consent is required. There must be no override power for UK ministers in the withdrawal bill. That would be consistent with the way in which other order-making powers are currently exercised and with the devolution settlement. That proposal is one that we have repeatedly made to the UK Government.

Those are practical and workable solutions to the issue that would ensure that the necessary preparations for Brexit could be made across the UK, while protecting devolution. They are both on offer. By continuing to work with the Welsh and UK Governments, we can make progress on them but, in the end, it will be for this Parliament to make the final decision. It is the Scottish Parliament that will give or withhold legislative consent to the UK Government's withdrawal bill.

Later this week, following the lodging at Westminster of the UK Government's amendments, the Scottish Government will lay in Parliament a supplementary legislative consent memorandum, in which we will spell out in detail the Scottish Government's remaining concerns about the bill and suggest the options that I have outlined as a way forward. It will express our wish to come to an agreement with the UK Government, but it will also make it clear that if clause 11 is not removed, or if the necessary changes to clause 11 are not made, we will not recommend that Parliament consents to the withdrawal bill as a whole. It will also set out our view on other clauses, indicate what we could accept if agreement can be reached and outline how we intend to proceed with the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill, which we will defend vigorously in the courts.

At the end of that process, this Parliament will decide how it wants to proceed. It will then be for the UK Government and the UK Parliament to respond to that decision. They will have to do so by the third reading of the bill in the Lords, which will be the last opportunity to make any substantive changes to it in Westminster. That is what is required by our constitution, and no less an authority on the matter than Professor Tomkins, in this chamber, described the Sewel convention as

"a binding rule of constitutional behaviour: breach it,"

he warned,

"and there will be a high political price to pay".—[*Official Report*, 23 January 2018; c 74.]

Indeed. It would be an outrage if the UK Government decided to use what the people of Scotland did not vote for—Brexit—to undermine what we did vote for: devolution. The UK Government has no mandate to undermine the powers of this Parliament and therefore the Scottish Government will do everything that we can to protect the devolution settlement that people voted for so overwhelmingly more than 20 years ago.

We want to agree with the UK Government and move the issue on so that we can spend time on the substantive and dangerous challenges that Brexit presents more and more pressingly to this nation, but we cannot agree at any price and certainly not at the price of undermining this Parliament and the essential work that it does for all the people of Scotland.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): I thank the minister for early sight of his statement. It is deeply disappointing that he has come to the chamber without a deal today. As he knows, we on the Conservative benches have been critical of the process around clause 11 since last summer, but the United Kingdom Government has, in recent weeks, stepped up the pace, listened to the concerns that were raised and come forward with a new offer that it will publish tomorrow. However, it would appear that, for narrow political reasons, the Scottish National Party once again says no. That, it seems, has nothing to do with the matter at hand and everything to do with the SNP's obsession with a second referendum on independence.

Will the minister confirm two points? In his statement, the minister claimed that he is still working together with the Welsh Government. Has he been informed of the view of the Welsh Government on the proposed new amendments to clause 11, or has it kept him out of the loop? Last September, Mr Russell said:

"we cannot envisage a situation in which Scotland would be content and Wales would not be, or vice versa."—[*Official Report, Finance and Constitution Committee*, 20 September 2017; c 25.]

Has anything changed or is that still his position?

Secondly, is it not the case that the minister was, in fact, prepared to sign up to the deal today but was overruled last week by the First Minister? Is not it the case that he was prepared to give consent, but she refused?

Michael Russell: I will respond to three points and not just to the two questions. On the first point, there is nothing narrow about standing up for the powers of this Parliament—that is what we were all elected to do. The heart of this matter is very simple and the issue at stake has been boiled down to its irreducible minimum, which is that we

can consent and move forward by consent or we can be refused the opportunity to consent. The offer is on the table and I have made it very clear that there are two options, either of which we would accept; I make that absolutely clear—we would accept either of them. However, there has to be a decision by the UK Government to respect the devolution settlement. That is non-negotiable.

On the two points, first it is up to the Welsh Government to say what its position would be. I have discussed these matters, over a range of days and opportunities, with Mark Drakeford. As I said in my statement, the thing that we agreed last night—at 25 past 5 last night, when I was on a Caledonian MacBrayne ferry on the way back from Mull—was that no matter the decision of either Government, which we are entitled to make, we would go on working together on the key issues from Brexit that confront both Administrations. There are some things that rise above the narrow political advantage of the Tories on Brexit, and one thing that rises above it is the work that the Welsh Government and we will do to defend the devolved settlements—and we will go on doing that together.

As for the final question, clearly Mr Tomkins is not close to what has taken place, because anyone who is close to what has taken place knows precisely that the situation as I left it with David Lidington in our conversation on Saturday is that we cannot move forward on the basis of lack of consent for the Scottish Parliament. I stand foursquare behind that position and, as I indicated, so does the entire Government—there is no crack in that. Either every member of this chamber stands foursquare behind that, or we would have to ask what they are doing here.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): All through this process, Scottish Labour has worked with others to bring about a resolution to the disagreements around the devolution of powers after Brexit, because we believe in devolution. In the House of Commons, Lesley Laird tabled amendments that would have resolved the situation but, disgracefully, Tory MPs were whipped to oppose them. Early on in the process, we proposed stand-still agreements and a sunset clause, but the minister was dismissive of that approach until he and the First Minister went on to propose the very same thing.

All along, we have taken the minister at face value. My colleagues and I have worked with him on the continuity bill. Up until today, he has shared information and the latest developments in negotiations but, today, alas, there have been no phone calls, texts or briefings—nothing. All we have to go on is the statement.

I acknowledge and welcome the progress that has been made on a range of issues. As we have

asked for all along, it is clear that the three Governments have worked constructively to find compromise on some of the key issues, and welcome progress has been made. However, ultimately, we do not have an agreement. I ask, again, whether the Scottish Government's position is shared by the Government of Wales. Is there no agreement there either? What will happen if the Scottish Government's continuity bill is struck down by the Supreme Court? Where will that leave us? What scope is there for further last-minute progress?

To pick up on Mr Tomkins's point, which I did not know about until today, the body language and lack of real language between the minister and the First Minister suggest that a deal—

Members: Oh!

Neil Findlay: I see that now they are all pals. That would suggest that there was potentially a deal to be struck, and that the minister wanted to sign it but was kiboshed by the First Minister. Is it the minister's opinion that the Scottish Government should have an absolute veto at all times? I hope that the minister and the First Minister are not playing political games in another round of constitutional politicking, because that would be a betrayal of the good faith that we have invested in the process. To paraphrase the minister's statement, it would be an outrage for the Scottish Government to use the devolution that the Scottish people voted for to pursue the independence that they did not vote for.

Michael Russell: I am grateful to see a new side of Neil Findlay today. I did not realise that he was a man of such sensitivity that his antennae could tell him instantly what the state of the relationship is between myself and the First Minister or, indeed, anybody else. I can assure him that the relationship with the First Minister seems fine to me, and I think that it seems fine to her, too.

The reality of the situation is clear. We need to know from Mr Findlay—it did not arise in his question, no doubt because he was too busy carefully staring at us to work out whether the First Minister and I were inching together or inching apart—whether he will stand up for the rights of the Scottish Parliament and oppose the imposition—

Neil Findlay: We do it every time.

Michael Russell: If he is indicating that he is willing to do so, I am very glad about that, because I want to continue to work with everybody on those issues. Notwithstanding the more benign language that is sometimes used in Westminster, the core issue is very clear. Will the Scottish Parliament consent, or will it not be asked for its consent? Will

those restrictions last for seven years, or will we have a voluntary working together?

As far as the Supreme Court is concerned, we will vigorously defend our legislation, which the member voted for, I am glad to acknowledge. Members voted for it by 95 votes to 32. We believe that that legislation is not only justifiable but necessary, and we will stick with it.

We will go on working with the Government of Wales. I repeat the conversation that I had with Mark Drakeford last night: whatever the decision of the Government of Wales and whatever the decision of the Government of Scotland, we will continue to stand together on the issue of defending devolution, and we will continue to ensure that our interests are defended in this process. We will go on doing that, and I am sure that Neil Findlay will not wish to drive us apart from the Labour Government in Wales.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I have repeatedly said how sceptical I am about whether the UK Government will back down from its power-grab approach. Unlike some MSPs, who seem to be eager to sign off on a deal that undermines devolution, I believe that MSPs of all political parties should be resolute. Members of this Parliament should not undermine the Parliament or go along with a Brexit power grab that would do so.

The minister said that

“The UK Government has no mandate to undermine the powers of this Parliament”

and that is absolutely right, but surely there is now a bigger question. With all that we now know about the Cambridge Analytica scandal, about anonymous Tory donors channelling their money through the Democratic Unionist Party and back again in order to avoid transparency rules, and about whistleblowers’ revelations about illegal co-ordination between different parts of the leave campaign, is not it time to say that the entire EU referendum result is in question, and that there is no safe mandate for the UK to leave the European Union?

Michael Russell: I have the greatest sympathy for that point of view. [*Laughter.*]

It strikes me that all that hollow laughter from the Tories has a nervous air. They have been caught out about a shabby and unpleasant campaign, the result of which does not have—this is vitally important—the agreement of the people of Scotland. It might come as a surprise to the Tories, but this is Scotland’s Parliament. One or two Tory MSPs supported Brexit, which was a reasonable and honourable position, but the day after the result, some Tory members who had been clamouring to stay in the single market and

the customs union were running away from that as fast as possible. That does not strike me as principled politics and it does not strike me as them being honest to the people whom they represent. Patrick Harvie was absolutely correct to raise those issues.

However, it is important that—as the SNP Government has tried to do from the beginning—we separate our ensuring that the statute book is prepared for a Brexit that I hope will not happen, from our opposing Brexit. We continue to oppose Brexit, but we also continue to try to get the statute book in the right condition, so that it is ready. We stand ready to do so on the terms of the proposals that I have laid out here today.

I commend anybody who has influence with the UK Government—I do not know whether anybody has; it strikes me that the Prime Minister does not listen to anybody but herself—to make sure that they understand that we are happy to accept the two offers and that that will conclude the matter.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I also thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

In selling his approach, Mr Russell has made much of his close working relationship with his Welsh counterpart and with the Welsh Government more generally. He has stressed it time and again today. It now seems that the Welsh Government will accept the UK Government’s amendments tomorrow. What will the minister do in those circumstances? What is now the difference between Cardiff and Edinburgh?

Michael Russell: I know that Mr Scott likes hypothetical questions. He had a reputation for them in a previous parliamentary session.

I go back to what I said in my statement about my discussions with Mark Drakeford:

“Mark Drakeford and I, in our conversation yesterday, confirmed that we would continue, going forward, to work together on these and on all the other Brexit issues and concerns we have in common.”

That is the answer to Tavish Scott’s question: we will continue to do that, no matter the position that either Government takes.

That will also be true no matter the position that either Parliament takes. In my statement, I also stressed that the decision on the supplementary legislative consent memorandum will come to this Parliament and that it will be for Parliament to take a position on it. We will lay out in greater detail the things that I have mentioned today, then Parliament will have a choice.

I also indicated early in my statement that I expect to meet Mr Lidington and Professor Drakeford next week, when we will continue with our discussions. In our meetings, the view has

also been taken that if we could get the Northern Ireland Assembly up and running—if we could overcome the historic mistake of the Tories of relying on Democratic Unionist Party votes, which has made that ever more unlikely—we might also be able to have four nations sitting at the table trying to find a way forward on the basis of consent. I repeat: “on the basis of consent.” That is the issue that we are addressing, and the issue that needs to be resolved.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): Can the minister please confirm that I have the correct understanding of what he has set out in his statement? Am I correct in thinking that the UK Government is proposing a different set of rules for the UK to the rules for here at Holyrood in regard to some areas of devolved powers?

Am I also correct in thinking that the UK Government is proposing that Holyrood be bound by UK statute to not act on those devolved powers for at least seven years, while the UK Government would not be similarly constrained, and that it has asked us to trust it that it would not seek to change any devolved powers in those areas?

Does the minister believe that his proposal upholds a central principle of devolution—which is what this is all about—that Holyrood should always give its consent to changes in devolved powers that are proposed by the UK Government?

Michael Russell: Bruce Crawford has put things pithily and succinctly, as ever. That is exactly the situation. We are being asked to agree to something and to accept legislative constraint being put upon us in those areas for a period of seven years, while there will be no equivalent legislative constraint put on the UK Parliament or Government. That is exactly what the UK Government is saying.

Although I am a very trusting individual, I think that in those circumstances, trust should go both ways. We are saying that if that is the relationship that the UK Government wants to have, it should trust us and we will trust it. That is—I would have thought—a reasonable way to move forward. If it trusts us and we trust it and we write that down—we are quite prepared to put it in a written agreement—we will have a basis for moving forward. I think that most people would say, “That’s how a deal should be done. Do it.”

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): There is clearly a heightened atmosphere, but I implore ministers to do all that they can to work until the very last minute to secure an agreement—and not, I say frankly, on the basis of the late and random proposals being made now but on the basis of the working amendment that is on offer.

The minister has spelled out this afternoon the concessions that the UK Government has made,

but he has not spelled out what concessions the Scottish Government has made. Will he do so?

Given that the minister’s previous statement, and Ash Denham’s and Stuart McMillan’s interventions on it, were all based on the lock-step approach with Wales being fundamental to challenging the impression that there is anything here to evidence a constitutional obsession in the Scottish Government, what will ordinary Scots now make of the fact that if Wales agrees, it is Scotland alone that will stand against an agreement that will clearly be in the interests of the whole United Kingdom?

Michael Russell: Jackson Carlaw started well with an appeal to reason, but he did not finish very well. I think that ordinary people will look at this Parliament and say that they elected its members to stand up for Scotland. That is what we are here for. They will see some members who are prepared to stand up for Scotland, and who are prepared to say that the people who voted for the devolved Parliament have the right to be listened to, and that the people who did not vote for Brexit have the right to be listened to.

I think that people will also look at us and say that we are a Government that is offering a compromise, because the compromise that is being offered is absolutely clear. [*Interruption.*] The compromise is absolutely clear—we are prepared to restrict voluntarily how we operate and the powers that we have, as long as the UK Government agrees to its own voluntary restriction. We will then both have given up substantive amounts in order to reach a fair agreement about how we will operate. That is a massive concession.

At the beginning of the process, as I said in my statement, we would have been quite entitled, given how we had been treated, given how the legislation came about, and given what is in it, to throw up our hands and say that enough is enough, and that we will not be treated in that way. However, I have to say that we have, painstakingly and over many months, worked on the issues. We got, eventually, to the list of 24 after a lot of work. We got, eventually, acceptance of the principles on which we would draw up that list, and we have now got to the stage at which there is a very clear choice.

I agree with Jackson Carlaw that we should not hype the matter up as Adam Tomkins did at the beginning. Let us keep it nice and calm. [*Laughter.*] Some Tory members cannot do that, but I can, so let us try to keep this nice and calm. [*Laughter.*] I am afraid that some of the Tories are not up to the challenge, so I will give it a third shot. Let us keep this nice and calm. We have made the offer of a choice. The UK Government now has the opportunity to respond to it. Members of that

Government are usually calmer than the Scottish Tories, so I urge them again to be calm, to look at that choice and to come to the voluntary agreement that we need.

The Presiding Officer: I urge all members and the minister to be succinct with the next few questions and answers.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): The minister has made it clear that the Scottish Parliament could be prevented from legislating in a wide range of devolved areas for, shockingly, up to seven years. What impact could that have on vital Scottish interests, particularly in the context of trade deals being struck after Brexit?

Michael Russell: The topic of trade deals is clearly very much on people's minds—the much talked about but fortunately so far never-eaten chlorinated chicken comes to mind. In relation to a range of food safety issues, measures could simply be imposed on Scotland and we would have no possibility of resisting them. The same applies to areas such as environmental issues, the administration and development of agricultural policy and fishing.

The issue applies to a whole range of things, which gives us serious cause for concern, and that is only with the present UK Government. It is always foolish to say that things could not get worse, as my experience in politics is that they often can. Can members imagine a Boris Johnson Government? Can members imagine a Rees-Mogg Government? I know that that sounds ridiculous, but we live in a very bizarre world. Can members imagine what that type of Government might want to do and would be able to do because the Scottish Parliament could not prevent it from doing that? If that does not concentrate minds in this chamber, I do not know what would.

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): What would be the legal standing of the supplementary LCM that the minister proposes if the challenge in the courts to the continuity bill is successful?

Michael Russell: I would want to seek opinion on that question, because I am not in a position to give a legal opinion, and I do not think that I should do so. We will proceed to defend the continuity bill, as we believe that it is entirely within the competence of the Parliament. We will bring forward the supplementary legislative consent memorandum, which will go to the Finance and Constitution Committee, of which Mr Kelly is a member, where I am sure there will be a searching examination of it. It will then be up to the chamber to decide what to do. However, I do not really want to give Mr Kelly a legal opinion. I know that he can get some of those closer to home, but I really should not do that.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): The minister indicated that this is not the end of the process. What remaining opportunities are there for the UK Government to put the situation right and amend its bill to ensure that it respects the Scottish Parliament?

Michael Russell: There remains time for the UK Government to do so in the House of Lords at the third reading, which I understand is presently scheduled for the middle of May, although of course that timetable can always slip. We would have liked to have resolved the issue earlier, but we cannot resolve it on the basis of the present discussions. We have made substantial progress and there has been give on both sides, but there is a fundamental point, and we cannot work our way around fundamental points, although the UK Government keeps trying to do that. There is a fundamental point that we have to address and so we are placing it here very carefully. However, we could resolve the issue this afternoon. The First Minister has written to the Prime Minister and has set out the choice that we think needs to be made. If the Prime Minister were to come back and choose either of the options, the issue would be resolved. There is time to do that, and I hope that we are able to do it.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): Did the First Minister overrule the minister on making a deal?

Michael Russell: No.

Ash Denham (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP): The statement revolved around the significant issues that remain over clause 11, but the minister outlined that there has been progress on other areas of the withdrawal bill. Will the minister say what those areas are and whether the approach now meets the approval of the Scottish Government?

Michael Russell: I just addressed a range of those areas in my statement and I will not go back through them, but in the conclusion to my statement I said that we will bring forward a supplementary legislative consent memorandum later this week. It will outline those matters in more detail and will indicate what we propose to do about them.

It is right to focus on the issue of clause 11, and I would encourage people to do that. Everything else is secondary in these circumstances—clause 11 is the issue that still requires to be resolved, so we need to focus on clause 11 and find a resolution to it.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): I welcome and acknowledge the progress that has been made, but I have to express disappointment and frustration that, all these months later, we still do not have a deal.

The minister will know that I have pressed the case for the use of standstill agreements and sunset clauses. He will recall that Nicola Sturgeon and Carwyn Jones wrote jointly to offer a sunset clause as a potential solution to clause 11.

The Presiding Officer: Ask a question, please, Mr Bibby.

Neil Bibby: We now see a sunset clause on the table, but the minister appears to be objecting to it lasting up to seven years. Will the minister clarify whether he has a specific objection to it being up to seven years and, if he does, what timeframe would be acceptable to the Scottish Government?

Michael Russell: It is a combination of the time and the lack of consent that is the issue. A sunset clause is obviously useful to have and we have never opposed it, but we have been doubtful about it because the issue of consent is more important. The issue of consent remains at the centre of these concerns.

The member says that he is frustrated that there is no solution. I am frustrated that there is no solution. To be entirely blunt about it, I could probably do without commuting backwards and forwards to London to have these discussions. I could probably do without late Saturday afternoon discussions with David Lidington. I am frustrated too, but my job is to make sure that I do not sell the pass. The pass here is to make sure that we defend the Scottish Parliament and the devolution settlement. I absolutely will not sell the pass on those issues.

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): I thank the minister for the statement updating us on the negotiations. A key point, however, remains: we cannot give up on the single market and the customs union, despite the Tories' best attempts. Will the minister continue to fight for a differentiated solution for Scotland that will protect jobs, living standards and our economy?

Michael Russell: Yes, I will. The single market and customs union issue is vitally important. I am pleased to see that the position of the Labour Party has moved towards keeping the customs union, and I think that there was some indication in Emily Thornberry's contributions over the weekend and yesterday that further movement was possible. I welcome that, because I think that single market and customs union membership is absolutely vital.

Of course, the UK Government knows that, because it has its own figures. In undertaking an analysis, as we have done, the UK Government has come to the conclusion that, of the three options that exist—single market and customs union membership, a Canada-plus type of deal and a World Trade Organization-rules deal—single market membership, even though it would

mean that people would be worse off, would be a far, far better option than the other two. Those are facts and they are known to the UK Government.

The most astonishing thing is that a Government that knows those things—ministers who know those things—is proceeding with a fantasy about some advantages that will exist in free trade deals elsewhere, when the figures show that those would be minuscule when compared to the advantages of the existing customs union.

I saw the trade secretary tweeting about it at the weekend. The trade secretary knows from those figures that the advantages that will be produced by those free trade agreements are nothing compared to the disadvantages of leaving the customs union. Frankly, I find that—there is only one word for it—disgusting.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): Last year, Mike Russell told the Finance and Constitution Committee:

“we cannot envisage a situation in which Scotland would be content and Wales would not be, or vice versa.”—*[Official Report, Finance and Constitution Committee, 20 September 2017; c 25.]*

Is that still his position?

Michael Russell: Mr Simpson is asking a question that was asked about four questions ago. I respectfully suggest that he catches up. It is very strange that the Tories are so concerned with Wales; I cannot remember Tories being concerned for Wales ever before—how odd.

The reality of the situation is that it is up to the Welsh Government and the Welsh Parliament to make their decision. Mr Simpson is a member of the Scottish Parliament, I remind him, and it is up to the Scottish Parliament to make our decisions.

I return to a point that I have made many times, which I will make again. It is absolutely clear from the discussion between me and Mr Drakeford yesterday. As I said, I was speaking from a CalMac ferry from Mull. I will read the point again. We confirmed—*[Interruption.]* If the Conservatives do not like the answer, they should not ask the question so often.

We confirmed

“that we would continue, going forward, to work together on these and on all the other Brexit issues and concerns we have in common.”

That was my answer 20 minutes ago, it was my answer 10 minutes ago and it is my answer now. If Mr Simpson comes back to it tomorrow, it will be my answer then.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): I thank the minister for the information that he has provided. What assurances has the Scottish Government received from the UK Government

about how the devolved Governments will be consulted?

Michael Russell: Clare Haughey has returned to the nub of the matter, which is that there could be consultation, but there certainly will not be a role for decision making. In other words, we might be asked our opinion, but, if our opinion does not match with what the UK Government wants, it will not matter. That is not how we can do business—it is not how any member of this Parliament should be able to do business. We should be able to stand there as equals, discussing these issues with other Administrations and ensuring that we come to a common mind on them. That is mature politics and that is what we should be doing.

National Plan for Gaelic

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-11788, in the name of John Swinney, on the national plan for Gaelic.

Some members have indicated that they will make speeches in Gaelic, so interpretation facilities are available. Any member can listen to the interpretation by inserting their headphones into the socket on the right-hand side of the console. Any member who is unable to hear the translation should press the audio button on the console and select channel 1.

15:07

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): It gives me great pleasure to open this debate on the national plan for Gaelic. The ability to make our own decisions in this Parliament has been good for Gaelic in Scotland, and I am pleased to say that there has been good and welcome cross-party support for the Gaelic language in all sessions of this Parliament. I also welcome the opportunity to build on the established policy direction of supporting Gaelic, which I recognise that we share with other parties in Parliament today, as evidenced by the nature of the amendments to the Government motion.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig published the “National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-2023” just a couple of weeks ago. I want to place on record my thanks to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for the comprehensive, inclusive and ambitious way in which it has developed the work to take forward the contents of the plan and the approach to developing and building on the previous national plans. The main headings and themes in the plan focus on the need for progress in the use of Gaelic, the learning of Gaelic and the promotion of Gaelic.

The national plan provides us with clarity and direction in the steps that we need to take for Gaelic in Scotland. I again emphasise that there has been significant investment and very good progress in key Gaelic priority areas such as media, arts, education, communities and wider local plans, and our aim is to build on that excellent progress at local and national levels. Those important areas have wider benefits. Television, arts, education, communities and Gaelic plans can all strengthen the economy, encourage collaborative working and provide digital opportunities. Further, in this year of young people, it is important to note that they have a strong appeal for young people in our country.

The programme of Gaelic activities that is set out in the national plan is in line with our manifesto

commitments and commitments in the programme for government. In the areas of activity that I have listed, there are good initiatives and projects in place and operating successfully. That will be built on as part of the development work of the national plan.

At the heart of the national plan is an ambitious agenda with the aim of increasing the speaking, using and learning of Gaelic in Scotland. We will take action on the basis of the priorities in the new national plan. We will introduce initiatives and review projects in order to overcome obstacles, to address gaps and to make faster and more effective progress with Gaelic in Scotland.

Now that the national plan is in place, later this year I intend to convene a gathering of a range of public bodies and authorities and interested parties that can contribute to the progress that we want to see in the implementation of the national plan for Gaelic. It will be a day for looking at challenges and opportunities, and also proposing how we can take action to achieve more Gaelic activity and participation in the language in Scotland. My aim in the discussion later this year will be to emerge with a stronger commitment to Gaelic in Scotland and a range of specific actions that can be put in place to ensure that the aspirations of the national plan are realised in focused activity across a range of different organisations.

Today, I would like to list the areas in which we need to make progress and in August I will convene the relevant stakeholders to ensure that we can focus on a package of practical measures that can be put in place to support the development of the language. There are a number of areas in which we have seen good developments and in which we would like to see further progress.

In Gaelic early years education, there are currently 80 Gaelic early years groups, and last year there were over 500 Gaelic book-bug sessions for children. Bòrd na Gàidhlig has been awarded £100,000 of core funding for 2018-19 through the children, young people and families early intervention fund to take forward that work. In Gaelic early years education, we will build on recent growth in the sector. We will focus on continuity with Gaelic-medium education at primary and look to benefit from the opportunity of extended-hours provision. We will also maintain the effectiveness of Gaelic book-bug sessions and look forward to Sabhal Mòr Ostaig offering its new early learning and childcare course in the Gaelic language.

The growth of GME and Gaelic learner education will remain a key priority, and we will maintain our support for Gaelic education at all levels. There are very good examples of Gaelic

education in our local authorities and we welcome and support the work that is being undertaken by individual local authorities. In particular, following the opening of Portree Gaelic school last week, we will work towards the opening of other GME schools in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness and ensure that support is put in place for parental wishes and aspirations for Gaelic schools in Oban and Dingwall.

Portree Gaelic school is the sixth Gaelic school. I commend Highland Council for this achievement and look forward to attending the official opening of Portree Gaelic school later this year. As Gaelic education continues to grow, we will ensure that the growth is encouraged and supported through any changes and reforms to the ways in which our schools are run.

On the expansion plans for Gaelic education, I am pleased to build on the successful opening of Portree Gaelic school earlier this week with the announcement today that the Government will allocate £1.8 million to Glasgow City Council to support the development of the third Gaelic school in Glasgow. I commend Glasgow City Council for its remarkable record with Gaelic education. We look forward to hearing more of the development plans that will come forward from Glasgow City Council in the period ahead. I hope that the announcement will give confidence to the way in which we take forward the further development of the Gaelic-medium education programme across our country.

A strong emphasis will be maintained, as referred to in the Conservative amendment today, on GME teacher recruitment, including new routes into teaching and by means of Gaelic immersion for teachers and transfer courses. Those courses have been successful. We will keep them under review and ensure that they continue to offer opportunities for teachers who would like to transfer to Gaelic-medium education teaching.

We will ensure that Gaelic teachers have access to resources and technology in Gaelic through Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig and e-sgoil and are well supported by Education Scotland through the work that is taken forward in our regional improvement collaboratives.

We will maintain our support for Fèisean nan Gàidheal and its many activities in arts and education. In particular, I commend Fèisean nan Gàidheal for its new project beairteas. That will establish a register of mature Gaelic speakers to support teachers and to contribute to school learning in classrooms.

In education, the Government has invested significantly in partnership with our local authorities and I give the reassurance of our continued aspirations to ensure that the

programme of investment and expansion is supported. Through education, we have our best prospects to encourage and support the development of the Gaelic language and participation within the language itself.

It is difficult to think of Gaelic in Scotland without considering the strong contribution of BBC Alba. Without doubt, MG Alba makes a unique contribution to important areas of Gaelic development, such as Gaelic adult education, school education, initiatives for young people and Gaelic in the home and our communities. Benefits can also be seen in employment, skills, training, creative industries, sports, arts and traditional music. Indeed, the work of MG Alba has been fundamental to establishing strong creative industries sectors in some Gaelic-speaking areas of Scotland, particularly in the Western Isles where we have seen significant growth in the creative capacity of the creative industries.

MG Alba adds significant value to Gaelic, to Scottish cultural life and to the economy, particularly in areas of low population density. We will continue to support its diverse contributions, and discussions will continue with the BBC about funding arrangements for MG Alba programmes and how to support the development and range of the programming that can be delivered. The learn Gaelic adult learning resource will be revised and promoted by MG Alba to provide excellent digital access to Gaelic adult learning materials in the future.

The final area that I will cover is the contribution of Gaelic to Scotland's artistic community. We know that the impact of the Gaelic arts is immense and that they have huge potential to promote language attachment and loyalty. They provide opportunities for expression and skills development, for access and participation and for the pursuit of excellence. Through the Gaelic arts, the appeal and profile of Gaelic are raised in Scotland and beyond; Gaelic language use is strengthened and cultural life is enhanced, which has welcome economic and social benefits.

The work of An Comunn Gàidhealach, Fèisean nan Gàidheal and Ceòlas Uibhist is central, and a range of drama organisations, arts centres and festivals provide opportunities for the Gaelic arts. We must also include the important work of Gaelic publishing, particularly the work of the Gaelic Books Council, Acair and others, which ensure that Gaelic continues to provide opportunities for writers, publishers and consumers.

At the heart of our work on the Gaelic language is encouraging participation and ensuring that Gaelic is an integral part of the vital and vibrant life of communities in Scotland. We can see its impact in stimulating community activity and development, and it is important that we

encourage participation, particularly through education and broadcasting, and seize the opportunities of the 21st century, through digital applications, to ensure that the Gaelic language is given every support to encourage and nurture its development. We welcome the publication of the national plan for Gaelic, which we will build on to ensure increased participation and strength in the Gaelic language in Scotland, and to ensure that the benefit is felt throughout Scotland's communities as we support the development of Gaelic in our country.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the publication and launch of the National Gaelic Language Plan, and regards this as an opportunity to build on the good success of recent years and to ensure a faster rate of progress in all key areas of Gaelic development in Scotland, maintaining support and encouragement for standalone Gaelic schools and increasing the number of people speaking, using and learning the Gaelic language in Scotland.

15:18

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Scottish Conservatives are delighted to support the Government's motion and the Labour amendment.

The Scottish Conservative Party has a proud record of supporting Gaelic communities across Scotland. In 1985, George Younger, the then Secretary of State for Scotland, delivered a speech at the Sabhal Mòr Ostaig Gaelic college in Skye, in which he promised specific grants for Gaelic. In the following years, those grants became a reality for the first Gaelic medium units, which are now seen as the catalyst for the subsequent growth in Gaelic medium education. In 1990, the sum provided by his successor, Malcolm Rifkind—and followed up by Michael Forsyth—was crucial for setting up the Gaelic television fund and, therefore, what we know now as BBC Alba. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills was quite right to say how much has been achieved by BBC Alba; it is tremendous and very good news that 10 per cent of Scotland's population, whether they are Gaelic speaking or not, watch BBC Alba regularly. I know that the cabinet secretary is addressing BBC Alba's concerns about future funding and the implications of the new BBC Scotland channel.

Like all other parties in the chamber, the Scottish Conservatives have always understood that Gaelic is an intrinsic part of our heritage and social fabric, and it is to be celebrated as such. It is, therefore, extremely important to reassure all Gaelic-speaking people that Parliament gives them its full support. That is something that they greatly appreciate, particularly as it is cross-party support, which has meant that there has been

much more substantial progress than might perhaps have been the case otherwise.

As both the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization have pointed out, however, there is still an issue about Gaelic as an endangered language, by their definition. We should not forget that in the 1990s we saw a considerable decline in the Gaelic-speaking population in Scotland. While there has been renewed growth, there are still signs that in some cases there are real challenges ahead—something that we have to take very seriously.

In 2012, I spoke in the debate that followed the launch of the then Scottish Government's Gaelic language plan, and I have been on education committees on three different occasions when we have debated the future of Gaelic in Scotland. Then, as now, we were indebted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig and many others in the Gaelic community for helping us—especially those of us who are not Gaelic speakers—to understand the aspirations of the indigenous Gaelic communities and the challenges that they face.

In that respect, it is important to mention the progress of Gaelic medium education, the growth and development of which is one of the great success stories of Scottish education over the past 25 years, as far as I am concerned. More than 4,000 children are now taught through the medium of Gaelic throughout Scotland, and the exciting development is that so many of them are in primary school. We warmly welcome the development of new Gaelic schools in Glasgow, building on the success that Glasgow has always shown, and also in Inverness and Edinburgh, not least because the educational research points to the benefits of bilingualism in the intellectual development of young people. Many of the Gaelic schools and others that have Gaelic medium education have shown real progress in relation to attainment. There is a message there.

It is critical to the survival of the language that that growth continues. It is also important to the increasing diversity of Scottish education, in which the Scottish Conservatives firmly believe parents should have maximum choice. I am aware of some of the controversy concerning recent issues on the Isle of Skye, but I think that we can get past that if we handle the issues sensitively.

I note that Bòrd na Gàidhlig has concerns about whether the forthcoming education bill might undermine the statutory provision of Gaelic medium education across our local authorities. I do not share those concerns, but we must certainly ensure that nothing is done, even unwittingly, to undermine the language provision and the number of teachers available to teach it. We do not yet know what will be in the final

education bill, but it is important to be mindful of the issues that have been raised.

The fact that the most recent growth in the language has taken place in the nursery and primary sectors is a reflection of the improved facilities, including the digital ones that the cabinet secretary spoke about. However, there is still a huge issue about teacher recruitment in secondary schools. If there is to be a focus in this area, it must be on that. We know about vacancies that have lain open in local authorities where it has not been possible to encourage people to come and teach Gaelic, and there have been some headteacher vacancies, too. I encourage the cabinet secretary to look at that issue as a priority; we would be very supportive of his doing that.

It is also important that we look at teacher recruitment in the context of economic development across Scotland. We have had debates several times recently about some of the most fragile rural communities. A holistic approach must be taken to ensure that those rural communities, many of which have an indigenous Gaelic population, have the support that they require through their own infrastructures. Without those infrastructures, it is extremely difficult to encourage people to go and stay there to bring up their families and give those communities something for the future.

I say that, not because it is simply what I feel, but because of the advice that we have been given by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and some of those indigenous communities. I looked back at the comments that they made to the Education and Culture Committee in 2012 and 2013, providing Parliament with a lot of information about why the focus had to be on those communities, and recognising that perhaps we need to be a bit cleverer about ensuring that the spending in local authorities is diverted to them and that we do not focus too much time on local authorities where there is no demand and there are minimal numbers of Gaelic speakers.

When we have limited resources, which we do—perhaps increasingly limited resources—that focus is very important for us because, if there is anything that we want to do, it is to ensure that the Gaelic community feels that it is being properly supported in the right areas. That is why we support the cabinet secretary's motion, but also why we want an additional focus on Gaelic-medium education and supporting those indigenous communities.

I move amendment S5M-11788.1, to insert at end:

“, and, to this end, believes that the priority must be on Gaelic medium education and on ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of Gaelic-speaking and Gaelic-qualified teachers available to meet the demand, especially in secondary schools.”

15:25

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): The interpreters can relax: I do not have the Gaelic and I will not torture any word of the language by pretending otherwise. However, I have a little experience—albeit vicarious—of the recent historical context of this debate.

My secondary school was Inverness Royal academy. In those days, many young people from the islands had to go there for their secondary education and they all boarded together in a hostel. They could study for a higher in their language—Gaelic—but that was it. There was no opportunity for learning in the language or even using the language otherwise. I will not overstate the case, but that was a small community in a big school that suffered a kind of othering. Even then, it seemed to me that that was a pretty dismal kind of education provision for those young people, and, in truth, pretty shameful.

When the Parliament passed the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill in 2005, Peter Peacock, speaking for the then Government, looked back to 1616 and legislation that decreed that Gaelic be “abolished and removed” from Scotland. The school system in the 1970s might not have gone that far, but it was hardly a nurturing environment for Gaelic.

Now, more than 4,000 pupils learn entirely in the Gaelic language and parents have the right to request that for their children; Scotland has a Gaelic TV channel; and 50 of our public bodies have Gaelic language plans in place. All of that—including, of course, the national plans; we note the publication of the third national plan—flows from the historic Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. Our amendment simply adds acknowledgement of that to the Government’s motion, which we are also glad to support.

Scottish Labour has a good record of supporting the Gaelic language. Apart from Peter Peacock’s leadership in the Parliament in 2005, Labour-led Strathclyde Regional Council opened the first Gaelic-medium education unit at Sir John Maxwell primary school in 1985, and Labour-led Glasgow City Council opened the first standalone Gaelic school in 1999. The United Kingdom Labour Government ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2001, and the Communications Act 2003 provided the legal underpinning for BBC Alba.

There is, of course, a long way to go. In the debate on the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill in 2005, Alex Neil, at his most Churchillian, said:

“The bill represents not the end of the story but the end of the beginning of the story of the regeneration of Gaelic.”—[*Official Report*, 21 April 2005; c 16343.]

He was right. The last census—in 2011—showed a slight decline in Gaelic speakers, although, much more positively, it also showed an increase in young speakers. Although there are more pupils in Gaelic-medium education and more Gaelic schools now, the most recent official figures showed a drop in the number of pupils sitting Gaelic qualifications at both the national 5 and higher levels. Labour has repeatedly raised the issue of the narrowing of the school curriculum with the introduction of the new national exams. We have presented evidence that enrolments and attainments have been squeezed and that certain subjects have particularly suffered. Gaelic is one of those.

The other well-known problem, which Liz Smith rightly drew attention to, is the difficulty of recruiting Gaelic teachers and Gaelic-medium teachers. Indeed, last year, in response to the Education and Skills Committee’s work on teacher workforce planning, a Gaelic-medium teacher described in his written submission his frustration that the

“Failure to recruit fluent Gaelic staff, or adequately train non-Gaelic speaking staff results in only a minority, or small majority of staff having required levels of Gaelic. This undermines the very ethos of a Gaelic school and ultimately the burden on Gaelic speaking staff is increased.”

That is a vicious circle, for the teacher in question—a fluent Gaelic speaker—confessed that he was seeking to leave teaching. However, the reasons that he gave were increased workload and erosion of pay—in other words, the same problems that are underlying the shortages in other key subjects, too. Until the Government addresses those fundamental issues of pay and workload, we have to be concerned about the practicalities of the welcome expansion of Gaelic-medium education to which the cabinet secretary referred.

We should welcome progress, but must acknowledge the challenges that remain. We can celebrate the third national plan, but the cabinet secretary is right to point out that it is only the precursor to an implementation strategy, which will have to address questions of targets and timescales if the momentum of progress is to be maintained.

In spite of my lack of any facility with Gaelic, when pressed on my favourite Scottish poet, I answer Sorley MacLean, even though I can only ever enjoy his work in translation. Seventy years ago, MacLean wrote the rather despairing lyric:

“I do not see the sense of my toil putting thoughts in a dying tongue”.

At least today we can perhaps tell ourselves that MacLean’s native tongue is no longer dying, but

we must acknowledge that we have much more to do ere we can truly claim that it flourishes.

I move amendment S5M-11788.2 to insert at end:

“, and notes that the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 set up the framework for the National Gaelic Language Plan with the aim of growing the language usage to a point where it can be normalised.”

15:31

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green):
'S e latha math a th' ann. 'S toil leam a bhith ag èisteachd ri Gàidhlig anns a' Phàrlamaid againn.

Tha mi às na Cluainean, baile beag snog ri taobh Loch Lòchaidh 's faisg air a' Ghearasdan. Cha robh Gàidhlig aig mo phàrantan 's cha robh Gàidhlig san sgoil agam. A-nis tha sgoil ùr Ghàidhlig anns a' Ghearasdan. Tha an nighean agam, Ruth, agus an dithis nighean aice, Daisy 's Aimee, fileanta.

Tha mi a' smaoinichadh gum feum a h-uile duine sabaid airson na Gàidhlig.

Mar as àbhaist, feumaidh mi ràdh nach eil ach beagan Gàidhlig agam, 's feumaidh mi Beurla a bhruidhinn an-diugh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

It is a good day. I like hearing Gaelic in our Parliament. I am from Clunes, a small village beside Loch Lochy, near Fort William. My parents did not have Gaelic and there was no Gaelic at my school; now there is a new Gaelic school in Fort William. My daughter Ruth and her daughters Aimee and Daisy are fluent in Gaelic. Everyone should fight for Gaelic.

As usual, I must say that I have only a little Gaelic and must speak in English today.

The member continued in English.

It is important that we give a hearing to one of Scotland's national languages. I want to talk briefly of my other two grandchildren who are residents of Catalonia. Having travelled South America with their parents, carrying rucksacks, they have settled in Catalonia and are at the first and second stages in a Catalan school. They speak English and they already understood Spanish; now they speak Catalan and Spanish, or Castilian, as they would call it. That is a broadening experience.

Liz Smith touched on bilingualism. As a councillor in Highland Council, I encountered much ill-informed discussion about Gaelic, so I decided to promote the benefits of bilingualism. Quite frankly, it does not matter what the other language is, but in Scotland there is the option for it to be Gaelic.

I will cite information from the bilingualism matters website:

“Research has shown that bilingualism is beneficial for children's development and the future. Children exposed to different languages become more aware of different cultures, other people and other points of view. But they also tend to be better than monolinguals at 'multitasking' and focusing attention. They are often more precocious readers, and generally find it easier to learn other languages. Bilingualism gives children much more than two languages!”

I am sure that I am not the only MSP who is approached about the availability of languages in school, and it is right that Liz Smith recorded Bòrd na Gàidhlig's concerns about the Education (Scotland) Act 2016, which I am sure the cabinet secretary has heard.

There is a rich opportunity in bilingualism, and a lot of people want to take it up.

In the previous session of the Parliament, I was pleased to be successful in getting an amendment agreed to on the trigger point for Gaelic's availability in local authority areas. I also did work on Gypsy Traveller sites in a previous session, and it seems to me that there is a common link, when we consider the disparaging comments that are made and the local authorities that do not provide sites and have their heads down. We need to get everyone involved.

Tremendous work is going on—members talked about the statistics, and we can make a lot of that.

The cabinet secretary used the word “attachment”, which I thought was important. I was born and brought up in the Highlands and I have to say that Gaelic was not on my radar at all—it was a language that older people spoke. I did French at school, as did many other people. Now, many people in Scotland, across the Highlands and Islands and beyond, are making a good living and embracing our culture. There are many fine examples of that. I particularly like that Griogair Labhruidh raps in Gaelic—I am sure that the cabinet secretary is familiar with his work, which will be an important part of his record collection. It is about attachment; Gaelic should not be seen as remote.

In that context, I very much align myself with the comments about the fèis movement and BBC Alba. It is great that people understand “cairt-bhuidhe”—yellow card—because they frequently watch BBC Alba. It is not tokenism—we often talk about the quality of journalism, and “Eòrpa” is one of the few programmes that takes a wider perspective and has a positive outlook.

There are challenges with Gaelic-medium education, one of which is that many qualified teachers who are fluent Gaelic speakers do not feel that they have the necessary writing skills to

take up posts. There have been a lot of good initiatives in that regard, which I am sure will continue.

Portree Gaelic school has been mentioned. My word, we have some ability in the Highlands—indeed, elsewhere, too—to turn an amazingly exciting and positive story into a negative. Members who follow the Daily Gael on Twitter will know that the opening of the school has not opened a “Portal to hell”; it is a very positive news story and I am sure that there are more such stories to come. I particularly welcome the additional money for the new school in Glasgow.

Mòran taing.

15:37

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): John Swinney might recall that he and I were on a panel at Culloden academy in advance of the 2014 independence referendum. The green room happened to be a primary Gaelic-medium classroom. A notice above the displays clearly explained:

“We learn about the Gaelic language, and learn the language, because it is a gateway to learning about the history and culture of our country.”

That is a nice neat sentence that sums up what we are all trying to achieve when we promote the language, and its message contrasts with Iain Gray’s rather dismal experience at school all those years ago—it is not that long ago. There is a much more positive and uplifting experience now, which is inclusive of people of all ages.

That idea is echoed across the world. The American activist and writer Rita Mae Brown wrote:

“Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going.”

It is with that sentiment that we support the motion and the two amendments that were selected for debate today.

Liberal Democrats have been fully supportive of the Gaelic language and its promotion. From Russell Johnston, to Ray Michie, to Charles Kennedy, to John Farquhar Munro, my party has a long and proud tradition of passionately advocating for the Gaelic language and culture. John Farquhar Munro often spoke Gaelic in the chamber; indeed, I am told that he often used the language in Liberal Democrat group meetings when he was being particularly cussed and was determined not to let anyone else know what he was talking about.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Does Willie Rennie agree that John Farquhar Munro’s greatest unrealised political

objective was to turn this country into a monoglot country in which people spoke only Gaelic?

Willie Rennie: Yes. I will resist. [*Laughter.*]

Ray Michie was also a firm advocate of the Gaelic language. In fact, she took her oath in the House of Commons in Gaelic. When she retired and was elevated to the House of Lords, she did the same there, and hers was the first Lord’s oath to be given in Gaelic. At that time, she said:

“This brings home to people who have an interest in the tradition and culture of the Highlands how vulnerable the language is and how we want to promote it”,

which I think is a sentiment that we can all share.

I agree with the priorities that the cabinet secretary has set out and which the national plan has also set out, as regards use, learning and promotion. The variety of small schemes that he was able to set out today—in a range of areas from pre-nursery to nursery, and primary to secondary—are all part of the wider strategy that we are trying to develop. They have contributed to a radical change from 1985, when only 14 pupils were using Gaelic-medium education. The figure has shot up to 3,278, which is quite a miraculous change in such a short time. Every party in Parliament has contributed to that development, from the Conservatives—Liz Smith rightly highlighted the early years and support from Conservative ministers—to the then Liberal Democrat-Labour Government also making sure that legislation went through to give it status, to the Scottish National Party Government, which has taken it even further.

However, there is still an awful lot more to do. Liz Smith was absolutely right to highlight the Council of Europe and the fact that the language is still endangered. Overall numbers of speakers are still in decline and we still have a huge amount of work to do, which is why it is greatly encouraging that so many people from across the chamber who are speaking in the debate—some in Gaelic and others in English—are four-square behind the development of the language in culture and the arts through education and a range of other mechanisms, in order to ensure that it continues to flourish in years to come.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. Speeches should be of up to five minutes, please.

15:42

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): Ann an 1959, sgriobh an sgoilear cliùiteach Calum MacIllaethain mun sgìre agamsa,

“in Glen Roy I found the only Gaelic speakers in Lochaber under 40 years of age ... a language ... passes into oblivion.”

Uill, gu fòrtanach, cha do thachair sin.

Ged a tha an deasbad seo a' tachairt sa Phàrlamaid, chan e rudeigin politeagach a tha sa Ghàidhlig. Ged a tha mi nam bhall dhen Phàrtaidh Nàiseanta, feumaidh mi ràdh gur e am pàrtaidh Tòraidheach a thug cead airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig sa chiad àite, le 14 sgoilearnan ann an 1984, agus am Pàrtaidh Làbarach agus na Libearalaich Dheamocratach a chuir Achd na Gàidhlig 2005 air dòigh.

An t-seachdain 's a chaidh, chuir Port Rìgh, san sgìre agam fhìn, fàilte chridheil air an t-siathamh sgoil Ghàidhlig ùir ann an Alba, le tòrr taic bho Phàrtaidh Nàiseanta na h-Alba, agus gu h-àraidh bhon Leas-phrìomh Mhinistear, Iain Swinney, a tha uabhasach taiceil ris a' Ghàidhlig. Tha fios agam gu bheil luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig gu math taingeil airson na taice aige. Is e deagh naidheachd a th' ann a bhith a' cluinntinn mu na sgoiltean ùra ann an Glaschu agus air a' Ghaidhealtachd.

Air sgàth 's gu bheil Achd na Gàidhlig 2005 agus planaichean Gàidhlig ann, tha na h-àireamhan de dh'òigridh a tha a' dèanamh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a' fas gach latha, agus tha iadsan a' fas seach searbh sgìth de na h-argamaidean an aghaidh na Gàidhlig. 'S e mion-chànan a th' innte, ach chan eil i mar mhion-chànan airson nan daoine a tha ga bruidhinn agus ga cleachdadh, agus a tha a' pàigheadh na h-aon chìsean a tha luchd-labhairt na Beurla.

'S e seo a' phuig as cudromaich dhòmhsa; chan fhaca mi riamh a' ghràin air a' Ghàidhlig cho làidir 's a bha e às dèidh na h-òraid mu dheireadh a rinn mi sa Ghàidhlig. Le Achd na Gàidhlig 2005 agus am plana Gàidhlig, tha cothrom againn uile Gàidhlig a neartachadh agus a leasachadh, ach cuideachd feumaidh sinn tòrr a bharrachd a dhèanamh a thaobh nan argamaidean ceàrr mu shoighnichean-rathaid, foghlam agus an airgid a tha Gàidhlig a cosg. Tha luach sa Ghàidhlig agus feumaidh sinn sin a dhearbhadh nas fheàrr agus a shealtainn gu bheil taic thar-phàrtaidh ann airson na Gàidhlig. Is i a' Ghàidhlig cànan ar dùthcha air fad.

Tha adhartas air a bhith ann o chionn a' chiad phlana Gàidhlig—ann am foghlam, na meadhanan agus cultar—ach aig a' cheann thall, 's e am prìomhachas na h-àireamhan de dhaoine a tha a' bruidhinn Gàidhlig gu làitheil, aig an taigh agus leis an obair, agus leis na sgoiltean ùra tha mi gu math dòchasach gu bheil na h-àireamhan a' dol a dh'èirigh. Mar sin, bu chòir dhuinn an Riaghaltas agus am plana Gàidhlig a mholadh.

Ach 's e a' cheist as motha, a bheil na h-iomairtean seo—na h-iomairtean sa phlana, na h-iomairtean sa phlana mu dheireadh, agus na h-iomairtean a tha a' dol a bhith againn san àm ri

teachd—a' neartachadh a' chànan mar chànan làitheil? Tha cunnart an-còmhnaidh ann gu bheil na planaichean Gàidhlig aig buidhnean poblach agus daoine eile dìreach mar "tick-box exercises". 'S e sin an t-adhbhar a tha lèirmheas agus sgrùdadh den adhartas cho cudromach. Tha tòrr iomairtean air a bhith soirbheachail—mar fhoghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig agus BBC Alba—ach tha tòrr fhathast ri dhèanamh. Tha mi gu math taingeil dhan Leas-phrìomh Mhinistear, oir tha fios agam gu bheil esan mothachail dha na cùisean cudromach seo, agus gu bheil e taiceil ris a' Ghàidhlig. Tha e cho math a chluinntinn gu bheil trì sgoiltean ùra a' dol a bhith againn.

Anns an sgìre agam fhèin, tha sinn a' faicinn ath-bheothachadh ann an iomadh dòigh, leis na fèisean, na h-iomairtean Gàidhlig, sgoiltean Gàidhlig, ionadan Gàidhlig agus ceòl Gàidhealach. Ach 's e an t-amas as cudromaiche Gàidhlig a neartachadh airson 's gum bi barrachd dhaoine ga cleachdadh is a' faireachdainn cofhurtail ga cleachdadh, agus gum bi daoine aig a bheil Gàidhlig mar-thà a' fàs nas misneachail le bhith ga cleachdadh gach latha—san taigh, san sgoil is san obair.

An t-seachdain 's a chaidh, bha mi air leth toilichte fàilte chridheil a chur air a' bhun-sgoil ùir ann am Port Rìgh. Chan eil mi a' tuigsinn ciamar as urrainn do dhuine sam bith a dhol an aghaidh sgoil ùr, gu h-àraidh sgoil ùr Ghàidhlig.

Tha mise agus an òigridh eile a fhuair na cothroman a tha a' tighinn an cois foghlam Gàidhlig fada an comain gach neach a rinn spàirn às ar leth agus às leth na Gàidhlig, agus tha mi 'n dòchas gum bi tòrr a bharrachd sgoilearan ann san àm ri teachd as urrainn dhaibh an aon rud a ràdh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

In 1959, Calum Maclean, the famous writer, said:

"In Glen Roy I found the only Gaelic speaker in Lochaber under 40 years of age ... a language ... passes into oblivion."

Well, that did not happen.

Although the debate is taking place in Parliament, Gaelic is not a political thing. I am a member of the SNP, but I must say that it was the Tories who granted permission for Gaelic-medium education in the first place, for 14 pupils in 1984, and that it was Labour and the Liberal Democrats who introduced the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

Just last week, in my constituency, Portree welcomed the sixth new Gaelic school in Scotland, with lots of support from the SNP and especially from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney.

He has been very supportive of Gaelic—for which, I know, Gaelic speakers are very thankful.

It is good news to hear about new Gaelic schools in Glasgow and in the Highlands. Because of the 2005 act and national Gaelic language plans, the number of young people in Gaelic-medium education is growing by the day, and they are really tired of the arguments that are made against Gaelic. Gaelic may be a minority language, but it is not for the people who speak it and use it, and who pay the same taxes as those who speak English. For me, that is the most important point. I have never seen hatred towards Gaelic expressed as strongly as following the previous speech that I delivered in the language. With the 2005 act and the Gaelic language plan, we have an opportunity to strengthen and develop it.

However, we need to do an awful lot more regarding the wrong arguments about Gaelic signs and the money that Gaelic costs. There is value in Gaelic, and we must do better in proving that and showing that there is cross-party support for Gaelic, which is a language of our country as a whole.

A lot of progress has been made in education, the media and culture since the first Gaelic language plan, but at the end of the day, the priority is to increase the number of people who speak Gaelic every day at home and at work. I am very happy that, in my constituency, the number of Gaelic speakers is set to rise. We should praise the national plan for Gaelic, but the biggest question is whether the initiatives under the most recent plan and future initiatives will strengthen Gaelic as an everyday language. There is a danger that the Gaelic plans for the public bodies are just a tick-box exercise. That is why it is so important that progress is reviewed and monitored.

There have been many initiatives that have been realistic and successful, including Gaelic-medium education and BBC Alba, but there is a lot still to be done. I am very thankful to the Deputy First Minister, who I know is aware of those important matters and is supportive of Gaelic. It is good to hear that we are to get three new schools in my area. In many ways, we are seeing a revival of the language through fèisean, Gaelic initiatives, Gaelic schools and Gaelic music. The most important aim is to strengthen Gaelic so that more people use the language and feel comfortable using it. That might result in people who already speak Gaelic becoming more confident in using it every day at home, at school and at work.

Last week, I was very happy to give a warm welcome to a new primary school in Portree. I do not understand why anyone would be against a new school, especially a new Gaelic school. I and

other young people who got the opportunities that Gaelic-medium education offers are very grateful to everyone who strove on our behalf and on behalf of Gaelic. I hope that, in the future, there will be many more pupils who can say the same thing.

15:47

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): When I meet constituents across the Highlands and Islands, there are signs of Gaelic everywhere that I travel on our roads, in our stations and by our lochs and Munros. They are a daily reminder of how important Gaelic is to Scotland.

I struggled to listen to Kate Forbes and the interpretation at the same time. Frankly, both were worth listening to, so I will go back and listen to one and then the other so that I can link them together.

Gaelic has a fundamental place in Scotland's cultural heritage, with the clans that we associate with and the ceilidhs that we dance at all having traditions that date back. It is right to remember Scotland's Gaelic past, but it would be wrong to think of the language as an historical language, because it is very much a living language—albeit that it is one that has been threatened and which we must remember to cherish.

With the future of Gaelic being far from secure, it is encouraging to see that, for the first time, there has been an increase in the number of Gaelic speakers under the age of 25. However, the overall picture is one of decline. The 2011 census recorded that there were about 58,000 Gaelic speakers, which represented a fall of about 1,000 on the figure from 10 years previously.

Therefore, the Scottish Government's new Gaelic language plan could not have come at a more opportune time to reassure communities on how Parliament proposes to support them. It is worth bearing in mind that 50 per cent of Gaelic speakers live in the Highlands and Islands. The Government's plan is nationwide in scale, but it must be particularly sensitive to the needs of local and rural communities in the region that I represent.

The issues that impact on those rural communities—lack of jobs, housing, broadband and public transport—all impact Gaelic communities and the Gaelic language, which often results in depopulation that decreases use of the language, which we should be striving to protect. The pressure is therefore on the Government to unlock the potential economic value that Gaelic can provide to the Scottish economy, which could, according to Highlands and Islands Enterprise, be in the region of £100 million per annum. The

growth of the rural economy will lead to the growth of Gaelic in Scotland, which is something that we should all work towards.

Economic gains from Gaelic will be underpinned by effective Gaelic education. In recent years, Gaelic has become an essential part of Highlands school life, with 23 primary schools and 16 secondary schools teaching the language. Inverness boasts the first purpose-built Gaelic-medium primary school, which was opened in 2007 with 100 pupils and has, 10 years later, a roll of 232 pupils. That is a success story that we should all celebrate.

It is clear that more and more communities that have a Gaelic tradition want their children to be more than bilingual, because the benefits from being so are beyond doubt. Learning different languages from an early age leads to higher attainment, so we should not be surprised that more parents wish to send their children to Gaelic-medium schools. The Scottish Conservatives will always support investment in Gaelic schools where there is a real demand from the parents in a community that has a Gaelic tradition.

John Finnie: I am a bit concerned about the description of how you would establish demand. Can you clarify that? You would certainly want a situation where the local authority has the opportunity to build on demand by encouraging others to come forward, which has often happened in communities.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that they should always speak through the chair and not have direct conversations. So—through the chair, please, Mr Mountain.

Edward Mountain: Thank you, Presiding Officer. The point that I was trying to make is about where we should encourage demand and build on existing demand rather than just say, “No—we’re not going to do it.” If there is demand, we should encourage it. However, we have to ensure that when we are encouraging expansion of Gaelic education, as in Portree, we do not allow concerns from some quarters to suggest that investment in Gaelic schools is to the detriment of investment in other facilities in the area. We must ensure that Gaelic is seen as a way of uniting rather than dividing communities.

I am mindful of the time that I have left, so I will just say that I am proud of the enduring contribution that my party has made to securing the future of Gaelic by funding the first Gaelic-medium units, as well as by introducing the Gaelic television fund. Those measures were ambitious, but practical—an approach that the Scottish Government would, to my mind, be wise to maintain.

The debate is also a timely reminder for the Scottish Government to act on its commitment, which was made 10 years ago, to ensure that by the 2021 census, the proportion of Gaelic speakers is back up to 2001 levels at the very least. Let us aim high and ensure that the ambition of all the parties across the chamber is to increase use of Gaelic across Scotland

15:53

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Tha mi nam bhodach: I am an old mannie, so I am unlikely to learn Gaelic before I shuffle off this mortal coil. However, like many of us, I have Gaelic antecedents. My grandfather Alexander Campbell MacGregor was a Gaelic speaker. He was a ship’s rigger; he married someone from Edinburgh and settled in Leith. My mother was therefore brought up in a bilingual household and spoke Gaelic to her father and English to her mother. When she went to school in 1914, she entered an environment where she was punished if she spoke Gaelic. My great-great-grandfather—Archibald Stewart—took his Gaelic with him to Canada, but that was a very long time ago: he was born in the late 1700s.

On the other side of the equation, and perhaps less to the merit of the Stevensons, is my grandfather William Stewart Stevenson, who married Elizabeth Tait Barlow in 1890. His first appointment as a teacher was in the Gaelic community on Lewis, where, as an Anglophone monoglot with an English wife, he was sent to make sure that nobody in the school that he taught in spoke Gaelic. Thank goodness that we are now in different times.

Like Iain Gray, my wife went to Inverness royal academy—I have not spoken to her about her experience, but she does not come from a particularly strong Gaelic tradition.

How do I connect to Gaelic today? Like others, I see Gaelic place names and geographical features; I have Runrig’s “Maymorning” CD in my car, which they produced for the opening of the Scottish Parliament in 1999; and I also have a Julie Fowles CD. Do I understand everything that I hear in Gaelic? Certainly not, but I have a few words. I was interested to find that as I was listening with one ear to the English translation of my colleague Kate Forbes’s speech and with the other to the Gaelic, I could pick up some of the crossover. However, can I speak Gaelic in any meaningful sense? No, absolutely not.

When I was a young lad, if someone wanted to hear Gaelic, the place where they would hear most Gaelic was, bluntly, under the heilanman’s umbrella in Glasgow, which is where, traditionally, the people from the Western Isles gathered—it is

adjacent to Central station under the arch over Argyle Street. They would have heard more Gaelic there than English. Just as we now see the development of Gaelic in the cities, historically—albeit in the more recent past—it was also a city thing.

The area that I used to represent in Parliament, which is now, after a reorganisation of the boundaries, represented by Gillian Martin, was where the “Book of Deer” came from nearly 1,000 years ago. The “Book of Deer” is a copy of the Bible that contains the oldest piece of written Gaelic. When the first attempts were made to work out who owned Scotland, the monks from Deer abbey went round writing down in Gaelic information in the margins of that Bible about who owned what. That is really quite interesting.

Some of the Gaelic that we are talking about in Aberdeenshire is not Scottish Gaelic. There is a town that is now known as New Pitsligo, which has the alternative name of Cyaak. That is actually Welsh, or Brythonic Gaelic. The linguistic traditions that we have are quite diverse.

My voice is a wee bit rusty today—for that, I touched on Gaelic, as I had a gargle of anCnoc, which is the whisky that is made nearest to me. It is the Gaelic name for the Knock, which is the hill behind the distillery.

I very much welcome the announcement of additional investment in Gaelic teaching in Glasgow and the opening of other facilities elsewhere. Thankfully, the 1616 act that Iain Gray referred to did not succeed, and Peter Peacock, our ex-colleague, was absolutely pivotal in moving Gaelic to another place and building on what had been done before. I give my absolute support to efforts to bring Gaelic to more people.

I conclude with a very simple suggestion that might help and which we might consider doing. We have lots of geography and places with Gaelic names. We might start to help Anglophones with the pronunciation of Gaelic, because, as an Anglophone, it can be quite baffling to look at some Gaelic names. With a wee bit of help, we might learn how to pronounce Gaelic—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): I do not know how to say, “Please conclude” in Gaelic, but please conclude.

15:58

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I am pleased to speak in this afternoon’s debate. It comes not long after our recent debate on intangible cultural heritage, in which many members raised the significance of Gaelic, both in a historical sense and in terms of the need for us to continue to support the language in Scotland.

It is right that we recognise, value, preserve and celebrate Gaelic in Scotland, and the language plan has a key part to play in achieving that ambition. In particular, it is important to strive to grow the language beyond its traditionally strong areas, and to make it accessible to those who wish to learn it across the country. That is how the language will have a future.

It is interesting that the cabinet secretary talked about early years education. It was a nostalgic experience for me when I saw a “Dotaman” display on a recent committee visit to the BBC. It now has a bit of a cult status, but in 1985, it was groundbreaking in its normalisation of the language, to which it introduced many children. On that visit, it was positive to hear about the innovative work that BBC Alba and CBBC are doing in collaborating on the filming of a Gaelic version of the popular kids’ quest programme “Raven”.

Since 1999, the Parliament has played a significant role in providing a focus for Gaelic. The Parliament was established at a time when there were fears that Gaelic was a fading language. Although that has been recognised and some action has already been taken, we still have some challenges to address around educational demand, as well as around public opinion, to which Kate Forbes referred. Parliament has made a conscious effort to ensure that Gaelic receives support and I am pleased to see that it continues to do so.

We must recognise that a contributing factor behind the language’s decline in Scotland can be traced back to deliberate choices and decisions that were made to restrict its use in years gone by. The language was kept alive over the centuries by generations and communities, and by activists and campaigners, who really pushed the agenda.

In supporting the work of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the role of Government and Parliament is to acknowledge the importance of the language to Scotland, promote equality and inclusion for the communities who speak Gaelic, and encourage acceptance and greater knowledge of the language. We are, thankfully, in a much healthier place today than we have been in recent history. Although I appreciate that Gaelic is no longer the first language for many people, there are still concerns that, as the generations pass on, the traditions that are associated with the language might be under threat of passing with them. On the whole, however, we are now talking less about Gaelic’s survival and more about its potential to grow and flourish across families and communities.

One of the reasons for that is that during the years when the language was marginalised, Scottish arts and culture still preserved and

promoted Gaelic. From psalms to the Mòd and Celtic Connections, there has long been the space for those who wish to learn or who wish to speak Gaelic to do so with confidence and support. Such richness must not be underestimated. Sitting in a classroom with trained teachers is important, but so is the ability to learn, embrace and live the language through songs and stories, comradeship and friendship.

For example, the new plan includes a project to support the long-term sustainability of the South Uist education and arts centre, which will, I hope, allow the traditions and songs of Gaelic to continue. I am also pleased to see that the plan will continue to support the bodies that are important for Gaelic arts in Scotland. Gaelic is part of the country's heritage, and in the areas where it is strong, we should be looking to embrace that and the opportunities that it presents. By building strong cultural and artistic links, we can benefit in other areas, especially tourism, as visitors embrace the romance behind the language and its links to Scotland's rich past.

The development of a Gaelic tourism strategy is welcome, as it looks to support organisations that use the language. I always seem to be referring to the television series "Outlander" at the moment, but it has generated increased interest in Scotland, our built heritage, our landscape and, with the use of Gaelic, an interest in a language that is unique to Scotland and a gateway for visitors who are interested in our culture.

Although members have highlighted Labour's commitment to Gaelic over the years, I recognise that we have co-operated across Parliament to promote the language, which is very much to be welcomed. The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and the plan were introduced because we all appreciate and understand that the language and the communities who speak it still need focused support.

The Gaelic-speaking communities of Scotland continue to face many challenges. They are often fragile communities that have ageing and shifting populations as younger people chase employment. That can lead to strong Gaelic communities, in which speakers feel comfortable and where the language is used every day in the home and in the local area, being put at risk of fragmenting. Breaking up such communities and opportunities for everyday use of the language, especially among the younger generations, can put the desire of future generations to access and learn the language at risk, too. Secure and well-paid jobs are important to making sure that Gaelic-speaking families can continue to live and thrive in their communities.

To be successful at supporting and growing Gaelic, we need a holistic approach that nurtures

this valuable, precious and unique language of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have to be tight with speeches. We have no time in hand. I ask for five-minute speeches, please.

16:04

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): It is a pleasure to be able to speak once again in support of the Gaelic language and the work that will get under way to deliver the aims that are set out in the national plan.

I have spoken in a number of debates on Gaelic over the years, and each time it is clear that we are moving on and making progress with this beautiful language, which plays a huge part in shaping who we are as a people and where we are going as a nation.

I will not pretend that I am even remotely a speaker of Gaelic, but it has been wonderful to hear Kate Forbes speaking our language with such passion and feeling. I do what I can to support the language, and later in my speech I will share with members some of the impressive work that has been going on in Kilmarnock for the past 20 years at bun-sgoil Onthank—Onthank primary school—near where I grew up; I still live close by.

What I like about the plan is that it is clear, easy to read and very positive about the language. The next five years promise to be an exciting phase. It is important to be able to measure progress, of course, and the implementation and monitoring proposals are due to follow shortly.

The task ahead will not be easy and is very challenging. Gaelic is one of many world languages at risk of being lost unless we all do something about it. UNESCO describes Scottish Gaelic as "definitely endangered", with around 80,000 people who can speak the language in Scotland outwith the formal education setting. The number of people in Ireland and Wales who speak the other Celtic languages is higher, but we know the history of how we came to be in this situation.

The aim in the national plan is simply to make sure that Gaelic is used more often, by more people and in a wider range of settings. I recall mentioning this the last time I spoke about Gaelic—I hoped that the language could be seen more as well as heard more. The plan certainly aims to do that in the way it intends to promote the language much more in the heritage, tourism, food and drink and leisure sectors.

I hope that that will also mean that people who do not normally come into contact with the language will be able to see it and hear it spoken and sung in local settings, perhaps through music and performance—it all makes a difference and

helps to promote the positive image that is really important if we are to broaden Gaelic's appeal.

The communities aspect of the plan recognises that there are different levels of engagement with Gaelic—areas with a high percentage of speakers; communities in cities and towns such as Kilmarnock; and the technology, media and performance community. They are all different but they all have a part to play in taking the plan forward.

I will share with members a little glimpse of what has been happening in Kilmarnock at Onthank primary school. The Gaelic unit there has recently celebrated its 20th anniversary, with around 250 children passing through the school over those years. Currently, there are around 32 children in primary 1 to primary 7, with a further 13 in the early childhood centre. The benefits for the children over the years have not been restricted to the curriculum. The social and cultural benefits have been immense, with the children travelling all over Scotland for competitions and get-togethers.

None of that would have happened had it not been for the Gaelic language, and it is to the great credit of East Ayrshire Council and the staff in the school over those years that so many children have had such a positive experience. The Gaelic unit is moving to the new William McIlvanney campus in the town, which is a stunning new secondary and primary campus that has everyone really excited about the future.

The national plan is another opportunity to take Gaelic a step forward on its journey of recovery. It has been a difficult journey for so many people who love the language, whether we speak it or not. The plan to broaden its appeal within the diverse communities of Scotland through culture, music and all forms of engagement is the right thing to do in my opinion and I fully support the substantial efforts that everyone is making to protect our language.

Tighinn 's obraichidh sinn ri chèile gus dèanamh cinnteach gun urrainn don Ghàidhlig mairsinn beò airson bhliadhnaichean ri tighinn: come and let us work together to ensure that Gaelic can survive for years to come. I am ever grateful to a young fellow called Loughlan Buchanan for providing me with that sentence and its pronunciation.

I am happy to support the Government's motion.

16:09

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Scotland's Gaelic heritage is something that all parties in this chamber rightly stand ready to protect and uphold. My colleague Liz Smith spoke about some of the work that the Scottish Conservatives in Government undertook

before devolution to promote the language and the rich culture associated with it. We stand alongside that work today.

I welcome the work that has gone into the national Gaelic language plan from Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the process that has led to its development. As a Highlands and Islands member, I recognise the strong Gaelic heritage that is found, in particular, in the islands and west Highlands—specifically in Lewis, South Uist, Lochaber and Wester Ross. In those parts of Scotland, Gaelic is the language of day-to-day life. However, Gaelic culture continues to thrive not only in the Highlands and Islands but in other parts of Scotland. The central belt's association with the language reflects more modern population movements, as Gaelic-speaking highlanders migrated south in search of opportunities. We see some of that legacy just up the road from the Parliament, where Greyfriars church maintains its regular Gaelic language service, having absorbed the congregation of the Highland Tollbooth St John's church, which now sees a new lease of life as the Hub, the home of Edinburgh's international festival.

Members have touched on Glasgow's links with the language. Particularly through music and other cultural outlets, much of Scotland is at least touched by a Gaelic influence. Indeed, its historical reach is often underestimated. Still, my region retains its position as the home of Gaelic today, particularly in rural communities. I have spoken on many occasions about the challenges that are faced by remote and rural communities in Scotland, particularly in the Highlands and Islands. We face a real challenge in ensuring that those rural communities are sustainable for the future.

Moving beyond the Gaelic-speaking areas, we see a huge diversity of cultures in Scotland. I am an Orcadian, and people in our islands most likely moved from speaking Pictish to speaking Norse and then English without any historical Gaelic tradition. It remains a matter of academic speculation how closely the Pictish language was related to the insular Celtic languages of Britain. In other areas that I represent, there is a long Doric tradition—in the Highlands and Islands, there is a distinct Moray and Nairn sub-dialect of that. We also know well of other languages that have been brought to Scotland more recently by our migrant communities.

Sitting in that context, Gaelic is one of many strong cultural influences that the whole of Scotland can recognise as part of our collective cultural heritage. One element that must be removed is the thankfully fringe pursuit of politicising languages in one way or another. Languages are not political beasts, much less political weapons, and culture thrives by crossing

barriers, not by being exclusive or exclusionary. In the areas where Gaelic has a strong presence, it is clearly right that it is recognised by the state. It is right that distinctive cultures and traditions are taken into account when policy is drafted and considered. As the Gaelic language plan shows, that bisects the tiers of government: it is a consideration not only for central Government but for a range of institutions from local councils to health boards.

In his introduction to the plan, the chair of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Allan MacDonald, recognises the challenges of recruiting high-quality staff in Gaelic-medium education, which members have touched on.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the consensual tone of the debate, but does the member think that the part of the Tory amendment on ensuring that we have

“sufficient numbers of Gaelic ... teachers available to meet the demand”

is slightly hypocritical, in that the Tories actively stand in the way of Gaelic-speaking qualified teachers such as Sine Halfpenny teaching in our schools, despite a long but unsuccessful campaign to allow that lady, who is from Nova Scotia, to teach on the island of Mull?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That was a long intervention, Mr Halcro Johnston—I am sorry, but I have no spare time to give you.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: It is a shame that the member has brought up the issue of immigration in a debate about the plans for the Gaelic language, but there we are.

Gaelic-medium education is not the only public service in which there are issues. On a recent visit to Stornoway, I heard of the problems of recruiting Gaelic-speaking social care workers, who are required particularly to support older people with dementia in the islands who have reverted to their first language. There are, of course, excellent examples of progress. While I was there, I met the council's director of education, who spoke about the work that is being done through e-sgoil to engage young people. I also had the opportunity to hear some Gaelic singing, which brought out some of the true depth of Gaelic culture and heritage on the islands.

Promotion is positive, and the high degree of collaboration that has been undertaken in the construction of the Gaelic language plan certainly counts in its favour. However, as other members have mentioned, for Gaelic to thrive in its heartlands, we must more closely recognise the needs of our remote and rural communities. There have been many steps forward, but the

sustainability of those communities remains a concern to many across my region.

As I said, it is wrong to politicise language, and we must be—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that you must stop there. That is a good place to stop.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: I am just about to finish.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have had an extra 25 seconds, and I have no time left.

16:14

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I will open with a quote from the very fine writer Joseph Conrad that has always resonated with me. “History repeats itself”, he wrote,

“but the special call of an art which has passed away is never reproduced. It is as utterly gone out of the world as the song of a destroyed wild bird.”

Conrad was talking specifically about human achievement and culture in its broadest sense, and I would include language in that. Indeed, as other members have said, language has been seen as the greatest achievement of humankind, without which none of our other achievements could be expressed.

A language that is lost is hard to reclaim; as Conrad said, it is

“utterly gone out of the world”.

I have always thought of Gaelic when I have heard that quote, perhaps because of its lyricism and the way that it captures the fragility of human culture. Comparing the threat to human culture to threats to wildlife is also evocative. We rightly support measures that are aimed at protecting our flora and fauna, and we are prepared to accept some inconvenience to ensure that the cackle of the corncrake or our ancient Caledonian pine forest is not extinguished.

However, human ecology is also in need of protection and we cannot afford to see Gaelic utterly gone out of the world. That is why I support this national Gaelic language plan. It aims to secure a future for the language, which carries with it a millennium of cultural richness, and I support the plan's central premise that education is the future of the Gaelic language. It aims to increase its use, to expand the number of people who are learning it and to promote a positive image of it.

As other members have said, the language belongs to all of Scotland, and people are coming from all over the world to learn it and to enjoy the music, literature and oral traditions that it encapsulates. I welcome the fact that the motion

enjoys cross-party support, just as the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 enjoyed the support of every party in this Parliament.

Having said that, it is disappointing to hear some people outside the Parliament disparage Gaelic, perhaps because of their ignorance of the role that politicians of all parties have played in protecting it. Sadly, it is not at all uncommon to hear negative comments on social media and even in mainstream media, with nonsense about dead languages and their irrelevance. It is important to tackle that head on.

Particularly relevant to my area of the country is the line of argument, which is often rather drearily advanced, that Gaelic is not relevant to other parts of Scotland. That argument was articulated quite recently on social media by a councillor whose party I will not refer to, because he is quite young and I do not think that he is representative of his party. He made a point on social media about his area of the south of Scotland not having any connection at all to Gaelic.

John Finnie: Will the member take an intervention?

Joan McAlpine: Yes.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Sorry—I was drifting there. I drift occasionally. I call Mr Finnie.

John Finnie: I wonder whether the member would agree with me that it is not always helpful to come out with a big line about all the negative—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Just a wee minute, Mr Finnie. Speak into your microphone so that we can hear you. Thank you.

John Finnie: I beg your pardon, Presiding Officer. I wonder whether the member agrees that it is not necessarily helpful to recite a lengthy list of negatives. Rather than promoting them, we should be ignoring those people, whom she rightly identifies as often being motivated by ignorance.

Joan McAlpine: I do not think that it was a lengthy list of negatives, and I am just about to come on to a positive retort to the councillor's comment.

I represent the south of Scotland, where there is actually a strong Gaelic tradition. Gaelic became widespread in south-west Scotland between the 9th and 11th centuries. The very name "Galloway"—Gall-Gael—originally meant "land of the foreign Gael". Alan, Lord of Galloway, who died in 1234, is named in the Annals of Ulster as the king of the foreign Gaels. Galloway was once an independent kingdom as well. It has been said that the distinctiveness of Galloway perhaps ensured that Gaelic was preserved in the west of the region after it had been supplanted by Scots in other parts of lowland Scotland. There is a very

interesting blog by Alistair Livingston of Castle Douglas, who has done a huge amount of work on the subject. It is called greengalloway, and I highly recommend it to anyone who is interested in the topic.

Later this year, in September, the CatStrand arts centre in New Galloway will host a day-long conference on Galloway Gaelic, featuring prominent academics. The conference has already sold out, which is testament to the fact that Gaelic has a potential, in terms of cultural tourism in the south-west of Scotland, that many people are keen to explore.

In conclusion, Gaelic is for everyone in Scotland, and that is why I support the motion.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I now call—sequentially—Lewis Macdonald, to be followed by Angus MacDonald.

15:05

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): The words

"An Tìr, an Cànan 's na Daoine",

which mean, "the land, the language and the people", are on the masthead of the West Highland Free Press, the UK's first employee-owned newspaper, which is based on the Isle of Skye. It is a direct reference to the slogans of the Highland Land League and the Crofters Party of the 19th century. It is good to celebrate the support that the Gaelic language has enjoyed from all parties over the past 30 years, and it is right to say that the language is part of the cultural richness of Scotland as a whole, but we should never forget the origins of the Gaelic language movement in the class struggles and land wars of the Highlands and Hebrides in earlier generations.

When Labour ministers introduced measures such as the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, they did so not only out of support for cultural diversity and inclusiveness, but to achieve, at long last, equal rights and recognition for what had been the culture of the common people of the Highland clans, which is just as important as rights over land and the right to a democratic voice in local government and national Government.

When Labour councils such as Strathclyde Regional Council and Glasgow City Council pioneered Gaelic-medium education outwith the Highlands, that was a recognition not just of the Highland diaspora but of the fact that Gaelic requires equal status right across Scotland if it is to be fully supported in its native-speaking communities. Those views are shared across parties and public bodies today, so it is easy to forget the extent to which the right to speak Gaelic was denied and how significant that denial was.

When people were cleared from the land, in the 1700s and 1800s, it was not just the means to earn a living that were lost; the connection with the land and with past generations, through the language and the shared knowledge of people and place, was also lost.

A few years ago, I was told about the workhouse in Tobermory by the son of a man who had been there. Gaelic-speaking Muileachs had sought refuge in the workhouse as late as the 1890s after being driven from their homes. What struck my friend's father was that those folk were not just destitute; they were utterly bewildered at the extent of their loss, which impacted on who they were as well as on what they had. That story could be repeated again and again, from the straths of Sutherland to the banks of Loch Tay and to the most westerly of the Hebrides. It is a story of cultural loss going hand in hand with material deprivation.

In debating Gaelic in the 21st century, it is as well to remember that history, which stretches back to when the statutes of Iona were approved by the Scottish Privy Council, in 1609. Those laws effectively prohibited the Gaelic-medium education of the sons of chiefs, with just as clear a purpose as laws that are passed in support of Gaelic-medium education today. As we have heard, that suppression of Gaelic in Scotland's schools continued for more than 300 years. We have a lot of ground to make up, and what is most remarkable about the Gaelic language is not its decline but its survival.

The national Gaelic language plan is right to seek

“to enable urban Gaelic communities to thrive”,

and real progress has been made on that in the past 30 years. My daughter Iona enjoyed Gaelic-medium nursery and primary education in Aberdeen, studied and debated in Gaelic at secondary school and now, as a university student, keeps up her skills by working of an evening with Gaelic-speaking children in Glasgow. She would want me to mention Mairi Morley, who was for a number of years the Gaelic officer at Aberdeen City Council with responsibility for Gaelic-medium education and who recently went back to her native Uist. She has died too young, and her friends in Aberdeen will gather later today to remember her. Mairi Morley made a real contribution to supporting and sustaining her native language into the present century and to promoting it across Scotland, and she should be warmly remembered for that.

Gaelic has made progress in urban Scotland and should continue to do so, but there is no substitute for the spoken language at the grass-roots level in Highlands and Islands communities.

Therefore, our first priority must be to sustain the health and strength of Gaelic as a community language in those places where it is still passed on as a first language from one generation to the next. I welcome the focus on the Gaelic heartland areas in this third iteration of the national Gaelic language plan under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

In conclusion, I ask ministers to say a bit more about how they will measure success in achieving that objective. The future of Gaelic as a community language is inseparably bound up with the future of many of our communities on the edge, and a sustainable future for the language requires us to secure a sustainable future for those communities, too. That would enable Gaelic in Scotland to take another step in the right direction.

16:25

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): Tha mi toilichte a bhith a' bruidhinn anns an deasbad an-diugh air plana nàiseanta na Gàidhlig, ach gu mo nàire sheasmhach, ged a rugadh agus a thogadh mi anns na h-Eileanan Siar, chan urrainn dhomh fhathast bruidhinn gu fileanta ann an cànan mo shinnsearan air gach taobh de mo theaghlach.

Bidh mi a' sabaid airson a' chàinain, ge-tà, fhad 's a bhios an deò annam, gus dèanamh cinnteach gum bi Gàidhlig beò airson linntean ri teachd. Mar sin, bha mi toilichte a bhith nam neach-gairm air buidheann thar-phàrtaidh na Gàidhlig anns an t-seisean mu dheireadh den Phàrlamaid, ach tha mi toilichte gu bheil e a-nis fo làimh ealanta le Ceit Fhoirbeis mar neach-gairm ùr.

Cho math 's as toigh leam Gàidhlig a chleachdadh an-dràsta 's a-rithist, feumaidh mi tionndadh gu Beurla.

Following is the simultaneous translation:

I am happy to be speaking in today's debate on the national plan for Gaelic but, to my constant shame having been born and bred in the Hebrides, I am still unable to speak fluently in the language of my forefathers on both sides of my family. I will, however, fight for the language to my last breath to help ensure that it survives for future generations.

That is why I was pleased to take on the position of convener of the cross-party group on Gaelic in the previous session of Parliament. However, I am pleased that it is in capable hands with Katie Forbes as the new convener.

As much as I like to use Gaelic now and again, I will turn to English.

The member continued in English.

Now I would like to concentrate much—probably all—of my allocated time this afternoon on the issue of funding for MG Alba and BBC Alba. I am sure that the whole chamber welcomes last week's announcement that the broadcasting regulator Ofcom has given provisional approval to BBC plans for a new TV channel for Scotland. However, that should not be to the detriment of BBC Alba's funding or programming.

We know that BBC Alba contributes to our Scottish culture, identity and economy, fostering international collaborations and creating internationally recognised programmes. BBC Alba is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. I remember well the launch party, which was held in this very city; a good time was had by all, as members would expect.

There is no doubt that BBC Alba has been a game changer in normalising the language and bringing it to a far-wider daily audience than Gaelic has ever enjoyed. That is no mean feat, given its budget. I am sure that we all agree that BBC Alba has been one of the major successes for Gaelic in recent years. However, it faces two challenges. One is the level of funding that it receives, which has been at a similar level for some years, and the other is that the new BBC Scotland channel is on the horizon. It is not yet clear how the BBC will ensure that that development supports BBC Alba and does not detract from its viewing figures.

MG Alba currently has a budget from the Scottish Government of £12.8 million, which is made up of £11.8 million core funding and £1 million additional annual pressure funding. In the last financial year, that funded 443 hours of original television programming and related costs such as rights, 28 hours of radio, LearnGaelic and 100 hours of channel links from the Stornoway studios.

Funding that level of programming on a small budget for a television channel is achieved through a combination of volume-deal commissions and seasonal commissioning rounds. In July 2017, new four-year volume deals were entered into with eight independent production companies, committing MG Alba to £25.6 million over the term. Those contracts include drama, sport, music, children's programmes and entertainment and are all with independent production companies. That gives long-term supply commitments to the channel as well as securing jobs, creating stability and encouraging sustainability within the independent sector. The deals also offer the foundation for innovative collaboration. MG Alba has generated £950,000 of added value for the channel from long-term deals as a result of co-productions, and

it expects that trend to continue with ambitious, international projects.

Given MG Alba's level of funding, it can invite only two seasonal commissioning rounds per year, which bring higher production value and bespoke programming to the schedule. It is worth pointing out that the initial Gaelic television fund of £9.5 million in 1992—it has been mentioned already this afternoon—would, taking account of the retail prices index, stand at £18.2 million today. The number of hours that were funded in the early years, prior to the organisation gaining commissioning powers, averaged 165 per annum. With 443 hours budgeted in 2017-18, MG Alba has achieved output of 268.5 per cent of its historical output on a drop in funding, in real terms, of 29.7 per cent. Therefore, it is essential that current investment is maintained, so that MG Alba has a stable funding base that consolidates the £1 million and £11.8 million that will be required to draw more investment from the BBC. I seek the Deputy First Minister's assurance that such consolidation will be considered in the future.

We should not forget that there would be no commissioning rounds if it were not for the pressure fund of £1 million. At stake are the 114.5 full-time equivalent jobs that were created in the Western Isles and Skye by the MG Alba fund; the equivalent number of jobs in the central belt, given the population difference, would be in excess of 11,000.

16:30

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): Many of my constituents and some of my colleagues will be surprised to see me taking part in the debate. I am honest that I have not always been a natural champion or advocate of the Gaelic language.

I have found the debate interesting and informative. Kate Forbes's speech, in particular, has given me a different insight to the concerns that I hear regularly from constituents about token issues. I will try not to give too long a negative list. I do not see all the debate as being hate filled, but there are complex cultural and social issues in the part of the world that I represent. People in the south of Scotland feel threatened by globalisation, the encroachment of central Government and some neglect for our indigenous culture. When we recognise that, it is important that those of us who live in the south of Scotland in communities where Gaelic has not been a traditional part of the heritage or oral traditions—

The Minister for International Development and Europe (Dr Alasdair Allan): Does Oliver Mundell realise that the big stone in Gretna, the Lochmaben stone, has a Gaelic name, and that it is named after a stone, not a loch? Is he seriously

suggesting that Gaelic has never been part of the heritage of the South of Scotland?

Oliver Mundell: I am not suggesting, by any stretch of the imagination, that Gaelic has never been part of the heritage of the south of Scotland. However, for a range of historical, cultural and social reasons, it is clear that the cultural connection with the language is not the same in all parts of the country. As Lewis Macdonald recognised in his speech, in trying to promote Gaelic positively—which I fully support—we have to be sensitive to the history of the Gaelic language and its origins and, in particular, its cultural significance in large parts of the Highland region. We should not be ashamed of that; we have to be alive to and recognise the sensitivities if we are going to tackle some of the challenging cultural issues around building the Gaelic language and a real sense of community about it as a spoken language and to convince people that the language belongs to the whole of Scotland.

It is a testament to native Gaelic speakers, for whom Gaelic is the mother tongue, that they are generous enough to share their language and to see it as belonging to all of us culturally, particularly in light of some of the difficulties and oppressions that they have faced over many years. It is important that we should all work together to try to build a consensus. I have heard a few people say that Gaelic should not be politicised, which is absolutely right and very important. If we are to secure the future of the language as a living speaking language, we have to recognise that politicians and Government actions alone cannot help to keep a language alive. People have to be confident in their belief that the language can and does belong to anyone.

We need to recognise the fact that Gaelic is still in a fragile position, as many members have pointed out. We cannot blame anyone here for the mistakes that were made in the more distant past, but when we see a drop in the census figures we have to recognise that that is because the community is coming to a certain age, which means that people will not always be here to continue speaking their language. That is what makes Gaelic-medium education so important, and why it is important that we focus our effort in communities where there is a desire to grow the number of speakers. We need to ensure that we deliver all the resources that are needed for those who wish to take the language forward.

16:35

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this important debate on the Scottish Government's new national plan for Gaelic and its overarching aim to help to create a secure future

for Gaelic in Scotland, building on the 2005 act and recent developments, progress and success.

I speak today not as a speaker of Gaelic, but certainly as an admirer and also as a constituency MSP. I will come on to why that is important shortly. My experience of Gaelic, both as a constituency MSP and generally, is an appreciation of its vulnerability and the historical nature of that, but also of its growing strength, particularly in the urban environment here in Edinburgh and in Leith in my constituency.

The Gaelic language makes a hugely positive contribution, in terms of cultural progress and adding to the social character and cultural diversity of our society, and by being of huge educational value to those who are in Gaelic-medium education. I welcome the fact that the national language plan reflects Gaelic's unique and important contribution to many areas of Scottish life. When I read that part of the plan, I thought of two people whom I know. The first of those people is Dolina MacIannan, who has been a long-standing advocate of the Gaelic language and is a well-known actress and singer in the Gaelic community. She is a resident of Edinburgh, welcomed my parents when they moved from Leeds to the city and then welcomed me when I joined the Scottish National Party shortly after that. Incidentally, Dolina made an appearance in "Still Game" a few weeks ago, which members may have seen. Dolina has contributed significantly to the development of the Gaelic language and I think of her today and how we are building on her success.

The second of those people is one of my constituents, who represents a younger generation—Phil MacHugh. As a television personality, he has helped to promote the Gaelic language in the work that he does. That is symbolic of passing on the Gaelic language through the generations and its absolute relevance to modern Scottish media culture, as well as in previous times.

I also think of politicians such as my colleague Deidre Brock MP, who was the Gaelic champion here in Edinburgh when she was a councillor. Deidre emphasised not only that Gaelic-medium education is key to the future of the Gaelic language, but that it is enriching for our education system here in Edinburgh and across the country. That is important, if we want to see enough Gaelic speakers coming through the education system to secure Gaelic's future.

I worked in the school office at James Gillespie's high school for a year, and got an understanding of its importance for secondary education through the Gaelic medium here in Edinburgh. That was an inspiring part of developing my understanding of the importance of

the language. However, yesterday I went to Taobh na Pàirce, the dedicated Gaelic primary school in Edinburgh, and what a wonderful experience that was. The school is thriving and the nursery is nearly at capacity—there is huge demand. The primary school is very rich with energy, the modern education practices that are used, and the diversity of young people coming together in that wonderful school in Leith, which is an extremely diverse place anyway. The school brings to life the old Presbyterian Bonnington Road primary school with a new future for the language and the area. The school is truly remarkable, and I recommend that people go and see it if they want to see an example of thriving Gaelic-medium education.

In Edinburgh, the number of Gaelic speakers is growing, and that is to be welcomed. I am delighted for Glasgow in light of today's announcement, and I was also delighted to hear the cabinet secretary say that he and officials are working to bring forward proposals for a Gaelic-medium secondary facility in Edinburgh beyond James Gillespie's high school, as the number of Gaelic speakers is growing. I look forward to seeing that happen in due course.

I absolutely agree that the bilingualism of Gaelic-medium education develops intellectualism. That is undoubtedly the case from what I have seen. Most of all, it is an inclusive development. It benefits all of us—from those in rural areas to those in urban areas—and that is something to welcome for everyone. The plan should be welcomed, too.

16:41

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

Tha mi toilichte a chur fàilte air a' phlana seo. I am pleased to welcome the plan. I am also pleased to welcome the debate, in which there has been a lot of agreement about the plan and its refreshed priorities. Each party has taken time to highlight its commitment and contribution to Gaelic. Kate Forbes pointed out that every party has been supportive, but members should indulge me for a moment as I highlight the Labour Party's commitments and what we have done in the past.

It was a Labour council that opened the first Gaelic-medium unit, a Labour council that opened the first Gaelic-medium school, and a Labour-led Government that introduced the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, which was guided through Parliament by my colleague Peter Peacock. As Lewis Macdonald pointed out, its aim was to provide equal status for Gaelic. I am proud of that record and proud that those initiatives had cross-party support. That must continue if we are to protect our language, and our heritage, with it. The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 gave life to

the national plan for Gaelic, and we need to build on it.

The Conservative amendment, which was moved by Liz Smith, highlights education issues. Liz Smith and Iain Gray spoke about the shortage of Gaelic-medium teachers. The Scottish Government needs to ensure that it has enough teachers. It is great to have buildings for Gaelic-medium education, but unless there are teachers to staff those schools, they will not serve the purpose for which they were designed.

The culture and education have changed. Iain Gray talked about the "othering" of islands pupils at his Inverness high school and how that school system discouraged use of Gaelic. John Finnie talked about growing up without Gaelic being available, and how that has changed in Fort William with the Gaelic-medium school there.

Claire Baker said that our communities kept Gaelic alive while the Government and education discovered it. Lewis Macdonald pointed out that the survival of those very communities and the survival of Gaelic are so closely interlinked that we need to protect both in order for both to survive.

Why do we need the Gaelic language? The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 came about because the number of Gaelic speakers was falling. We can read in our history books about the rich and famous, but the people's history is held in song, poetry and storytelling. For much of Scotland, those stories are told in Gaelic—the history of the Highland Land League, for instance, as Lewis Macdonald pointed out.

It is not just the Gaidhealtachd that has its culture and heritage held in that way. Because of the contraction of the language from many parts of Scotland, we have already lost part of that history and culture, so we need to stop that happening. Willie Rennie's story about the green room made that very point.

Gaelic was the language of most of Scotland; indeed, its use stretched into northern England. However, much of that has been lost and, with it, the history of those areas and the history and culture of the ordinary people in them. I think that, if we can trace some of that, that would revive interest in Gaelic in those areas.

There is also an economic argument for protection and growth of Gaelic. Angus MacDonalld talked about BBC Alba and Radio nan Gàidheal and what they have meant to many parts of the Highland and Islands. Those self-sufficient media outlets encourage training in all aspects of the media, which creates jobs. Many of those who have benefited have moved on to English-speaking media, which has made way for other young creative people.

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is the Gaelic college in Sleat, on Skye. That area was devastated by depopulation, but the college has grown a new and vibrant community around it. That investment, which continues to build the local economy, has, arguably, done more for the economy than any investment solely in jobs could have done. Claire Baker talked about Cnoc Soilleir in South Uist. I hope very much that that facility will do exactly the same for that area. However, we must go further than culture and education in order to protect the language—there must be a language for everyday communication.

Feumaidh sinn dèanamh a h-uile càil as urrainn dhuinn airson a' Ghàidhlig a chumail beò. Feumaidh sinn a cleachdadh airson nan nithean a tha sinn a' dèanamh a h-uile latha. Is e seo an dòigh airson Gàidhlig a chumail beò.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

We must do everything that we can to keep Gaelic alive. We need to use it for everyday things. That is how we can keep alive.

16:46

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): Having asked a question in Gaelic in a recent debate, I will not inflict the same pain on Parliament twice in one month. I am very pleased to be able to close, for the Scottish Conservatives, the debate on the Gaelic plan, which addresses how we continue to preserve, protect and promote that critical aspect of our culture and our being.

I pay tribute to the work of Bòrd na Gàidhlig for its efforts in putting together the report, and the work of other organisations and individuals who participate in such reports and strive to put their recommendations into practice. They include An Comunn Gàidhealach, which organises the Royal National Mòd festival. Last year, it took place in my home town of Fort William, and this year it will go to Dunoon. It is one of the biggest festivals of Gaelic music, arts and culture and it has, along the way, raised millions for the local economies of its various host towns.

Like the Deputy First Minister, I commend Fèisean nan Gàidheal—particularly its chief executive, Arthur Cormack, who happens to be one of my favourite Gaelic musicians—which does so much to promote Gaelic arts and music in communities across Scotland. The fèis movement is a striking example of Gaelic culture playing a role in everyday local life, especially with our young people.

I will make a couple of more personal observations. To my regret, I never had the benefit of Gaelic education, either through GME or simply learning the language at school. I have tried to

learn it as an adult—I attended night school in London and in Edinburgh, and I even did a summer course at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig—but I have never progressed into anything approaching fluency, although I will keep trying. I am deeply envious of those who have had those opportunities, and I fervently consider that those initiatives should continue to be supported.

Sadly, we have to recognise, as Oliver Mundell did in one of the debate's most sensitive and measured speeches, that Gaelic has been politicised in recent years—or has at least been used as a proxy for other battles. I do not point the finger of blame, not least because all parties, including my own, bear some responsibility for that, but when the very survival of the language is at stake, we must all join together in that common endeavour.

As Liz Smith noted, Gaelic is in the precarious position of being classified as an endangered language, with about only 58,000 speakers, according to the last census. Gaelic has enough of a fight on its hands simply to exist without there being internal battles within the Scottish body politic about it, so I welcome the consensual comments from all sides in the debate.

Kate Forbes: I agree fully with Donald Cameron on that point, and in my speech I mentioned the contribution of every party. Unfortunately, such matters are nearly always fought along either constitutional or party lines. How do we, as representatives, try to change that debate?

Donald Cameron: Kate Forbes is right: it is incumbent on all of us, in the language that we use, and in the points that we make in the chamber and outside it, to work towards ending that often constitutional battling.

All public spending should be scrutinised; there should never be a blank cheque. However, in a way, by its having to argue its case and fight its corner, the cause of Gaelic has, arguably, emerged stronger.

We must always remember that, for many people, Gaelic is not just a language but a way of life. Nowhere is that more obvious than in education. Only last week, the new school in Portree opened in the Highlands and Islands region; the fact that 123 local children have been enrolled in it shows the commitment from people in Gaelic-speaking communities to pass on the language to the next generation. That has not been without its challenges, but I am sure that, in time, divisions will heal.

Members mentioned the primary school in Caol, in Lochaber, which opened a few years ago and continues to thrive. I recently had the pleasure of visiting the school—albeit unofficially. Members also talked about schools in Glasgow, Edinburgh

and elsewhere in Scotland. Many schools see the benefits of GME and Gaelic-learner education. I welcome the fact that local authorities including Perth and Kinross Council, East Dunbartonshire Council and Argyll and Bute Council have some Gaelic education provision.

The importance of GME is the key focus of the plan, which recognises the important role that it can play in Scottish education and beyond. The plan notes the success of Gaelic in contributing to the Scottish attainment challenge. That view is supported by Her Majesty's inspector and lead officer for inspection of Gaelic-medium education, who said in 2017 that

"attainment in Gàidhlig as a subject is strong",

and went on to say that

"children attain equally well, or better, than their peers in English medium education."

Another aspect of the plan that I must mention, and which John Swinney mentioned, is the e-sgoil initiative. I recently met Bernard Chisholm, the director of education of Western Isles Council. We discussed the success of e-sgoil and how modern technology has enabled Gaelic education to be provided virtually to communities across the islands. Although the plan is right to say that e-sgoil would not directly replace traditional teaching methods, the use of technology to increase access to Gaelic is an important step in ensuring the survival of the language.

A key aim of the plan is to increase the number of Gaelic schools. We welcome that, given that in our party's manifesto we called for the setting up of more dedicated Gaelic schools. With that comes the crux of the matter: if we are to expand Gaelic-medium education and increase the number of schools, we need trained teaching staff. We know from other areas of the public sector that filling roles in rural and remote environments can be extremely difficult, so I am glad that the plan acknowledges that, when it says:

"we must also maintain a consistent emphasis on supporting the training and recruitment of teachers and other staff".

The plan has an abundance of ambitious proposals, which the Scottish Conservatives welcome. We want Gaelic to thrive in Scotland and we want to do our utmost to support communities where Gaelic is not just a language but a part of the community's fabric and identity.

I am proud to represent a part of Scotland that has such a rich tapestry of culture, which for the most part is Gaelic culture. As a nation, we should be grateful that we have such a unique language and culture, and as politicians it is our moral duty to defend that.

16:52

The Minister for International Development and Europe (Dr Alasdair Allan): 'S e deasbad feumail dha-rìreabh a bh' againn an-diugh, a' dearbhadh a-rithist gu bheil taic anns a' Phàrlamaid, agus thairis air na pàrtaidhean, dhan Ghàidhlig agus dhan àite a th' aice ann an Alba.

Tha mise fòrtanach a bhidh a' riochdadh nan Eilean Siar, far a bheil a' Ghàidhlig làidir. Tha mi 'n dòchas gum bi plana na Gàidhlig a' toirt chothroman gu mòran anns an sgìre agam fhìn Gàidhlig a chleachdadh agus ionnsachadh. Tha mi 'n dòchas cuideachd gum bi e a' brosnachadh na Gàidhlig ann an Alba air fad. Mar a tha fhios aig duine sam bith a leughas ainmean-àite air mapa, chan eil tòrr àitichean ann an Alba gun eachdraidh Ghàidhlig sam bith.

Tha mi den aon bheachd 's a tha Ceit Fhoirbeis mun mhì-rùn a th' ann am measg cuid bheag ann an Alba dhan Ghàidhlig. Cha bhi mi a' bruidhinn mu dheidhinn gu fada, ach innsidh mi sgeul no dhà. Is e a' phuuing as cudromaiche gu bheil e a' dèanamh diofar mòr dè tha daoine gun Ghàidhlig ag ràdh mun Ghàidhlig. Ma bhios iad ga moladh, bidh daoine òga moiteil gu bheil a' Ghàidhlig aca. Ma bhios daoine anns na meadhanan no ann am poileataigs a' magadh air a' Ghàidhlig, bidh na daoine òga sin a' fas suas leis an smuain nach eil Alba a' toirt spèis sam bith dhan dualchas Ghàidhlig aca.

Mar a tha sinn air faicinn san deasbad seo, tha ceanglaichean soilleir ann eadar a' Ghàidhlig agus iomadhach raon eile de bheatha phoblach agus coimhearsnachdan na h-Alba. Mar eisimpleir, tha VisitScotland a' leasachadh ro-innleachd turasachd Ghàidhlig mar phàirt den phlana Gàidhlig aca, tha Àrainneachd Eachdraidheil Alba a' cur thachartasan air dòigh ann an sgoiltean far a bheil foghlam tron Ghàidhlig, tha Poileas Alba air àrdachadh mòr a thoirt do dh'iomhaigh na Gàidhlig air feadh na dùthcha, agus bidh Leasachadh Sgìlean na h-Alba agus Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean a' cruinneachadh fiosrachadh mu chleachdadh na Gàidhlig anns a' mhargaid-obrach agus a' cur taic ri preantasachdan tron Ghàidhlig.

Tha iomadh comhairle air feadh Alba a-nis a' toirt air adhart dhleastanasan ùra mar phàirt den phlana Ghàidhlig aca, agus tha comhairle maoineachaidh na h-Alba a' cur taic ri faclair eachdraidheil na Gàidhlig, am measg iomairtean cudromach eile.

Innsidh mi rud no dha mun dà leasachadh a tha air am moladh an-diugh agus dham bi an Riaghaltas a' toirt taic. Tha mi cuideachd airson facal no dhà a ràdh mu dheidhinn cuid de na daoine a bha a' bruidhinn an-diugh, agus tha mi

gu math toilichte gun robh tòrr buill a' bruidhinn an-diugh—cus airson bruidhinn air a h-uile duine.

Rinn Ealasaid Nic a' Ghobhainn puingean math mun fhàs ann am foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Tha e cudromach a ràdh nach eil foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a' tachairt ann an àite sam bith gun taic is gun sabaid sa choimhearsnachd. Bha Iain Gray ceart nuair a thuir e nach robh cothroman ann sna bliadhnaichean a chaidh seachad airson dhaoine a bha a' cleachdadh no ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig. Rinn Iain Finnie puing mhath cuideachd, is e a' bruidhinn mu na sochairean a th' ann airson duine sam bith a tha a' cleachdadh dà chànan, no a tha ag ionnsachadh dà chànan, no trì cànanan. Bha Eideard Mountain agus Lewis Dòmhnallach ceart cuideachd a bhith a' cuimhneachadh gu bheil ceangal ann eadar slàinte an eaconamaidh ann an sgìre agus slàinte na Gàidhlig.

Bha Stiùbhart MacSteafain a' bruidhinn mu eachdraidh an teaghlach aige—cha chuala mi sin a-riamh roimhe bho Stiùbhart MacSteafain—agus bha e a' bruidhinn mun àite a th' aig a' Ghàidhlig ann an Glaschu, agus mun cheangal eadar a' Ghàidhlig agus uisge-beatha. Dh'innis Claire Baker dhuinn beagan mun cheangal eadar a' Ghàidhlig agus cultar, mar a rinn tòrr buill eile.

Tha mi a' smaoinachadh gu bheil barrachd Gàidhlig aig Dòmhnall Camshron na tha e ag ràdh. Tha mi a' creidsinn gu bheil Gàidhlig fhìor mhath aig Loch Iall; chuala mi sin an-raoir agus tha mi a' creidsinn gu bheil uabhasach modhail mun an sin.

Bhuidhinn mi mu rud no dhà a bha daoine ag ràdh san deasbad, ach nì mi puing no dhà eile. Tha Bile nan Eilean a' dol tron Phàrlamaid seo an-dràsta fhèin agus tha a' Ghàidhlig na pàirt chudromaich dheth. Mar a chuala sinn na bu tràithe, tha ceangal ann eadar a' Ghàidhlig agus cùisean eaconamach agus bun-structar, mar thaigheadas, còmh-dhail, ath-leasachadh fearainn, teicneòlas fiosrachaidh agus cosnadh. Bidh seo na chuspair deasbaid aig a' bhuidhinn a bheir an Leas-phrìomh Mhinistear ri chèile san Lùnastal. Faodaidh na cùisean nas fharsainghe seo cleachdadh agus ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig a bhrosnachadh, agus ìomhaigh a' chànan a chur air adhart.

Tha mise air a bhith taiceil dhan Ghàidhlig bhon mhionaid a mhothaich mi nach b' urrainn dhomh a h-ionnsachadh mar chuspair san sgoil. Tha mi a' creidsinn gu bheil a' Phàrlamaid taiceil cuideachd, agus bha sin follaiseach an-diugh.

Tha mi a' dol a chriochnachadh le fàilte a chur a-rithist air foillseachadh agus cur air bhog plana cànan nàiseanta na Gàidhlig. Bheir seo dhuinn an cothrom togail air an deagh obair a tha sinn air dèanamh o chionn ghoirid agus adhartas nas

luaithe a dhèanamh anns gach roinn de leasachadh na Gàidhlig ann an Alba. Cumaidh Riaghaltas na h-Alba ar taic agus brosnachadh ri sgoiltean Gàidhlig ùra, agus sinn airson gum faic sinn na h-àireamhan a sìor dhol suas de luchd-labhairt, luchd-cleachdaidh agus luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig ann an Alba.

'S e deasbad feumail a bh' ann an-diugh, mar a thuir mi, agus tha mi an dòchas gur e toiseach-toiseachaidh a th' ann airson an t-seòrsa taic a bhios aig a' Phàrlamaid san àm ri teachd airson na Gàidhlig.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

This was a very useful debate, which has proved again that all parties in the Parliament are supportive of Gaelic and its place in Scotland.

I am fortunate to represent the Western Isles, where Gaelic is strong, and I hope that the Gaelic plan will bring to many people in my area new opportunities to learn and use Gaelic. I also hope that Gaelic will be encouraged throughout Scotland. Anyone who reads place names on a map will know that not many places do not have some Gaelic history.

I am of the same opinion as Kate Forbes regarding the denigration of Gaelic in Scotland. I will not talk about that much, but I will tell members a story or two. The most important point is that what people without Gaelic say about Gaelic makes a big difference. If they praise it, young people will be happy that they have Gaelic. If people in the media or politics denigrate Gaelic, young people will grow up thinking that Scotland does not respect their Gaelic heritage.

As we heard in the debate, there are clear links between Gaelic and many aspects of public life and communities in Scotland. For example, VisitScotland is creating a tourism strategy, Historic Scotland is promoting events in schools where there is Gaelic education, Police Scotland has greatly promoted the profile of Gaelic throughout the country, and Skills Development Scotland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise are collecting information and supporting apprenticeships through Gaelic.

Many councils throughout Scotland are promoting new roles as part of the Gaelic plan, and the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council is providing support for a historical dictionary in Gaelic, among other things.

I want to tell members one or two things about the developments that were recommended today, which the Government will support. I will also say a word or two about the contributions of a few people who spoke in today's debate. I am very happy that a lot of members did so, but it would be too much for me to speak about each contribution

in detail. Liz Smith made some very good points about Gaelic education. It is important to say that Gaelic medium education is not happening anywhere without people fighting for it and that, in years gone by, there were few opportunities for anyone who was using or learning the language. John Finnie made a good point in mentioning the benefits for anyone who uses two—or perhaps three—languages. Edward Mountain and Lewis Macdonald were also correct in remembering that there is a link between the economy and Gaelic. Stewart Stevenson spoke about the history of his family, which I have never heard from him before. He spoke about the place that Gaelic has in Glasgow and also the link between Gaelic and whisky. Claire Baker told us a little about the link between Gaelic and culture, as did many other members. I will tell the chamber something else: Donald Cameron has more Gaelic than he stated. In fact, I am sure that Lochiel has very good Gaelic—I heard it last night—but he is very modest about it.

I want to make a few more points about matters that speakers covered in the debate. The Islands (Scotland) Bill is going through Parliament at the moment, and Gaelic is an important part of that. Also, as we heard earlier, there is a link between Gaelic and economic and infrastructure matters such as housing, technology and many others. That will be a matter for debate in a group that the Deputy First Minister will convene in August. A wider aspect of that will be encouragement of using and learning the language. I have been very supportive of Gaelic from the moment that I realised that I could not study it as a subject at school. I believe that the Parliament is supportive as well, which has been obvious today.

I will finish by again welcoming the publication and launch of the national Gaelic plan, which will give us an opportunity to build on the good work that has been done before and to make faster progress in the development of Gaelic in Scotland. The Scottish Government will maintain support and encouragement for new Gaelic schools so that we can see the numbers of speakers, users and learners of Gaelic in Scotland increase.

As I have said, today's debate has been very useful and I hope that it represents the start of the kind of support that the Parliament will give to Gaelic in the future.

Point of Order

16:59

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green):

On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would like to raise a point of order in relation to rule 3.1 of standing orders, which is the rule that outlines the duties of the Presiding Officer and the Deputy Presiding Officers. Subparagraph 1(d) of that rule says that the Presiding Officer shall

“represent the Parliament in discussions and exchanges with any parliamentary, governmental, administrative or other body, whether within or outwith the United Kingdom.”

Presiding Officer, particularly with regard to recent events in Gaza, which have involved considerable loss of life, I would be interested to know whether you took the opportunity to raise the issue of justice for Palestine when you met the Israeli ambassador today.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I thank Mr Finnie for giving me advance notice of his point of order. As he and, I hope, other members will be aware, one of my duties as Presiding Officer is to welcome all ambassadors on behalf of the Scottish Parliament. It is the case that I do not divulge the nature or content of the courtesy calls that we have.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Today, we have three questions. The first question is, that amendment S5M-11788.1, in the name of Liz Smith, which seeks to amend motion S5M-11788, in the name of John Swinney, on the national plan for Gaelic, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-11788.2, in the name of Iain Gray, which seeks to amend the motion in the name of John Swinney, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-11788, in the name of John Swinney, on the national plan for Gaelic, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the publication and launch of the National Gaelic Language Plan, and regards this as an opportunity to build on the good success of recent years and to ensure a faster rate of progress in all key areas of Gaelic development in Scotland, maintaining support and encouragement for standalone Gaelic schools and increasing the number of people speaking, using and learning the Gaelic language in Scotland; to this end, believes that the priority must be on Gaelic medium education and on ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of Gaelic-speaking and Gaelic-qualified teachers available to meet the demand, especially in secondary schools, and notes that the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 set up the framework for the National Gaelic Language Plan with the aim of growing the language usage to a point where it can be normalised.

Show Some Heart (Jayden Orr Campaign)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-10084, in the name of Stuart McMillan, on show some heart, the Jayden Orr campaign. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament commends Show Some Heart, the Jayden Orr campaign, which has been launched by the family of Jayden Orr, from Port Glasgow, who sadly passed away at the age of 10 while practising his favourite sport and pastime of ice skating; notes that the campaign has various targets, including raising public awareness of the importance of defibrillator machines and campaigning to raise funds to ensure that a defibrillator is located in every school in Inverclyde; further notes the importance of registering a defibrillator machine with the Scottish Ambulance Service, which maintains the register, as this allows it to guide people to a machine until an ambulance arrives; welcomes the backing of this campaign from the *Greenock Telegraph*, which has been hugely supportive of the family; commends the strength of the Orr family and this campaign to improve society, and wishes them every success.

17:03

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I thank everyone who supported the motion to enable the debate to take place. I also want to make members aware that members of Jayden Orr's family have travelled through to Parliament to be in the public gallery.

There can be nothing worse for a parent than losing a child. It is every parent's worst nightmare. Unfortunately, for many families, it becomes a reality and, no matter what happens after the passing, it will never bring the child back.

Show some heart is a campaign that was established by the Orr family in memory of their precious son, 10-year-old Jayden Orr from Port Glasgow. The Orr family saw their son once again take to the ice to practise his beloved ice skating, not knowing that it would be the last time. Jayden loved ice skating. Some youngsters love football, rugby or one of the many other sports that are available. For Jayden, ice skating was his passion and he was good at it. He won many competitions and awards, and he was a hard-working and determined young man who always wanted to improve on the ice. He wanted to be the best.

On 4 August 2017, Jayden collapsed on the ice and died shortly afterwards. As a result of that tragedy, Jayden's parents, bravely, wanted to highlight the importance of defibrillator machines being available in public places. The show some heart campaign was launched in January this year with a target of reaching £50,000 to fund a

defibrillator machine in every school in Inverclyde. I am fully behind the campaign, as are the Inverclyde public. The local newspaper, the *Greenock Telegraph*, has been instrumental in collating aspects of the campaign. I put on record my gratitude to the *Greenock Telegraph* for that and for the sensitive way in which it has reported any stories about Jayden, his family and the campaign.

Various fundraising activities have already taken place, with the opening of a shop in Greenock and the recent charity ball in Greenock town hall being two examples. Since January this year, which is only a short space of time, £17,000 has been raised. Local businesses and the local population have been supportive, and I thank everyone who has helped so far.

When I became involved in the campaign, I undertook some research to understand fully the situation regarding defibrillators in Inverclyde. It is clear that there are a few areas that could be strengthened to help the situation not only in Inverclyde but in every constituency in Scotland. At present, there is no obligation for the purchaser of a defibrillator machine to register it with the Scottish Ambulance Service. I accept that it might be difficult for every variant of a defibrillator to be registered and that there would be a cost to doing so, because of the investment in bureaucracy that would be required. However, defibrillators can be purchased from ordinary websites—they are not limited to specialist providers. The Scottish Ambulance Service already holds a register of defibrillator locations in the country, but it is not complete. The fact that there is no requirement for defibrillators to be registered is a gap in the system to assist people.

In December, I spent a day with the Scottish Ambulance Service. On one of the calls, a defibrillator machine had been used beforehand to try to assist. The machine had been registered with the Ambulance Service, so when a member of the public made the call about the ill person, they were directed to the nearest defib machine, which was in the local village hall, about 200 metres away. That was then used until the ambulance arrived. Whether defibrillator machines are in schools, community halls, shops or any other public location, having them registered on the Scottish Ambulance Service register would be hugely advantageous to society.

A second issue of note concerns the pads for use with defib machines. As the Minister for Public Health and Sport will know, there are different pads for adults and for children, although adult pads can be used on children because a reduced current can be deployed from the defib machine. In the first instance, I believe that it would be beneficial for there to be greater public awareness

of the importance of accessing defib machines, but I believe that it would also be beneficial for each machine to have pads for both adults and children. It is important to consider that, on occasion, the person who uses a defib until an ambulance arrives will be a member of the public. Every second counts when it comes to heart failure, so keeping the message simple for non-professional users would be helpful. I was informed by the Scottish Ambulance Service that adult pads are fine to be used on children, but I appreciate that confusion might arise in a pressure situation when a member of the public is trying to help.

The third important issue with defib machines is the connections available on them. They are not standard, which means that different machines can have different connections for the pads. If there was a standard—using, for example, a USB port or a headphones connection—it would be easier for defib owners to replace pads and possibly obtain them at more reasonable prices.

Fourthly, it would be remiss of me not to ask the minister whether the Scottish Government can help the show some heart campaign financially. The target is to reach £50,000, of which £17,000 has been raised so far.

The show some heart campaign has highlighted an important issue that could affect any one of us or any of our constituents in every community in the country. The campaign has highlighted positives in the current system and in awareness of defib machines, but it has also highlighted that there are, unfortunately, shortcomings in the system.

I believe that the show some heart campaign can achieve access to a defib in every Inverclyde school, and can also help to make the current system more robust and better for the country and, ultimately, our constituents. The campaign wants to introduce a defib into every local school and it is understandable why that is the aim. Schools tend to be in the heart of local communities and large numbers of people gather in them for large parts of the day, so it makes sense for that to be the aim.

In recent years, stories have appeared that have shocked the sports world. When we hear of young sportspeople collapsing and dying from heart-related conditions, it is always sobering. It also highlights that every second counts to try to save their life. Sometimes, the first responder is not a trained person but a bystander, so knowing where the machines are is vital. When we reach the target, which we will, the public will know that there is a defibrillator in the local school, which might just save a life.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

The member has made an excellent speech. Will he join me in congratulating the British Heart Foundation on its work to fund more than 1,500 defibs in Scotland, which is a fantastic achievement?

Stuart McMillan: I cannot disagree with David Stewart's contribution. The work of the British Heart Foundation in Scotland has, for many years, been outstanding.

The strength of the Orr family while coming to terms with the tragic loss of their son is immeasurable. Their desire to help ensure that others do not go through what they have highlights their character as a family, as well as their willingness to help others. The family have stated that they want Jayden to live on through helping others. Continuing the campaign to reach the £50,000 target and to have a defibrillator installed in every school in Inverclyde will be a fitting tribute to Jayden.

17:11

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I congratulate Stuart McMillan on securing today's members' business debate. I put on record my condolences to Jayden Orr's family on their loss, and my praise and admiration for how they are using their experience of tragedy to take forward the show some heart campaign to benefit others in their community. The fact that we are debating the campaign this evening goes to show that it has already achieved so much. I commend their efforts and, like Stuart McMillan, I wish their campaign every success. I am delighted that the *Greenock Telegraph* is backing their cause.

The show some heart campaign's work in Inverclyde mirrors similar positive efforts in other parts of our country. In my region of Lothian, I have been pleased to highlight the excellent work of the Jamie Skinner Foundation, which was established following the tragic death from sudden cardiac arrest of the 13-year-old Tynecastle Football Club player, Jamie Skinner, in 2013. His death shocked the Edinburgh sport and wider communities. The foundation has achieved a great deal in raising awareness of the risk of cardiac arrest for young sportspeople, and has already raised a very significant amount of money, with more than £40,000 being spent on community defibrillators that have the potential to save people's lives in Lothian.

Last year, I was pleased to join St John Scotland, which is based in Edinburgh, in a cardiopulmonary resuscitation and defib use training day for members of the public. St John Scotland supports the provision of community defibs around Scotland and I commend it for its

work. The St John and the city public access defib project has delivered numerous defibs in our capital city, including on the city's trams and at key tourist attractions.

Stuart McMillan's motion rightly references the importance of registering community defibs with the Scottish Ambulance Service. My motion in March on the SAS's very welcome new registration to resuscitation campaign and its new website, pad.scottishambulance.com, attracted broad cross-party support. Today, I again urge any community groups that have not yet registered their local defibs on the SAS website to do so, so that SAS knows where the nearest defibs are located and can give that information out to the public before an ambulance is dispatched.

I recently met Mr Phil Mills-Bishop, the chair of Stonehaven and District community council, who, like many people, has been campaigning for a number of years for more defibrillators to be located in communities in the north-east. Mr Mills-Bishop set out a range of concerns in relation to the provision of community defibs, citing the fact that some councils still appear unwilling for them to be located in public buildings, including schools.

He also highlighted the fact that his community council has to bear all the associated costs, responsibilities and risks in relation to the defibs, including the recurring cost of additional pads and fixing defibs after vandalism. When I met him, he raised a number of issues around planning regulations and whether changes could be made to remove the need for planning permission for defibs located outside, if their installation could be covered by permitted development.

I have raised these issues in writing with the health secretary, but from what has already been said in this debate, I hope that the minister will mention it in her closing remarks. I also hope that we will be able to take this forward at the cross-party level. I welcome the fact that more defibs are being made available across our communities, but in future we clearly need to make sure that they are serviced and that councils make all this easy to do. We need to see best practice spread right across Scotland and any barriers to that removed.

To conclude, I welcome today's debate and pay tribute to the work of the show some heart campaign. Delivering a defibrillatory electrical shock can change outcomes and bring survival rates up to as much as 75 per cent. We will all, therefore, be united in supporting the show some heart campaign and others like it throughout the communities that we represent. Their success means ever greater potential to save the lives of people of all ages and we should all welcome that.

17:16

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I add my congratulations to Stuart McMillan on securing tonight's debate. I also offer a very warm welcome to Jayden Orr's family.

This is a heartbreaking story of a 10-year-old boy from Port Glasgow who left the house one evening seemingly happy, fit, and healthy but who never returned home. While ice skating, Jayden collapsed from what is believed might have been a cardiac arrest. We can only imagine what the Orr family went through the night Jayden died, and what they continue to live with.

Jayden was a talented young ice skater. In just four years on the ice, he won countless competitions and was training for the British championships. His family are rightly proud of his achievements and are determined to honour his memory by campaigning to save as many lives as they can in the aftermath of their own personal tragedy.

As we have heard, the family's show some heart campaign aims to raise money to put defibrillators and other life-saving equipment into every school in Inverclyde, which is the area that I come from. Funds will also go towards training people to use the machines properly. Jayden's parents, Kathleen and John, are researching the most suitable child-friendly defibrillators, and they have secured the support of Northern Resus Training, which will come to Inverclyde and teach local people how to use the machines.

The leisure centre where Jayden collapsed had a defibrillator, but it only had adult pads, and the person who was trained to use it was not there. It is not known whether access to a child-friendly defibrillator would have made a difference for Jayden but, as Kathleen Orr said after her son's death, none of us knows when something is going to happen, or when the availability of a machine could save a life.

As well as raising money to buy equipment, the family want to educate the public about what to do in the event of what is termed an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. Doctors tell us that bystander CPR, coupled with the use of a defibrillator, offers the best chance of survival after an OHCA. Every minute without CPR and defibrillation reduces someone's chance of survival by 10 per cent.

In 2015, the Scottish Government published a national strategy to increase survival rates by ensuring that the public are equipped with CPR skills and enabled to use a public access defibrillator until emergency services arrive at the scene. It is also worth noting that many tools are available on the internet that the public can use to learn how to operate a defibrillator or practise effective CPR. We have heard the British Heart

Foundation praised tonight, and it has created how-to videos that last just a few minutes. Save A Life for Scotland's website is another great resource.

I understand that there is strong local support in Inverclyde for the Orr family's brave campaign. I was pleased to hear Stuart McMillan talk about the role of the *Greenock Telegraph*, the newspaper where I started my journalism career longer ago than I care to remember, in 1987. It has backed the family from the beginning and should be commended in particular for its sensitive reporting of the issue. There has been an outpouring of support from the people of Inverclyde, who have donated generously to the JustGiving campaign that was set up by Jayden's sister, Kerri Lynn, to the tune of thousands of pounds. I hope that when Jayden's family leave Holyrood tonight, they will do so in no doubt about how much MSPs from across the chamber, from all parties, admire their strength and back their efforts with the campaign.

17:20

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): I associate myself with the remarks made by Miles Briggs and Joan McAlpine and I congratulate Stuart McMillan on securing a debate on this very important campaign.

The family of Jayden Orr have shown remarkable strength since he was taken from them. What they have achieved in Jayden's memory is extraordinary. They have mobilised a community, enlisted the support of their local newspaper—the *Greenock Telegraph*—and won backing from local government, and they are still fundraising and raising awareness about the importance of defibrillators in public places.

The show some heart campaign has been inspirational in highlighting such an important issue. Today, that campaign comes to the Scottish Parliament, and I hope that members on all sides will see the importance of installing lifesaving devices in different community settings across the country.

Jayden's death at the age of 10 is a poignant reminder that tragedy can strike at any age. That is why among the campaign's aims is that of fulfilling the intention that defibrillators should be located in every school in Inverclyde, as well as in leisure centres and other public places. Just as the campaigners want to see more community defibrillators readily available in Inverclyde, they also want to educate people about how to use the devices properly and with confidence.

We must support the Orr family, who are here today, to achieve that aim, because, as has been said, it is not just ambulance crews and trained first responders who should have access to a

defibrillator and who should know how to use the device in an emergency; ordinary members of the public should also be able to do that, because when somebody has a sudden cardiac arrest, quick-thinking bystanders can become lifesavers.

As we have heard, campaigners also want to make sure that, where defibrillators are installed, they are registered with the Scottish Ambulance Service. Ambulance control centres will use the information in the public access defibrillator—PAD—registration system to signpost 999 callers to the nearest device when someone reports a cardiac arrest.

According to the Scottish Ambulance Service, the most important factors to determine survival of cardiac arrest are early, high-quality CPR and counter-shock therapy, which is more commonly known as defibrillation. To survive a cardiac arrest, patients have to receive CPR; in the majority of cases, they will also require defibrillation. To be successful, both CPR and defibrillation have to be applied within a matter of minutes. Time is always of the essence. That is why defibrillators have to be readily available and, as Stuart McMillan said, why their locations have to be recorded on a reliable, up-to-date register. It can make all the difference in an emergency when seconds count—it can save a life.

As Stuart McMillan said, the other main strand to the family's campaign relates to fundraising. PADs cost money. They can cost between £1,500 and £3,000, but, as Jayden's mother, Kathleen, said when speaking in support of the campaign,

"what's that in comparison to saving a life?"

Although the Scottish Government has made a financial contribution in the past, defibrillators are still largely funded through community, charitable or business donations. The family have been crowdfunding, holding table-top sales, auctions and a charity ball, and they have set up Jayden's Rainbow charity shop—a shop that was flooded with donations from ordinary members of the public.

The family have reached out to the business community and to local councillors and, as I said earlier, they been working with the *Greenock Telegraph* to ensure that the campaign is well publicised locally. The response to the appeal from the community in Port Glasgow and across the Inverclyde area has been impressive. Today's debate is an opportunity to recognise not just the importance of the campaign and all that it seeks to achieve but the kindness and generosity that have been shown by the people of Inverclyde. They have given their support to the cause, and now I ask the Scottish Government to consider what further support we can give to them.

I ask the Scottish Government to consider how community action and Government action together can expand the availability of this life-saving technology and what more can be done to help ensure that more people survive cardiac arrest.

I once again commend the Orr family for their strength and persistence in taking forward the show some heart campaign. I recognise all that they have achieved to date and all that the community in Inverclyde has done to support them, from the local newspaper to the council and individual members of the public, who have given so generously. Realising the objectives of the campaign will make a difference, so I wish the campaigners every success in the months ahead.

17:25

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I congratulate my colleague Stuart McMillan on securing the debate and on supporting the show some heart campaign. I associate myself with the words of my colleagues, and I support the family of Jayden Orr in the work that they are doing through their strong campaign.

Dr Richard Cummins from Seattle discovered 28 years ago that if a series of events take place in a set sequence, a patient who is suffering a heart attack stands a greater chance of survival. Those events are now known as the chain of survival. That chain is: early recognition and call for help; early cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR; early defibrillation; and early advanced care. The chain has led to more successful survival rates of persons having cardiac events in hospital and, since the advent of community defibrillators, to better out-of-hospital survival rates. The chances of survival can be greatly improved.

Automatic external defibrillators, which are also known as public access defibrillators or even shock boxes, are designed to enable non-medical personnel to save lives. In early 2000, in my previous nursing role, I was an early adopter of the technology while working in cardiac and trauma surgery, during which we would place the pads on the patient's chest for the duration of their surgery, just in case arrhythmia occurred. That was innovative preparation, at the time.

It is superb that the technology has the potential to be universally available, so that first responders and ordinary folks can contribute to life-saving events, so I welcome and promote that. Under the Scottish strategy on the out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survival rate, which was launched in 2015 and has since been reviewed, patient outcomes and the impact of the current efforts continue to be tracked. That tracking shows that bystander CPR saves lives.

Ahead of the debate, I did some research on where defibrillators are located in the south-west of Scotland. I spoke to a very helpful local councillor called Iain Howie, who is also a defib trainer, about local efforts to acquire and place defibs. Both Iain and I support the wording in the motion that asks for defibrillators to be registered with the Scottish Ambulance Service so that, when 999 is called in an emergency, the exact location of the closest defib can be relayed. Stuart McMillan described seeing how that worked on a visit.

The map on the HeartSafe website lists two defibs in the south-west of Scotland, but that is not the most up-to-date or accurate information. When I looked into the issue, I found that about 25 defibs are located in various places across the south-west of my region, including one in a BT phone box that was acquired by the public in St John's Town of Dalry. I found a spreadsheet that listed 18 local defibs, but only six are registered with the Scottish Ambulance Service.

Only four of the 13 secondary schools in the South Scotland region that responded to my inquiry have a defib. One of them is Dalbeattie high school. Last Friday, I attended the school, where a physics and chemistry teacher, Mr Alistair Bremner, was co-ordinating a basic life support and CPR class, which I attended. About 40 young people were learning how to perform chest compressions and rescue breaths, how to simulate the defibrillator process and even how to deliver simulated shocks. Having defibs in school is part of what we need to support learning. All kids should leave school with basic life-support skills, and Alistair Bremner should be commended for his commitment to his pupils obtaining those life skills.

A defibrillator is a lifesaving machine. For every minute that passes without defibrillation, chances of survival decrease by 10 per cent. Seconds count. Seconds mean that a shock can start a heart. Seconds save lives.

Deputy Presiding Officer, I support the motion. Not only Inverclyde schools, but all schools and public arenas should have defibs. Once again, I thank Stuart McMillan for bringing the debate to the chamber and I commend the strength of the Orr family for their campaign.

17:30

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I join my colleagues in thanking Stuart McMillan for bringing the debate to the chamber and giving us the opportunity to highlight such a hugely important issue.

It is worth taking a moment to acknowledge the difference between a heart attack and a cardiac

arrest, because the two are often confused. When someone suffers a heart attack, the blood supply to part of their heart has stopped because of a blockage in a coronary artery, which causes part of the muscle to begin to die. In cardiac arrest, the whole heart stops pumping, often because of a problem with the electrical signals that control the heart muscle.

A person who is having a heart attack may experience the symptoms over a number of hours, and they can remain conscious and still have a pulse. Cardiac arrest is sudden and dramatic. A person who is in cardiac arrest will be unresponsive and usually stops breathing. Although the conditions are different, they are closely linked—so closely, in fact, that the measures that we take to treat one can often help the other.

In the treatments for heart attack and cardiac arrest, a key factor is early administering of treatment, as Emma Harper has just pointed out. Unless we are extremely lucky, there will always be a gap between the person experiencing a cardiac event and an ambulance arriving. That is why campaigns such as show some heart, which aim to increase the availability of public access defibrillators, are so important.

For patients who have a cardiac arrest outside a hospital setting, receiving good-quality CPR and defibrillation within minutes can mean the difference between survival and death. In fact, for every minute that passes after a cardiac arrest without defibrillation, a patient's chance of survival decreases by as much as 10 per cent.

The advent of automatic external defibrillators means that, in an emergency, anyone—even if they have no medical knowledge at all—can provide defibrillation to someone who is in cardiac arrest, and can potentially save their life. Across the country, we are seeing more and more public access defibrillators being installed as the public catch on to the fact that the devices can make all the difference in an emergency.

Although we are unlikely to get to a point at which there is a PAD on every street corner, the more that are available, the greater is the chance that there will be one nearby when one is needed. That is why commitments from nationwide businesses, including Asda, to provide defibrillators and CPR-trained staff in stores can make such a difference. Even so, there will always be places where another defibrillator could be useful—especially rural areas, where help can take longer to arrive.

Ensuring that as many people as possible have the opportunity to learn the basics of CPR will make a huge difference to the chances of people who suffer a heart attack or cardiac arrest. Such

opportunities, whether they are formal first-aid courses in schools or workplaces, or media campaigns, can give a person the basics.

It is often said that knowledge is power; in this case it can mean life, too. However, knowledge on its own is not enough: with knowledge must come the confidence to use it. That confidence comes from campaigns like show some heart—campaigns that make CPR and PADs less alien and unfamiliar, and which reassure people that trying to help is always better than not doing so.

In closing, I, too, would like to take a moment to pay tribute to the Orr family and the work that they have done to create and drive their show some heart campaign. The loss of a family member is always devastating, but it is so much more so when that family member is so young. As Stuart McMillan said, Jayden was a young man who was seemingly very fit and healthy, and who was pursuing an enthusiasm for sport. To come through that kind of tragedy and then choose to campaign in the hope of sparing others the same loss is a true show of strength and determination. I wish the Orr family's campaign every success and I hope that it can serve to encourage councils, businesses, clubs, and venues across Scotland to install their own public access defibrillators, and help to prevent such a tragedy happening again.

17:34

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): Like others, I am grateful to Stuart McMillan for bringing this motion to the Parliament this evening. I also welcome Jayden Orr's family to the chamber. I cannot imagine the pain that they have gone through after losing their precious wee lad all too soon. Like others, I pay tribute to them and the rest of their family for their strength and courage, which have enabled them to campaign in Jayden's name through show some heart.

As Joan McAlpine said, the level of support for that campaign, in Inverclyde and on the part of MSPs tonight, shows just how much admiration we all have for the Orr family and for all that they have done to raise awareness to ensure that people who need help are responded to in a timely fashion.

As others have outlined, the campaign aims to raise public awareness of the importance of defibrillators, to make more available and to register them with the Scottish Ambulance Service. All of those elements are important with regard to the saving of more lives. Using a defibrillator and starting CPR are the key factors in determining survival when someone has an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. That is the reason why they are the early priorities in the out-of-hospital

cardiac arrest strategy for Scotland. It is in that context that I will base some of my responses to the points that have been raised tonight.

We launched the strategy in 2015 with a commitment to improve survival and outcomes from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest and to get more people home to their families. That involves improving the whole system of care, dubbed the chain of survival, which, as Emma Harper outlined in her remarks, comprises early recognition that someone has had a cardiac arrest; calling 999 for help; the administration of CPR by the people present; early use of a defibrillator, where one is available; rapid access to high-quality resuscitation care by emergency services and clinicians; post-resuscitation care in hospital; and aftercare. All those elements must be optimised in order to improve outcomes from a cardiac arrest. As Neil Bibby said, we know that rapid bystander action of the sort that I have outlined in the minutes following a cardiac arrest is where the greatest gains in relation to survival will be achieved. Starting CPR keeps the person alive, buying time until medical help arrives.

CPR is a life-saving skill that practically anyone can learn. That is why we launched the save a life for Scotland partnership, which involves blue-light and voluntary sector organisations and which works to encourage people to learn CPR and to raise not only awareness of the importance of intervening in instances of cardiac arrest but the willingness to do so. Since 2015, save a life for Scotland partners have worked with schools and community and sports groups, in workplaces and public spaces and at major events to equip more than 200,000 people with CPR skills. That is a great achievement and we want to acknowledge the work of all the partners and thank all the people who said, "I'll do it," and learned how to save a life.

My priority for save a life for Scotland is working with schools to support CPR learning. Under curriculum for excellence, schools have the flexibility to provide emergency or first aid training, and it is up to individual schools and local authorities to decide whether and how best to provide CPR-learning opportunities in the curriculum. CPR training is already embedded in schools across Scotland, with support from save a life for Scotland partners such as the British Heart Foundation, St Andrews First Aid, the British Red Cross, the Royal Lifesaving Society and Lucky2BHere. The save a life for Scotland partnership has also worked with Education Scotland to develop resources for schools, which are available on Education Scotland's glow website. That is delivering our aim of making CPR learning easy, accessible and free.

Bystander CPR keeps a person alive in those crucial minutes until a defibrillator can be used. Defibrillation works with CPR and is more effective the earlier that it is performed. It is on that basis that we welcome the aim of show some heart, the Jayden Orr campaign's aim to increase public awareness and availability of defibrillators in Inverclyde. I will certainly instruct my officials to meet Stuart McMillan and the campaign to explore ways in which the show some heart campaign can work alongside our current approaches to ensure that we complement the work that is going on and maximise the reach that both of our campaigns seek to have in order that more people can benefit from the outcomes of those efforts.

Like others, I take this opportunity to show my appreciation of the communities, voluntary organisations and businesses that have raised funds to purchase defibrillators, often making them publicly available across Scotland, and I recognise the role of the British Heart Foundation in making funding available for defibrillators as part of its commitment to saving lives.

Last month, we published a guide to public access defibs, which provides practical advice for people who want to install a defib for their local community.

Our strategy recognises the importance of defibs and aims to make the most effective use of those that are available. Through it, the Scottish Ambulance Service has established a registration to resuscitation campaign that maps public access defibs on to their call-handling system, which means that they can direct bystanders to a defib when one is nearby. Through that system, we can improve their use, and I encourage everyone responsible for a public access defib to register it with the Scottish Ambulance Service.

A critical part of the Scottish Ambulance Service registration of defibs is that a person should be responsible for each defib, check it regularly and confirm that it is working. That is crucial. I hope that the effort to increase registration gives reassurance to Stuart McMillan that we want to build on that and ensure that more people know where defibrillators are in their community.

Stuart McMillan: Has the Scottish Government considered making registration with the Scottish Ambulance Service a mandatory requirement when a defib machine is purchased?

Aileen Campbell: We will certainly continue to work with the Scottish Ambulance Service to make sure that defibs in existence now get the registration required to make sure that the service is aware of defibs in communities. We will continue to keep Stuart McMillan updated on progress in that work.

This is not just about registration; it is also about making sure that someone takes responsibility for defibs to ensure that they work when someone has need of them. That is an important point to recognise. There has been an upsurge in registration. We are working with the Scottish Ambulance Service and that important work will continue.

In response to some of the points that Stuart McMillan raised, I say that we have funded the University of Edinburgh resuscitation research group to carry out modelling work to inform advice on where defibs are best located to save lives. Our expert group is considering the issue raised by Stuart McMillan about the use of defibs for children. I hope that that shows him that there is continued work to make progress on the issues that he described in his opening remarks.

We are starting to make progress on out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. Since the strategy's launch in 2015, the provision of bystander CPR has increased to nearly 50 per cent and survival has also increased. In 2016-17, an additional 62 lives were saved, compared to the previous year. That has only been possible because of the commitment and partnership working of public services, voluntary organisations and communities themselves.

The generosity of those involved in show some heart, the Jayden Orr campaign is a valuable part of that collective effort. I thank the Orr family and friends for their generous work and assure them that the memory of Jayden Orr will live on in the continued effort to raise awareness to help others. He sounds like an incredible young lad, and we will certainly do all that we can to make sure that his experience is not in vain and that we do more to help others throughout communities in Scotland.

Meeting closed at 17:43.

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