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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 14 May 2015

Session 4

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 14 May 2015

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

General Question Time

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Good morning. The first item of business is general questions. Question 1 is from Margaret McDougall. [Interruption.] You are late, Ms McDougall.

Fracking (Consultation)

1. Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab): I apologise, Presiding Officer.

To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making in setting up the public consultation on fracking. (S4O-04324)

The Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): Ministers have met representatives from community, environmental and industry groups to discuss the consultation and our pre-consultation preparations. We will continue to take a participative approach in the lead-up to, and during, that important consultation. Further details of the consultation and accompanying work will be announced in due course.

Margaret McDougall: Underground coal gasification was not included in the temporary moratorium on shale gas and coal-bed methane developments. I ask the minister to clarify whether the Scottish Government supports the process of underground coal gasification, so that there are no doubts on the issue. If it does not support the process, why is it not included in the temporary moratorium? Will he commit the Scottish Government to including underground coal gasification in the moratorium until proper and robust evidence is collected and the public consultation has been completed?

Fergus Ewing: I am happy to reassure the member that the Scottish Government considers environmental protection to be of paramount importance. The moratorium that I announced on 28 January was specifically about onshore technologies involving hydraulic fracturing and coal-bed methane, and it is correct to point out that underground coal gasification employs different technology and is not covered by the moratorium.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To what extent will the consultation be evidence based, given that the Scottish Government's

independent scientific panel, which reported last July, concluded that fracking could be conducted safely in Scotland if properly regulated?

Fergus Ewing: I am pleased to confirm to Murdo Fraser that we take a cautious, evidence-based approach to the whole policy area—an approach that his party called for in a previous policy document. We will continue to take that approach, which is why the public welcomed the moratorium that we have put in place. Incidentally, I hope that all parties support the moratorium. We are still waiting for confirmation of that, but we will continue to take an evidence-based approach.

The group that Murdo Fraser referred to identified gaps that need to be filled, and it is therefore appropriate that we consider further evidence on areas such as the possible impacts of what the hydraulic fracturing process entails on public health, the environment, and traffic and transport. As I have pointed out frequently, Scotland is not North Dakota. The central belt, where deposits are believed to be situated, is densely populated. We must therefore consider all those matters carefully and take the time to do so, as they are rightly and understandably of great importance to the public.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): The minister will recall that I lodged a question 12 weeks ago and wrote to him six weeks ago to ask whether his moratorium covers the drilling of conventional boreholes with a view to doing fracking later. Can he answer that question today? Does it cover exploratory drilling or not?

Fergus Ewing: I announced the moratorium on 28 January in very clear terms. I am aware that Mr Macdonald has raised a number of questions, and to that end I have armed myself with the reply that I wrote to him on 20 April, which states that such matters are all receiving careful attention.

It is reasonable to point out that Mr Macdonald has asked a very large number of questions. To ensure that the answers are correct and evidence based, we will take proper time to consider all the many issues that he has raised, including the one that he has singled out today, and we will ensure that the questions are answered fully in due course.

Smith Commission

2. Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its position on the recommendations of the Smith commission. (S4O-04325)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy (John Swinney): The Smith

commission recommendations offer an opportunity to provide the Scottish Parliament with further powers to improve the lives of the people of Scotland, although many of the key levers to boost growth and promote fairness will remain reserved to Westminster. The draft clauses published by the United Kingdom Government in January fall short of the Smith recommendations in a number of areas, and the Scottish Government is continuing to engage with the UK Government to secure improvements before the proposed Scotland bill is introduced at Westminster.

Roderick Campbell: It is clear that the Smith commission is not the final word on the question of more powers for the Parliament. Saturday's editorial in the *Daily Telegraph*—the house journal for the Conservatives—indicated that the proposed powers might not be enough. Will the cabinet secretary assure us that the Scottish Government will continue to press the case for additional powers as robustly as possible?

John Swinney: I confirm two points to Mr Campbell. First, the Government will continue in its efforts to ensure that the Smith commission recommendations are effectively legislated for. I welcome the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee report that was published this morning with all-party agreement. The report's thoroughly dispassionate and considered wording sets out a number of deficiencies in the draft Scotland bill clauses that we have seen. I look forward to pursuing those matters with the UK Government, with the assistance of that committee report, which has been supported unanimously.

Secondly, I assure Mr Campbell that the Government will continue to argue for additional powers. That was what the Scottish National Party fought the UK election on. We have set out the arguments for additional powers and we will take every opportunity to advance those arguments. As the First Minister confirmed to Parliament yesterday, we expect to have such an opportunity when she meets the Prime Minister in early course.

Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con): Does the Scottish Government intend to seek evidence and engage in civic consultation on its Smith-plus proposals?

John Swinney: That would be advantageous and beneficial. Despite Lord Smith's efforts to engage widely with the stakeholder community in Scotland, my opinion as a participant in the Smith commission—this is my view; I appreciate that Ms Goldie was on the commission with me and she will have her view—is that we were not able to engage sufficiently with Scotland's wider body politic on many of the issues. My answer to her question is therefore yes—it is essential that the views of the wider community in Scotland are

considered closely when we make decisions on all the questions.

Joint Exchequer Committee (Meetings)

3. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when the next meeting of the Joint Exchequer Committee will take place and what will be discussed. (S4O-04326)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy (John Swinney): The date of the Joint Exchequer Committee's next meeting has not been set.

Lord Smith recommended that the intergovernmental machinery between the Scottish and United Kingdom Governments needs urgent reform. We need to put in place appropriate governance arrangements that will support the implementation of the Smith commission financial provisions. I want to discuss that with the new UK Government at the earliest opportunity.

Kenneth Gibson: I thank the cabinet secretary for his answer. Much of what he said has pre-empted my supplementary question. Although there are other intergovernmental bodies, such as the joint ministerial committee, the Joint Exchequer Committee has not met for more than two years. Does he agree that, if additional powers are to be devolved effectively, such intergovernmental bodies must meet regularly and on a transparent footing to allow effective scrutiny by the Parliament?

John Swinney: I agree with Mr Gibson's points. One of the things that have affected the meeting programme of the Joint Exchequer Committee, such that it has not met for two years, is that we have been unable to agree on some of the elementary arrangements for implementing even the Calman commission proposals. Part of that could be ascribed to an unwillingness to consider some of the Scottish Government's alternative perspective in countering the requirements in HM Treasury's proposals.

If intergovernmental machinery is to work effectively, it must work on the basis of respect between the different Governments of the United Kingdom. I welcome what the Prime Minister said on Friday—that he intends to govern through respect. I hope that some of that sentiment will be evidenced in the implementation of such intergovernmental machinery as the Joint Exchequer Committee.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I agree with much of what the cabinet secretary said about effective intergovernmental machinery. I am sure that he will want to pursue his policy of full fiscal responsibility, whether through the Joint

Exchequer Committee or another intergovernmental mechanism. That being the case, will he outline a timetable for achieving that?

John Swinney: As I said in my answer to Baroness Goldie a moment ago, such issues are now to be taken forward in the dialogue that we will have directly with United Kingdom ministers. We expect a discussion with the Prime Minister to take place relatively soon, which will enable us to begin to explore the issues. The timetable for any implementation will depend on agreement being reached in that discussion.

I reiterate the point that I made to Baroness Goldie. The approach that the Scottish Government will take will involve engagement and consultation with the wider community in Scotland. It cannot be simply a Government-to-Government discussion. There are perfectly appropriate Government-to-Government discussions to have, but it is essential that we have the discussion with the wider community in Scotland to ensure that our proposals command support in Scotland.

Affordable Housing (Rural and Remote Areas)

4. Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what assistance it is providing to increase affordable housing in rural and remote areas. (S4O-04327)

The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess): The Scottish Government is committed to the provision of affordable housing across Scotland. We know that the housing system is different in remote and rural areas, and our resource allocation and subsidy system both recognise that. We are currently working with a range of rural stakeholders to develop a rural housing initiative that will complement the excellent work that local authorities and housing associations are doing. In particular, it will aim to support the work of community groups to increase the availability of housing in remote and rural areas.

Mike MacKenzie: Following the lifting of the moratorium on rural school closures, we have seen a number of local authorities across the Highlands and Islands rush to close rural schools. Does the minister agree that local planning departments need to take a more proactive approach to maintaining sustainability of rural communities, and a more enlightened approach to delivery of housing in those areas?

Margaret Burgess: I reassure Mike MacKenzie that we recognise well that small numbers of new houses can make a real difference to the sustainability of rural communities. I have visited a number of projects and have seen that for myself.

The Scottish Government supports sustainable economic growth in all our communities. Our

national planning framework sets out a vision for vibrant rural areas, with growing sustainable communities, supported by new opportunities for employment and education. The vision is further supported by "Scottish Planning Policy", which sets out clearly the expectation that, in all rural and island areas, the planning system should

"encourage rural development that supports prosperous and sustainable communities and businesses whilst protecting and enhancing environmental quality".

The Presiding Officer: Question 5 is in the name of Sarah Boyack, but I note that Ms Boyack is not in the chamber to ask her question. I deplore the fact that no prior information has been given to me as to why she is not here. I expect an explanation from Ms Boyack by the end of the day.

Question 6, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, has not been lodged. The member has provided an explanation.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (Meetings)

7. Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and what issues were discussed. (S4O-04330)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): Ministers and Government officials regularly meet representatives of all health boards, including NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, to discuss matters of importance to local people.

Neil Bibby: I am sure that the cabinet secretary will want to join me in paying tribute to the staff at the Royal Alexandra hospital in Paisley for their continued efforts to reduce patient waiting times. However, many of those staff are telling us that there are not enough beds or staff at the hospital. In the light of her new accident and emergency action plan, which was announced this week, what concrete steps will the cabinet secretary take to increase the number of staff and beds at the RAH to ensure that we avoid a repeat of the crisis that we saw at the hospital last winter?

Shona Robison: I join Neil Bibby in congratulating the staff at the RAH, not least because of their performance in A and E. The most recent figures, ending on 3 May, show that 89.6 per cent of patients were treated within the four-hour target, which is a substantial improvement on the 75 per cent figure that was recorded at the end of February. I record my thanks to the staff. Of course, that has been supported by the improvement team, which has been working very closely with staff at the RAH and at other hospitals to make such improvements.

The £9 million resource that I announced yesterday was part of a £50 million unscheduled care package to increase the number of A and E consultants, whose number has gone up by 170 per cent under this Government, which is a substantial increase. That resource will help to ensure that, as we make preparations for this winter, resilience in our hospitals is increased.

I assure Neil Bibby that I will do absolutely everything to ensure that our hospitals are staffed and prepared for the pressures that will emerge this winter, and am very confident that we are in a good place to do that.

The Presiding Officer: Question 8, in the name of Cara Hilton, has not been lodged. The member has provided me with an explanation, which I do not consider to be acceptable.

Dangerous Dogs

9. Paul Martin (Glasgow Provan) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to ensure that communities are protected from dangerous dogs. (S4O-04332)

The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs (Paul Wheelhouse): The Scottish Government is committed to policies that will help make our communities safer from out-of-control and dangerous dogs.

We are pleased that the latest figures show that local authorities are making good use of their powers under the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010. Initial figures show that in the year from February 2014 to February 2015, local authorities issued 261 dog control notices relating to out-of-control dogs. The number of dog control notices that was issued is the highest in a single year since the act came into force in February 2011, and the number excludes four local authorities that have yet to provide the information for the latest year.

We want to work with local authorities and Police Scotland to help them to use the existing powers relating to dogs wisely, and we are involved in work to develop a national protocol between local authorities, Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service to ensure that there is clarity about powers in relation to control of dogs.

In addition, the Scottish Government has recently announced that it will in April 2016 introduce mandatory microchipping. That will assist primarily in the welfare of dogs—for example, it will make it easier to reunite owners with their dogs—but it should also assist in control of dogs in our communities.

Paul Martin: I welcome the Government's proposed legislation, particularly in relation to the

compulsory microchipping of dogs, but the minister will recall the debate that I led in Parliament in connection with the serious attack on Broagan McCuaig. Is the minister seriously advising me that compulsory microchipping of dogs will be a significant step towards ensuring that such attacks do not take place in the future?

Paul Wheelhouse: Mr Martin is perhaps misreading my answer. We are working closely with local authorities to develop potential strengthening of the 2010 act, so microchipping is not happening in isolation. However, it will certainly play a part in ensuring that we can find dogs' owners. If dogs are left off the leash and are running around, we will be able to track down the owners. Obviously, irresponsible dog ownership is partly to blame for instances of dog attacks. I am certainly aware of the distressing and harrowing attack on Broagan McCuaig and I am happy to work with Mr Martin on tackling any deficiencies in the law.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): As the minister knows, I piloted the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010, which seeks to bring early intervention, before they may become dangerous, to dogs that are deemed to be causing anxiety. Notwithstanding what the minister said about co-ordination between the police and local authorities, my experience is that the public and many professionals are unaware of the legislation. Can I ask, for the umpteenth time, whether the Government could publicise the act which, as a member, I cannot do?

Paul Wheelhouse: I shall choose where I sit more carefully in the future, as regards supplementaries. [*Laughter.*]

Christine Grahame: Thank you for that.

Paul Wheelhouse: I thank Christine Grahame for her work on the 2010 act, which has been enormously helpful to us. In relation to publicity, I think that the rise in the use of dog control notices is an indication of growing awareness among local authorities, but I am happy to work with the member if she has any specific proposals to increase publicity, and I will do so at a time that suits her. I thank Christine Grahame again for her work on the act and look forward to working with her in the future.

Christine Grahame: Perhaps. [*Laughter.*]

The Presiding Officer: Before we move to the next item of business, members will wish to join me in welcoming to the gallery Professor Manuel Hassassian, the head of the Palestinian mission in London. [*Applause.*]

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Engagements

1. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what engagements she has planned for the rest of the day. (S4F-02786)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Engagements to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland.

Kezia Dugdale: Thank you. Earlier this week, it was revealed that student enrolment at Edinburgh College had fallen by 40 per cent between 2010 and 2014. The Educational Institute of Scotland says that it is "gravely concerned" about the situation. Can the First Minister confirm whether the number of students at college has fallen across Scotland as a whole since 2007?

The First Minister: As Kezia Dugdale will be aware, we have maintained our commitment to maintain full-time equivalent places in colleges. We are also spending more in terms of the revenue budget on colleges than I think Labour ever did throughout the eight years that it was in government.

Yes—we have restructured college education to make it more effective and efficient, and to ensure that those who go to colleges are more likely to come out of college with a qualification that will help them to get into employment. I am proud of the Government's record on colleges, as I am proud of its record on other aspects of education. However, I also take the view—as I do across the range of responsibilities that my Government and I have—that we will always look to do more and to do better, because we owe that to the people of Scotland.

Kezia Dugdale: The First Minister just told members in the chamber that she has maintained the number of full-time places. I am afraid that that is incorrect, and the Audit Scotland report that I am holding up evidences that. There are actually 3,000 fewer full-time places, and 140,000 fewer students going to colleges across Scotland, than there were when the Scottish National Party came to office in 2007. That is because of cuts to college funding that this Government made.

Today, pupils in Scotland are sitting their English exams, and we wish them well. Those exams will, to a large extent, determine their life chances. Yesterday, the First Minister's Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning said that there has been an increase in the pass rate for national qualifications. Can the First Minister

confirm that the education secretary was correct when she said that?

The First Minister: I am prepared to concede to Kezia Dugdale that something that I said in my first answer may not have been entirely accurate. I said that we had maintained full-time equivalent college places in line with our commitment. That is not strictly true, because our commitment was to maintain 116,000 full-time equivalent college places. In the last year for which we have figures, we delivered 119,636, so in fact, if I am being strictly accurate, we have not met our commitment—we have exceeded our commitment.

Kezia Dugdale also talked about funding for colleges. This year, we will invest—I think the figure is—£526 million of revenue funding in colleges. The maximum that Labour ever invested was £510 million, so in terms of both meeting and exceeding our commitment to places—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Order.

The First Minister: —and making sure that, in these tight financial times, we are investing in our college sector, I believe that this Government's record stands very close scrutiny.

We have record exam passes in Scotland. I do not take the credit for that. The credit goes to young people and their teachers in every single part of our country.

As I said at the end of my previous answer, I will stand here and defend this Government's record, because I believe that it is a good record, but I am ambitious for this country and for the people who live in it. Whether it is on education, health or tackling crime, I lead a Government that will continue to aspire to do even better. As long as we do, I hope that we will retain the trust of the people of Scotland, which they put in us as recently as a week ago today.

Kezia Dugdale: The First Minister just said that there were record pass rates. Here are the facts: a new analysis by Dr Jim Scott, an education expert at the University of Edinburgh, shows that the number of candidates in Scotland gaining level 3 to 5 qualifications dropped by 20 per cent in the past year—a whopping 20 per cent. That is 102,000 fewer candidates getting the grades that they need to get on in life. The great strength of Scottish education known around the world has always been its breadth, but Dr Scott's analysis is devastating. It shows that pupils in Scotland are studying fewer subjects and getting worse results. It is not the fault of our teachers, who are dedicated and passionate about giving our young people the best possible start in life.

We know that fewer people are going to college and that the number of pupils getting good grades is falling. So much of that is linked to what happens earlier in the education system. Given that, can the First Minister tell us what proportion of secondary 2 pupils from the poorest backgrounds have the counting skills that they need?

The First Minister: The answer to that question is not enough. That is why I have very recently put a new focus on raising attainment and closing the attainment gap, a commitment that is backed by £100 million of funding so that we can do more to make sure that our young people, regardless of the background they come from, get the best education, the best start in life and the best chance to fulfil their potential. I will never stop working until we have reached a position where background is no barrier to any young person fulfilling their potential. However, equally, I will not stand here and allow Kezia Dugdale to traduce the achievements of young people and their teachers across the country. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: We have record exam results. The number of higher passes is up 3 per cent from 2013 to 2014. School leaver destinations right now are the best on record, with 90 per cent of pupils who left school during or at the end of the academic year 2012-13 in sustained, positive destinations in March 2014, and fewer young people are leaving school with no qualifications at all, which is something that we should all celebrate. The June 2014 Audit Scotland report found that exam performance has improved over the past decade against all 10 of the attainment measures examined. Those are achievements not of this Government but of young people, teachers and parents across the country, but, yes, there is more to do. As long as I am First Minister, we will have an iron focus on doing the work needed in education to give every single young person in this country, regardless of their background, the best possible start in life.

Kezia Dugdale: For years, education professionals, teachers and parents have been warning the Government about the exam system, and the evidence from a third-party senior academic is very serious information that I request the First Minister take very seriously indeed. We are talking about a 20 per cent drop in attainment in one year, and her answer did not give any justification whatsoever for that.

However, my question was specifically about numeracy, and the First Minister said that the progress was “not enough”. It is far from not enough; it is just 25 per cent. One quarter of S2 pupils from the most disadvantaged backgrounds have the numeracy skills that they should have

and it is clear that pupils from the wealthiest backgrounds do twice as well. Is that not a damning indictment of eight years of this SNP Government? This really matters. That a child’s ability to read and write still depends on the income of their parents should be a source of shame to the Parliament. After eight years in office, the SNP’s record on education is this: the vast majority of S2 pupils from the poorest backgrounds falling behind in numeracy; the number of pupils passing exams plummeting; and the number of people going to college falling dramatically. In a globalised world where education matters more than at any time in our history, Scotland’s young people are being let down. Is this really a report card to be proud of?

The First Minister: I will look at and take seriously any evidence cited to me. However, more than that, I will make sure that we act on that evidence, which is why, as I have already said, we have announced the attainment challenge backed by £100 million of new funding so that we can continue to build on the work that we have been doing to improve education not just for those in our most deprived areas but for every single young person in this country. There is nothing more important to me—and I am sure that I speak on behalf of people right across the chamber—than education. I think that I said in the chamber last week or the week before that I would not be standing here if I had not had the benefit of a great education. As First Minister, I owe it to every single young person across our country to ensure that they get a great education too, and that is a responsibility that I take seriously.

Let me turn to things such as damning indictments and report cards. Kezia Dugdale talks about the past eight years. For the past eight years, Labour in Scotland has played the same old tune. The SNP is bad in every single thing that we do, according to Labour. The Scottish people issued their own report card on Scottish Labour just last week, and that report card resulted in Scottish Labour getting its worst election result and its lowest share of the vote in living memory. That is what the Scottish people think of Scottish Labour. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: I heard this morning that a letter is circulating. People are being asked to sign a letter to keep Jim Murphy in a job as Scottish Labour leader. I have only thing to ask Kezia Dugdale—where can I sign?

Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)

2. Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con): To ask the First Minister when she will next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland. (S4F-02785)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I have no plans at present, although I spoke to the secretary of state on the phone yesterday afternoon.

Ruth Davidson: In two of her answers to Ms Dugdale, the First Minister highlighted the £100 million attainment gap fund that her Government has brought forward. Today, the SNP-dominated Education and Culture Committee has reported back on just such efforts by this Government to tackle the worrying gap in attainment between children in our poorest communities and those in the better-off communities.

The committee says that it is not clear how those efforts by this Government will in any way help to close that gap, and yet, responding to legitimate concerns from this side of the chamber yesterday, the SNP's Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning simply insisted that we have much to be proud of and issued an incoherent rant against school reform in England, which had not even been mentioned. It is a depressingly stock tactic—to attack English measures in order to brush aside the problems in Scotland.

We all know that this Government has set aside £100 million to boost attainment, but if even an SNP-dominated Education and Culture Committee has no idea what effect it will have, what chance do the rest of us have?

The First Minister: We are currently working with the seven local authorities that will benefit in the first instance from our attainment fund to make sure that we have in place with them robust and measurable plans to ensure that the money that we are investing delivers results in closing the attainment gap. I understand that the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning has received or will receive a letter from the Education and Culture Committee, and it will be responded to in full with the detail that the committee is looking for. That is exactly how the Government should treat reasonable requests of committees.

I say this to Ruth Davidson in all sincerity. We will have our political ding-dongs across the chamber, but I said to Kezia Dugdale and I will say it again: nothing matters more to me personally than making sure that we face up to any challenges in our education system. No ideology will get in the way of doing what needs to be done. I invite Ruth Davidson, Kezia Dugdale and anybody in the chamber, if they have ideas and suggestions about what they think the Government should be doing, to provide them and I will listen.

I am not going to make any excuses. I am proud of and I have read out—I will not do it again—the achievements of young people, teachers and

parents across this country. We have a good education system. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's programme for international student assessment—PISA—study shows that Scotland is narrowing the attainment gap, but there is much, much more work to do, and I am absolutely determined that we do it.

Ruth Davidson: The Education and Culture Committee did not stop there in its letter, which I have in front of me. It also states that, in many schools, there is far too much emphasis on driving pupils towards university, to the detriment of some. These are issues that the Scottish Conservatives have been raising with the First Minister for some time. We need an expansion of college places, and we are committed to 10,000 more apprenticeships so that young people can earn while they learn.

The First Minister likes to write shopping lists of further powers that she wants to see devolved, but the SNP has had full control of our education system for eight years, with no limits whatsoever. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Ruth Davidson: In that time, this Government has slashed college places, it has presided over a slump in both literacy and numeracy standards and it has got Scotland to a position in which far fewer youngsters from poor backgrounds are now going to university than anywhere else in these islands. Is it not the case that, on school standards, in university attendance and at college, Scotland's poorer children are now getting a worse deal than they did when the SNP came to power?

The First Minister: That is absolutely and emphatically not the case. As an aside, let me offer the view that swingeing austerity cuts to the Scottish Government budget do not amount to "no limitations" on what the Government can do. That was an aside, because I take our responsibility seriously.

Ruth Davidson mentioned university education. Let me say two things about that. First, when a young person wants and aspires to go to university, they should have the opportunity to do so regardless of their background, just as I did when I was 17. That is why we have set up the commission to look at tackling inequality in access to university. I want a young person born today to have the same chance of going to university, regardless of their background.

The second point is—*[Interruption.]* If Ruth Davidson would stop talking at me across the chamber and listen to what I am saying, we might manage to get some consensus going here.

The second point is that, when a young person does not want to go to university or wants to

pursue a career in a different direction, they should be supported to do so. That is why we are delivering record numbers of modern apprenticeships. I visited GlaxoSmithKline in Irvine a few weeks ago—perhaps it is a few months ago now—where I talked to young people who would have been perfectly capable of going to university but chose to follow the vocational route instead. We are supporting young people who want to do that.

We also set up the Wood commission on developing Scotland's young workforce and we are investing the resources to take forward the recommendations, ensuring that there are the right links between schools and businesses, and making sure that young people know all the options that are open to them and then have the support to follow the options that they think are most appropriate to them.

Whether it is on early years, school education, college education or access to university—access to university without the burden of tuition fees, I hasten to add—as long as I am in charge the Scottish Government will never ever shy away from its responsibility to give our young people the best education and the best start in life.

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): The First Minister will be aware of the recent announcement by Subsea 7 in my constituency of more than 400 job losses to the energy sector. That is on top of job losses that have been announced over the last few weeks. Will the First Minister consider meeting with the energy sector in the north-east to ensure that we do not have a situation in which job losses mean that we cannot fulfil our contracts in terms of extracting energy, and to ensure that we have a skilled workforce for the future?

The First Minister: The Scottish Government—Fergus Ewing in particular—meets regularly with companies working in the energy sector and in the oil and gas sector in particular. The energy advisory board will meet shortly, and I will continue to meet regularly and appropriately with companies and other interested individuals.

The company cited by Dennis Robertson, Subsea 7, is one that the Government knows well and will continue to be in contact with. The jobs task force, which I established in January, is also working with a range of companies in the North Sea sector to seek to minimise job losses and to help those who are affected by redundancy into alternative employment. It has already met on a number of occasions. The partnership action for continuing employment is also deployed in any circumstances where people face redundancy, in order to provide appropriate support.

I am sure that John Swinney or Fergus Ewing would be very happy to meet the member to discuss those issues in more detail.

Welfare System

3. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Government has made an assessment of the likely impact on Scotland of a £12 billion reduction in the United Kingdom welfare system. (S4F-02793)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The UK Government has not yet set out how it will achieve those cuts, so we have not yet been able to make a full assessment of the impact in Scotland. However, if it is assumed that Scotland would take a proportionate share of the £12 billion cut, benefit expenditure in Scotland would be reduced by about £1 billion. That reduction would be in addition to the estimated £6 billion cut to the Scottish welfare bill over the six years to this financial year.

The Scottish Government is already working hard to mitigate the worst of these measures and our current funding will result in an investment of around £296 million over the period 2013-14 to 2015-16.

I want to see an alternative to these measures because I do not believe that it is right that we continue to see some of the most vulnerable people in our society being put in poverty or pushed further into poverty.

Patrick Harvie: We cannot know what the impact of these cuts will be, given that the Conservative Party committed to them without caring how they were going to be achieved. It is no wonder that one of the attendees at last night's Poverty Alliance event in the Parliament told me that she has never seen such a tangible level of fear among so many people in the face of this threat to what remains of the welfare state.

We can argue for greater control of social security in Scotland, but surely we also have a responsibility to build widespread opposition to these cuts across the whole of the UK. Does the First Minister agree that this assault on those in greatest need follows years of stigmatising and blaming people in poverty—indeed, a propaganda war against the welfare state itself? What will the Scottish Government do in its actions and use of language to reclaim the principle of a society based on mutual care and compassion where everyone's dignity matters, not just those who are labelled "strivers" or "hard-working families"?

The First Minister: I very much agree with both the substance of Patrick Harvie's question and the sentiment that lies behind it. For our part, the Scottish Government will never seek to stigmatise the most vulnerable in our society. I take the

view—I hope that it is shared on most if not all sides of the chamber—that a decent social security system that looks after people in need is one of the hallmarks of a civilised society. What the Conservatives have done over the past five years with the help of the Liberals to start to rip away that safety net is absolutely appalling, and I believe that we all have a duty to oppose any further attempts to take that net away.

Patrick Harvie rightly mentioned the lack of care taken over the detail of the £12 billion cuts. I cannot have been the only person who was completely and utterly appalled to hear Iain Duncan Smith say three days before the general election:

“as soon as we have done the work and had it properly modelled then we will let everybody know what”

the impact

“is.”

That really sums it up.

This Government will continue to do a number of things. First, we will continue as far as we can—as I said yesterday, there will be a limit to how effectively we can do this—to seek to mitigate the worst impact of those cuts. Secondly, as Patrick Harvie has invited us to do, we will be part of marshalling the opposition to an additional £12 billion of cuts to our welfare budget. Thirdly—and most important—I repeat what I said yesterday to Labour: please be part of this. We will do everything in our power to wrest the powers over welfare out of the hands of the Tory Government and put them into the hands of this democratically elected Parliament.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Equality

4. Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP):

To ask the First Minister how Scotland compares with European Union member states on the issue of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex equality. (S4F-02794)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I am very proud of Scotland's record as a leader in LGBTI equality, and I am delighted that last week ILGA-Europe recognised us as the best European country for legal equality for LGBTI people, ranking Scotland ahead of the United Kingdom as a whole. We were the first national Government in Europe to fund a transgender rights project, the first country in the UK to consult on introducing same-sex marriage and pride house Glasgow at last year's Commonwealth games was the first pride house to receive Government support. However, although we have made great progress, there is still room for improvement, which is why we continue to work closely with stakeholders

such as the Equality Network to help ensure that LGBTI people experience full equality in all areas of their lives.

Clare Adamson: I agree with the First Minister that although it is encouraging that Scotland is leading the way there is still much work to be done. Does she share my concerns that barriers to further progress in tackling discrimination against LGBTI individuals in our society might arise if the Conservative Westminster Government progresses its intention to repeal the Human Rights Act 1998?

The First Minister: I agree. The Human Rights Act 1998 matters, because it protects the rights to which everybody in our society is entitled. It has been instrumental in allowing people who have historically suffered discrimination and exclusion to challenge treatment that, in my view, has no place in a modern civilised society. That matters hugely to LGBTI people in Scotland, throughout the UK and beyond.

Without the underpinning of fundamental rights that is provided by the European convention on human rights and legislation such as the Human Rights Act 1998, the immense progress on LGBTI rights that we have seen since the 1980s would undoubtedly have been more difficult. Although that progress has been achieved in Scotland, there are far too many countries around the world where LGBTI people continue to live in fear of their lives.

It is hugely disappointing that the UK Government now appears to be intent on attacking human rights in the way that it has indicated. I say again, as I have said previously this week, that the Scottish Government will do everything in our power to ensure that vital human rights protections remain for people in Scotland.

Rent (Private Tenants)

5. Michael McMahon (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab): To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Government considers that there is a need to protect private tenants from unfair rent rises. (S4F-02792)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, I do. The Scottish Government's vision is for a private rented sector that provides good-quality homes and high management standards and which inspires consumer confidence. We want tenants to have more security and to be able to assert their rights without fear of eviction. That is why we have consulted on a new tenancy for the private rented sector that proposes to end unpredictability in rent increases by prohibiting more than one rent increase a year, with 12 weeks' notice required for any change, and also puts in place protection for tenants against unfair

or excessive rent hikes, through a process of adjudication.

Michael McMahon: Although there is widespread support for the Government's plans to simplify and clarify the private rented sector tenancy system and improve security of tenure by removing the no-fault grounds for repossession, does the First Minister recognise that there are concerns that, because of the second consultation, the timetable for legislation is in danger of slipping, and that the Government's proposals do not go far enough to make the private rented sector secure, flexible and affordable for tenants?

While we wait for the bill, will the First Minister confirm that she supports the reintroduction of rent controls, that she believes that tenants' welfare should be put first and that she believes that tenants must be protected by being given sufficient and justifiable notice to leave by landlords?

The First Minister: All those objectives are what led to us consulting in the way that I outlined. The consultation that I and Michael McMahon referred to attracted more than 7,500 responses, which will be analysed by an independent social research company. We expect to publish the findings in early August and we have committed to introducing a bill to Parliament this autumn, so we are determined to keep that timetable on track.

We want to see a private rented sector that provides good-quality homes and high standards of management and we want to ensure that the tenants who live in those homes have the protection that they deserve. We have consulted on a range of proposals around a new tenancy and some of the issues around rent increases that Michael McMahon mentioned. We are serious about tackling those issues, but I am sure that all members will understand that, having embarked on the consultation, it is essential that we complete the process.

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): I look forward to the new modern tenancy regime, with more proportionate rent rises. Will the First Minister and her Government support tenants to have the right to stay longer in their homes than the current six months?

The First Minister: We want to ensure that tenants have appropriate security of tenure. That is what this process is entirely about. When we introduce the bill—as I said, we plan to do that in the autumn—our proposals will be subject to full parliamentary scrutiny, and if members such as Jim Hume do not think that the proposals go far enough in any particular areas, they will have the opportunity to put forward amendments.

We are absolutely determined to deliver a modern private rented sector tenancy that is fit for the future, that encourages people to make homes for rent available—because they are required—but which also ensures that people who rely on the private rented sector can also rely on high-quality standards. We have given that commitment and are determined to deliver it.

The last point that I would make is that, although the issue that we are discussing is hugely important, the way to improve the affordability of housing is to increase the supply of housing. Over the lifetime of this session of Parliament, our planned investment in affordable housing will exceed £1.7 billion. We are three quarters of the way into our five-year target for affordable housing and are confident that we are going to meet that target.

Named Persons (Data Sharing)

6. Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the concerns raised by the charity, Clan Childlaw, regarding the data-sharing aspect of the named person legislation. (S4F-02788)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The named person service has been developed carefully over more than a decade, with extensive input and wide support from experts. It seeks to put the best interests of every child and young person at the heart of decision making. We have been clear that information should be shared only in a manner that is proportionate and respects the views of children and young people, and is, of course, within existing legal frameworks.

It is worth pointing out that, in January, Lord Pentland rejected the petition against the named person plans on all grounds and ruled that it did not contravene the European convention on human rights or European Union law.

Liz Smith: Despite that court ruling by Lord Pentland, Clan Childlaw argues strongly that the balance between data sharing among professionals and the ability of the young person to access confidential services has shifted far too far towards data sharing, meaning that young people will be less likely to engage with the existing services that protect them. At the same time, the Scottish Association of Social Workers is saying that its members are increasingly concerned about the very low threshold for intervention in family life. Is it not time that the named person plans were scrapped?

The First Minister: No. I absolutely and fundamentally disagree. Information sharing should always be appropriate, and it should always be proportionate to concerns about

wellbeing. Over probably the past 20 years, reports on significant case reviews into the deaths of children show that, very often, a key weakness in protecting those children was the failure to share information about the child's wellbeing.

The court's decision on the judicial review of the named person plans makes clear that the provisions in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 on information sharing are entirely lawful and do not contravene the Data Protection Act 1998 or the ECHR. The court's finding on the Data Protection Act 1998 is consistent with advice from the Information Commissioner's Office. We will continue to work with the Information Commissioner's Office and with stakeholders on clear guidance on how to fulfil the obligations to share information in the circumstances set out in the 2014 act.

What I said about proportionality is important. Young people will, in many circumstances, seek to take advice or share information confidentially, and we need to ensure that they are able to do that. Although none of us—whatever position we hold—can give absolute guarantees in that respect, I am sure that I speak for all of us when I say that none of us wants, in the years to come, to read further reports into the death of a child where lack of information sharing put that child at greater risk.

We will continue to act appropriately and in a way that puts the wellbeing of all children absolutely at the heart of decision making.

Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I seek your guidance. Ruth Davidson, in her first question to the First Minister, stated that the Education and Culture Committee had published a report on attainment. That statement is untrue. The Education and Culture Committee wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to seek the Government's views on a number of questions raised by submissions to the committee's inquiry into attainment. Ruth Davidson went on to strongly suggest that the committee had taken a view and in fact had reached conclusions on those submissions to our inquiry. That is also untrue.

How can a member get the record corrected so that Ruth Davidson does not tell the chamber something that is frankly untrue on at least two points?

The Presiding Officer: The convener of the Education and Culture Committee has raised some questions. I will go away and reflect on the issues that he has raised and come back later in the session.

Ms Davidson, do you wish to say something?

Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con): I would happily respond to the convener of the Education and Culture Committee, and I take this opportunity to do so and have it recorded.

I made it clear in my exchange with the First Minister that it was a letter. I even said that I had a copy of the letter here—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order. Let us hear Ms Davidson.

Ruth Davidson: I am happy to read directly from it. It says:

“There is clearly a desire for improvements to be made to our education system in order to ensure that far more pupils leave school and achieve a good outcome, be that a job, or further education that leads to a job. It is not clear, however, the extent to which the efforts underway and the further improvements suggested will serve to narrow”

the gap in attainment.

The Presiding Officer: Ms Davidson, that is not a point of order. I can read the *Official Report* as well as anybody. I said that I will go away and reflect on the matter, and I will come back.

Media, Society and Democracy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-13064, in the name of Jean Urquhart, on media, society and democracy. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I invite those who wish to speak to press their request-to-speak buttons now, or as soon as possible.

I remind members that they should not make reference to on-going cases in their speeches.

I call Jean Urquhart, who has seven minutes.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament believes that there is widespread debate in Scotland about the relationship between the media, political power and democracy; believes that critical and well-supported journalism is essential to a thriving democracy; believes that many Scots have lost trust in a range of media institutions; notes the development of new methods of delivering news and commentary through the internet and social media; notes the importance of local media and press in areas such as the Highlands and Islands, which rely on the many and diverse local news services available, and welcomes the continuing public debate on how media can be held to account by citizens and civil society and how to sustain and develop diverse media outlets that contribute to generating positive engagement with politics, the Parliament and the important issues facing society.

12:36

Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (Ind):

We live in a society that relies on the quick flow of information, and we live in a time when analysis and opinion of the latest developments are consumed by an awakening general public. That awakening is, in large part, down to the referendum debate, through which there was widespread discussion not just of the constitutional question, but of wider social issues and, indeed, of the media coverage of that historic event.

The relationship between the people of Scotland and power is changing; the democratic revival that we are experiencing is marked by a surge in interest in politics. Therefore, where we get our news and, indeed, in whose interests the media are run are of renewed importance and must come under intensified scrutiny.

On 29 April, the Scottish Government—rightly so—had a debate on the transatlantic trade and investment partnership, or TTIP. In my short experience in Parliament, I have not seen the gallery so packed. I think that I am in right in saying that the issue was raised through social media, which brought to the public's attention an item of interest and concern. If social media do that, then let us have more of it.

We must discuss how we can support journalism in Scotland. Local newspapers provide an often invaluable service; we certainly have a healthy distribution of local press in the Highlands and Islands. The new wave of citizen-led coverage and comment is an important development that must be registered. I did not know this until recently, but I am pleased to note that this is local newspaper week.

We must think in an interconnected way about investment in journalism and print media, while recognising the surge in social and new media. However, we must take the debate much further, and we must apply scrutiny to how particular media institutions have covered recent social and political affairs: for example, we might question and expose the mythmongering that was pushed by broad sections of the press on the question of immigration. We might also note the widespread problem that the BBC has in Scotland. In recent years, staff cuts and reduced resources have had a negative impact on the service that we need and want. Would change to the BBC charter make it possible for responsibility to rest with Holyrood instead of Westminster? That, of course, should also be the subject of a debate.

In many profound ways we live in a media-managed democracy. We know the hold that a tiny minority of media owners can have over the framing of political events in the public mind, and their outcomes. For so long that situation has been impenetrable. As democrats who have a view on the need for balanced and critical debate, perhaps now more than ever we have a chance to challenge the vested interests and corporate power that lie behind sections of the mass media: we have an electorate that has begun the process of grappling with the question. People are becoming shrewder about what information they digest, and many are using the internet to do their own more considered research into the issues of the day, both domestic and international.

As elected representatives of the people, we have a particular responsibility to uphold when it comes to how our actions are covered. More than that, we have a duty to ensure that coverage of the big debates that are polarising society is not left to the media barons. It is time for us to take a new look at our media, to carry out a proper assessment of new media and to exhibit a willingness to explore how we can support journalism as a trade and as a hugely important profession in Scotland. At a time when we are seeing a resurgence in people sensing the power of their opinion and their vote, it is crucial that we express our desire to support those who can articulate and record their considered opinion for the benefit of increasing our knowledge and challenging how we think.

Today's debate could not be taking place at a more important moment in the development of our democracy and our society as a whole. It is time for an even bigger debate to take place in Scotland, as we discover more about our country and as we learn more about one another and about the possibilities that exist for us to take action and raise our game. In that context, I think that today's debate is relevant, and I am grateful for being given the ability to voice my concern.

12:41

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): I congratulate Jean Urquhart on bringing this matter to the chamber for debate, and I apologise to the Presiding Officer and other members for the fact that I will not be able to remain for the entire debate, because I will host a meeting shortly.

When we reach a certain age, there is a danger that we view the past through rose-tinted spectacles and hark back to the good old days, so let me be clear: although the bulk of the 30 years that I spent in my previous career were enjoyable, the last few were anything but. When I left journalism in November 2010, I was grateful that I was escaping an industry that was already sailing into very difficult waters. Now, the best part of five years on, I genuinely fear for where the print media are headed as regards practices and viability, and I have a good deal of sympathy for many of the people who make their living in that field.

I would like to expand on that, in no particular order. I begin by highlighting an experience that was suffered by a constituent of mine. He had posted something on his personal Facebook page about the fact that the pain of having lost his daughter some months earlier had been stoked by his receiving a piece of mail for her. Understandably, he criticised the organisation that had sent it. The following morning, my constituent took a call from a journalist who sought a quotation to include in a story that the journalist's paper was running on the situation. The man was horrified to learn that the paper had sourced the planned article through a routine trawl of social media and that it had every intention of running with it, despite his making it clear that he had received an apology, that the matter was at an end and that he felt that it would be utterly inappropriate for the paper to intrude on what he considered to be a private matter.

The man told me that he had to spend the day negotiating with the paper to ensure that his family were not subjected to publicity that they simply did not want. They remained shocked that a newspaper would stoop to trawling Facebook in that way and be resistant to rowing back once the family had made clear their position. Such are the

demands that are being made on journalists because of staff cutbacks that journalists on some titles routinely sit in offices sourcing copy, including quotations, directly from social media. I highlight that example as an illustration of the kind of practices that are now being employed in parts of our media that previously would never have behaved in that way. The public are experiencing those practices at first hand and are balking at them, and that has reputational consequences.

That said, let us recognise the pressures that some journalists are having to contend with. Newspapers are trapped in a downward spiral that they seem to be incapable of escaping. As circulation falls, they embark on cost cutting and make further demands on demoralised staff, which in turn lead to diminishing quality of product, which results in circulation collapsing further, and so it goes on.

As a former journalist, I hear tales that genuinely sadden me. For example, I heard about a newspaper at which the longest-serving reporter had been there for 11 months. I heard about a young reporter who was handed, by his editor, the phone number of a Scot who had been caught up in the tragedy in Nepal. He was also given a list of questions: two questions into the interview, he had the phone put down on him, with the interviewee branding him an ambulance chaser, such was the nature of the tack that he had been instructed to take.

I have also heard about the phasing out of sub-editors, which can have implications for quality control and presentation, and the doing away with staff photographers, with picture duties instead being given to reporters and freelancers, who have to submit pictures on spec and for a relative pittance. That is the reality for many journalists nowadays. Morale is at rock bottom because of that, because of erosion of terms and conditions of employment, and because of the wider cuts agenda.

One respected weekly paper editor told me recently that the financial restraints had become so bad that members of the public had wandered into his office to check whether it was still open, because the refusal of the proprietors to meet the cost of window cleaning had left the premises looking as though they were closed.

The print media may well be headed online—we may be only a few years away from that happening—but I still hope that there is and can be a future for newspapers. A thriving written press that holds those in authority to account in a considered way without fear or favour is vital in any democracy. I especially hope that we can somehow save the weekly-paper sector at community level. At the risk of sounding old-fashioned, both are surely to be valued.

12:45

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): I congratulate Jean Urquhart on lodging an important motion.

I will start with what is perhaps the least controversial bit of the motion. I think that we would all agree on the importance of local media. I pay tribute to the great work over many years of the *North Edinburgh News* in my constituency, and Greener Leith. Regrettably, the former lost its regular council funding three or four years ago, and the mass distribution of hard copies of the newspaper that was possible as a result of the funding, but it is still a great source of news online, as is Greener Leith. I should point out that Greener Leith runs a social website, which is an interactive forum for raising awareness of local concerns. I think that we all value the local media in our constituencies.

The issue of media ownership is more controversial, although it was perhaps not so controversial three or four years ago. When David Cameron spoke in the House of Commons just days after the hacking scandal broke in 2011, he was explicit about the need for action. He said that the

“challenge is how we address the vexed issue of media power. We need competition policy to be properly enforced. We need a sensible look at the relevance of plurality and cross-media ownership ... and never again should we let a media group get too powerful.”—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 20 July 2011; Vol 531, c 967.]

To address that problem, the Labour Party pledged in its manifesto for the recent election that

“No media company should have so much power that those who run it believe themselves above the rule of law.”

If Labour had been elected to Government last week, we as a party would have sought to adopt the proposal that was endorsed by campaigners to limit national newspaper ownership to 30 per cent of the market. Such a law could have led to the break-up of News Corp in the United Kingdom, which currently publishes 32 per cent of the national daily newspapers and 34.5 per cent of the Sunday market, with its titles *The Sun*, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*.

Many members here and, indeed, at Westminster will give testament to the enormous shift from the dominance of traditional media that we have seen over recent years. The ability of papers and broadcasters to steer the course of political dialogue is still a prevalent aspect of contemporary politics, but the use of social media to shape political debate and to allow a more dynamic, instantaneous and reciprocal news source now offers the public the chance to become creators of content, with direct access to politicians.

After the general election, the research director of the centre for the analysis of social media, Carl Miller, gave an account of the importance of social media in the success and failure of campaigns. On the whole, he was largely positive about Twitter as a medium through which a more representative politics could be forged. He said:

“Twitter is broadly representative of the UK—now much more than 2010”,

and that

“In 2010 about 34 per cent of people in the UK were on social media, now well over half are.”

That is reflected in the sheer level of political content that passes through Twitter feeds every day. During the election campaign alone, there were an estimated 7 million tweets to politicians and candidates. As Carl Miller pointed out:

“that’s an enormous chaotic morass of lots of things”.

He said that what drives Twitter usage is

“converting likes and tweets and favourites into things that matter—volunteers, donations and ultimately votes”.

Twitter also offers a direct and instantaneous source of news—often much faster than traditional media. As many members will have witnessed, media such as Twitter and Facebook have the ability to generate crowd-sourced reaction to key political developments. As a result of that direct user-generated content, citizens feel more able to have direct contact with MPs and MSPs. That will undoubtedly have some impact in the long term on broader expectations about politicians.

In conclusion, I welcome this timely debate. It poses many questions that are simply too complex to answer in one short debate. However, the mere fact that we are able to speak these words, broadcast them to the media, write them on our parliamentary website and tweet them to our followers shows that we have come very far since the days of the penny dreadfuls—the early yellow-top gossip papers. Let us hope that this journey towards a more transparent and engaging system continues. I support the motion and congratulate Jean Urquhart on lodging it.

12:50

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I, too, congratulate Jean Urquhart on securing the debate. I agree with much in her motion, and especially the belief that

“critical and well-supported journalism is essential to a thriving democracy”.

A strong media plays an important role in making politicians and government at all levels accountable, and that is how it should be.

The motion notes the importance of the local media and press in my region—the Highlands and

Islands—which I completely agree with. The Highlands and Islands are fortunate to have a wide range of fantastic local newspapers, of which there are far too many to mention them individually.

I commend the journalists and editors who work so hard to cover local news stories in my region. As well as reporting on local stories and performing the important task of scrutinising the performance and decisions of local government in Scotland, many such newspapers can help to effect change by supporting local campaigns. I think for example of the recent and successful campaign to establish a new dialysis unit in Campbeltown hospital, which was backed by great support from the *Campbeltown Courier*.

Jean Urquhart is right to mention the development of news through the internet and social media, and she mentioned TTIP. I received upwards of 500 emails railing against TTIP and only one or two that were pro-TTIP. However, it was obvious that the 500 were generated from one source. During the inquiry that the European and External Relations Committee conducted into TTIP, the majority of the witnesses were in favour of it. I do not think that social media can always be used—

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): The vast majority—more than 90 per cent—were corporate lobbyists. Does Jamie McGrigor think that they reflect the general public of the European Union?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before Mr McGrigor responds, I have to say that I do not want this debate to descend into a TTIP debate; it is about social media.

Jamie McGrigor: I will take your advice on that and carry on, Presiding Officer.

Many of our local newspapers have developed first-class websites. In Argyll and Bute, the news website forargyll.com has developed a well-deserved reputation for its extensive and comprehensive coverage of all the key stories in the area and its insightful analysis. Lynda Henderson and her team at forargyll.com work extremely hard, and their success is reflected in the many thousands of page impressions that they receive every day and in the site's lively comments sections.

Jean Urquhart talked about trust in the media. All of us can agree that the events that led to the Leveson inquiry shocked many of our constituents. However, I think that the United Kingdom Government got the balance right in its response to Leveson by seeking to preserve the freedom of the press while ensuring that bad practice in journalism can be challenged. We need to monitor the effectiveness of the new Independent Press

Standards Organisation, which replaced the Press Complaints Commission, and assess its performance before considering any further changes in press regulation.

While Leveson focused on bad journalism, we should recognise that the vast majority of journalists and others in the media work to very high standards. The BBC remains an institution that is respected worldwide and we must cherish the expertise that we have in, for example, the BBC World Service. The broadcast media's coverage of the recent general election was balanced and robust, despite the polls. ITN and Channel 4 also offer some of the best international news coverage and analysis to be found anywhere in the world.

I welcome today's debate. I agree that it is important that we support a strong media in Scotland and the UK and have an on-going and measured debate about how citizens and society engage with our media and ensure that it meets the expectations that we have for fairness and balance.

12:54

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): I, too, congratulate my colleague Jean Urquhart on bringing the motion to the chamber. We know from the media and from the speeches that we have heard that the subject is of great interest to the general public. It is perhaps unfortunate that there is not a bigger attendance in the chamber for the debate.

The motion refers to a

“widespread debate”

and to

“the relationship between the media, political power and democracy”.

Members have talked about the range of media, from the locals, nationals and broadcasters to social media and the internet. The question of who has the power may be important. Mr McGrigor touched on that, and I venture that, at United Kingdom level, the power still rests with a group of elites—bankers, public schoolboys, the military and the like, and their lobbyists—and people will always have concerns about the term “state broadcaster”.

Jamie McGrigor: I referred to witnesses we had at the European and External Relations Committee. Is Mr Finnie suggesting that all of them were public schoolboys?

John Finnie: I do not know the committee that Mr McGrigor talks about, but I am not suggesting that the witnesses from whom it received evidence

were exclusively public schoolboys, and nor was my remark a personal dig at Mr McGrigor.

The promotion of news is terribly important, and so is the reflection of opinion. We need to ask ourselves what we expect from the media. We want facts, opinion and analysis, and we want a combination of all that, but we must look at what the facts are and at who says that they are facts and on what basis. Opinions cannot be right or wrong, but we can ask whether they are based on facts. Analysis of facts and opinions is challenging for many people in the media, for the very reasons that we heard from Graeme Dey—it was good to have that input from someone from the profession.

People ask, “Are there agendas?” Of course there are agendas. We all have agendas. I support an organisation called Reporters Without Borders, which wants freedom of expression and of information and says that that will always be the most important freedom that the world has. It also says:

“if journalists were not free to report the facts, denounce abuses and alert the public, how would we resist the problem of child-soldiers, defend women’s rights, or preserve our environment?”

Reporters Without Borders is asking the United Nations Security Council to refer to the International Criminal Court the situation in which its members find themselves in Syria and Iraq, and we know about the situation with Al Jazeera staff.

By and large, our media people do not find themselves in such circumstances, and we know that good work is done by those who work on community broadsheets and on local radio stations, as a result of community empowerment. We must sustain and develop those media outlets, as the motion says. The national corporations follow a narrow agenda, and I am not sure how we can deal with that, but there is much to commend outlets such as Common Space and Bella Caledonia.

The motion notes that trust has been lost

“in a range of media institutions”.

Trust has been lost in a lot of institutions, including politics, and we must all move away from spinning stories and towards a situation in which we provide facts and the basis for saying that they are facts. That would allow analysis. It is a two-way engagement.

As has been rightly said, the Highlands and Islands have a vibrant papers sector, and long may that continue. People view the sector as having a public service ethos.

There must be a separation between our media and party politics. There is much to be positive about for the future, and I applaud the work of the National Union of Journalists to encourage young

people into the profession. I commend its code of conduct, and I stress that journalists must at all times uphold and defend the principle of media freedom, the right to freedom of expression and the public’s right to be informed. If we stick to those principles, I do not think that we will go far wrong.

12:59

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I congratulate Jean Urquhart on securing the debate. In local newspaper week, I have to say that life would not be the same without a weekly read of the *Linlithgow Gazette*. I welcome the chance to speak in this timely debate and I thank members for the interesting and informative comments that we have heard. There is a widespread debate in Scotland about the relationship between the media, political power and democracy, and there is also a belief that critical and well-supported journalism is essential to a thriving democracy—Jamie McGrigor made that point.

For our part, public engagement with politicians and the media’s critical analysis of our work inside and outwith Parliament are essential to building and maintaining trust in the political process. It is essential to ensure the continued participation of people throughout Scotland in shaping our nation’s future.

Malcolm Chisholm talked about the role of social media, particularly in elections. A thriving media sector that supports diverse job opportunities, training and development is important, and a press and media environment that values, respects and champions quality journalism is essential to our future. We should also note, recognise and appreciate the role of the new publication *The National*.

The levels of engagement in September’s referendum and during the UK general election campaign have been rightly celebrated and it is heartening that so many people feel that they have a voice in the critical decisions that affect us all. However, despite such high levels of engagement, we find ourselves at a time of great change in how the media delivers its content and ensures its continued relevance amid changing perceptions of what constitutes international, national and local.

Nowadays, I can consume information from a variety of media outlets, with news in many languages and from many perspectives at my fingertips. Such easy access to a plurality of information is a challenge to our traditional modes of consumption and engagement and it can have an unsettling effect when what seems to be established fact is quickly challenged by another

point of view. That is positive for the quality of debate, but it changes our relationship with the media and challenges our ability and appetite to distinguish between opinion and fact, which might also impact on our levels of trust in media institutions, at least in the short term.

To sustain a flourishing democracy in Scotland, we will need diverse and independent voices across the media. However, the media continues to be concentrated in a handful of corporations and individuals who have considerable power over our news, cultural life and access to information. That was a focus of John Finnie's speech. Decisions about the newspaper industry, such as decisions on merging titles, deskilling and the laying off of good journalists, are often made with scant regard for the impact that such decisions will have on the media's ability to support democracy, political engagement and high-quality debate in Scotland.

We have seen job cuts throughout the media sector, including at the BBC. On print journalism, Graeme Dey warned of the vicious cycle of deteriorating circulation and standards in the media. The move to go online is also creating an ever more economically challenging environment for the print media. Circulation figures in February show reductions in the past six months across most major titles of between 5 and 15 per cent, and there have been closures at a range of media organisations. Of course, some publications have moved successfully to online circulation that pays.

Such challenging times for print journalism are leading to increasing domination of the industry by a smaller number of large media organisations. That is a challenge for industry regulators and one of the reasons for the loss of trust in the media that we have heard about today.

Alternative new media platforms have sprung up rapidly in the past few years, and access to local and social media provides many opportunities for voices to be heard on a range of issues. An example of that comes from Jean Urquhart's work on xenophobia earlier this year, which made excellent use of exactly that kind of opportunity. However, the ability of digital intermediaries, such as search engines and social media giants, to filter information threatens to create new monopolies that will undermine positive developments.

As the traditional print media adapts to respond to the digital age, it is critical that local voices are still heard and that high-quality local journalism and media remain vibrant and continue to develop. The launch of local TV services in Edinburgh and Glasgow earlier this year and the forthcoming launches in Aberdeen, Ayr and Dundee are an interesting development. The risks and opportunities for the media in Scotland at this time must be assessed, and we must address the

issues facing us, particularly where trust has broken down, in order to rebuild the relationship with people across Scotland.

As members know, the Smith commission proposed new powers for Scotland over broadcasting, and today's debate is well timed as we enter this critical period. The continued work to implement proposals on independent press self-regulation is also key to rebuilding trust in our media and helping to address structural issues.

I am committed to making sure that we seize the opportunity and promote continued public debate so that we can sustain and develop diverse media outlets that can generate positive engagement with politics, the Parliament and the important issues facing society, thereby ensuring that everyone has a voice in Scotland's future. I want to see a national debate with politicians, the industry and—critically—the public to ensure that we fully understand the vision for media in Scotland and the key issues that we want to address, from BBC charter renewal to support for independent producers across Scotland and support for vibrant and diverse print and online media.

I look forward to a lively and informed discussion of the issues with colleagues across the chamber and throughout Scotland. This is a critical agenda that matters. I am pleased and grateful that Jean Urquhart brought the debate to Parliament.

13:05

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Presiding Officer's Ruling

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Good afternoon. Before we begin the scheduled proceedings, I will deal with an earlier issue. The Presiding Officer undertook to reflect on a point of order, which was raised during First Minister's questions by Stewart Maxwell, as the convener of the Education and Culture Committee, on comments made by Ruth Davidson.

Mr Maxwell's concerns related to Ruth Davidson's assertion that the Education and Culture Committee had published a report on attainment. The Presiding Officers have had a chance to examine the *Official Report* of First Minister's questions. Ruth Davidson was reflecting on a letter from the committee to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, which seeks her views on written evidence received during its inquiry on attainment. In doing so, Ruth Davidson described that as reporting back. She subsequently referred to the letter from the committee. The contents of that letter are not matters for the Presiding Officers to rule on.

We consider that the point has been clarified and that the matter is closed.

Circular Economy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): I turn to this afternoon's business. The first item of business is a debate on motion S4M-13134, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the circular economy—waste management.

I call Richard Lochhead, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment, to speak to and move the motion. You have a generous 14 minutes, cabinet secretary.

14:31

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment (Richard Lochhead): I am pleased to open our first ever debate on the opportunities of a more circular economy for Scotland. Although this is our first debate on this important subject, I am certain that it will not be the last.

In the traditional economy in which we live or have lived in the past, we take, we make and we dispose. We take resources from the ground, air or water, we make products and then we dispose of them. A circular economy is about retaining the value of our primary resources, designing, reusing, repairing and remanufacturing, and exploring new business models that support a more circular approach.

We are getting better at disposing of goods in a way that lessens the impact on the environment. We are landfilling less, we are recovering energy, particularly from food waste, and we are recycling what we can. I think that we all accept that business as usual is not an option. We must act now to put the value of our resources at the heart of Scotland's economy.

Creating a circular economy is an economic, environmental and moral necessity. It will create jobs in our communities, it will improve our quality of life and, of course, it is just good sense.

Major new economic powers are emerging in Brazil, India, Indonesia, Korea and elsewhere. The climate is changing, and the world's population is changing; therefore, our demands for the world's resources are changing. Globally, by 2030, we may need around 40 per cent more water, 80 per cent more steel and 33 per cent more energy. Those are just some examples of how demand is increasing.

Commodity prices are more volatile these days. As we all know, they have increased sharply since the 2000s. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation has identified a global saving of £1.3 trillion if we were to move to a more circular economy.

We are all politicians here, so we have the means to design and influence action in Scotland, as well as the rest of the United Kingdom and throughout Europe. Therefore, it is our responsibility to show as much leadership as we can in this important area.

Last October, *The Guardian* identified five countries moving ahead of the pack on taking action on the circular economy. I am pleased to say that Scotland stands alongside Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and Japan in leading the way. The Green Alliance, which is a UK environmental think tank, has also said that Scotland is a long way ahead of other parts of the UK in its policy support for resource productivity.

We are all too familiar with products that seem to be designed to be discarded after relatively short use. That could be a mobile phone with a sealed casing or a washing machine sentenced to a short life because the part needed is not available any more. Design for a circular economy is the first step.

When a product has fulfilled its first life, reuse is almost always the preferred option. Reusing a product retains the embedded value of materials and the labour and the energy that were involved in making it in the first place, and it avoids the demand for new resources to create another new product.

Repair is by no means a new concept. We would not dream of scrapping a car just because the alternator had gone, but how often have we replaced a television, a vacuum cleaner or a coat or any other item of clothing because it was too difficult to get it repaired or fixed?

Remanufacture is when we take apart a product and rebuild it to the same standard as—or better than—the original. New resources are avoided, and remanufacturing can be much less energy intensive than manufacturing a new product.

In our traditional or linear economy, there is little incentive to make products reliable and easy to repair, or to design them so that valuable parts can be salvaged when they cannot be repaired. The concept of a circular economy can be daunting, but it starts to make sense once we unpack it into visible, practical things that we can do.

In January this year, the Green Alliance and the Scottish Council for Development and Industry published a report that identifies key opportunities for Scotland in particular sectors. Those include a potential £140 million opportunity from converting whisky by-products into feed for the fish farming industry. Reusing steel from decommissioned oil and gas rigs instead of melting it down for recycling could cut associated carbon emissions by more than 80 per cent.

In March, I published a report that sets out the potential value of remanufacturing to Scotland. Remanufacturing is already worth £1.1 billion to the Scottish economy, and it supports around 17,000 jobs, but the potential exists for its value to grow by £620 million by 2020 and for it to create another 5,700 jobs.

I was privileged to open the fantastic new Scottish institute of remanufacture in Glasgow earlier this year, which was established with £1.3 million of support from Zero Waste Scotland and the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council. That innovative centre will focus on innovation in remanufacturing, collaborative projects and establishing a remanufacturing community in Scotland. It is worth noting that it is one of only four such centres in the world—the others are in Singapore, New York and Beijing—and the first in Europe.

Scotland's reuse sector is also developing. The Revolve brand, which sets out standards and quality for reused goods in Scotland, is operated by Zero Waste Scotland and partners such as the Community Recycling Network Scotland. Reuse is growing, and many of us will have bought used goods from eBay, Gumtree or elsewhere. We are familiar with that trend. Indeed, my officials tell me that there is a burgeoning industry in pre-loved luxury goods such as designer fashion and handbags—I take their word for it, as that is not something that I have personal experience of, but it is another example of what is happening out there.

With our rich heritage in textiles, Scotland is in a fantastic position to support the reuse sector. Only a few weeks ago, my colleague the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, Aileen McLeod, attended an exhibition in her constituency at which small companies, including Hamish Mash Eco Fashion, were displaying some very smart clothes. Whether we are talking about the gearboxes that are remanufactured by Mackie's, a family business in the east end of Glasgow, the computer hardware that is refurbished for reuse by Re-Tek in East Kilbride or the textiles that are upcycled into desirable clothing in Dalbeattie, we are talking about quality, everyday products that are being put on the market by credible, sustainable businesses. They are doing that in a way that keeps materials circulating in our economy, thereby reducing our reliance on new materials and new resources.

That complements the work that is already being undertaken as part of the resource efficient Scotland programme, which brings together support on energy, water and materials in a unique approach to help businesses and the public sector. All that activity represents substantial progress, which I intend to build on by

bringing those issues together in a circular economy road map. I will publish that strategy and put it out to consultation in the next few months. It will set out the opportunities that suit the characteristics of Scotland as a nation on which we will focus our efforts.

The circular economy is about much more than recycling, but we are all familiar with recycling systems. As we all know, Scotland has some of the most ambitious recycling targets in the UK and beyond, and we aim to recycle 70 per cent of our waste by 2025. However, recycling quality is as important as quantity. Low-quality, contaminated recyclate is sold off cheaply, often abroad, and we must address that. It becomes a low-value commodity, and there is little motivation for householders to recognise the value in the products that they put in their recycling bins. High-value, clean recyclate can be kept in much higher-value use.

One example of what is happening is the work of Dryden Aqua, which is a small business in Midlothian that makes high-tech water filters from waste glass. I had the pleasure—around 18 months ago, I think—of visiting Dryden Aqua. It is an amazing, innovative Scottish company with an international reputation, but it faces a challenge in getting consistent and reliable sources of glass from our local authorities in sufficient quantities. It simultaneously highlights the opportunities of a more circular economy and some of the challenges in making that transition.

That is one of the reasons why I recently established the Scottish materials brokerage service. Despite its name, the service is an exciting idea, and it will bring stability for Scottish organisations in what can be a volatile market. It is all about bringing together materials in the quantities that are required to attract reprocessing infrastructure to Scotland. If all our local authorities and everyone else who collects those materials go through the brokerage service, the volumes will increase. Once there are the proper commercial volumes, we will, I hope, attract more reprocessing infrastructure to Scotland to be built by the commercial sector. That, in turn, would bring about a good income deal for local government in particular.

As I have indicated, glass is one of the priority materials for the new brokerage service to support ambitious companies in Scotland, such as Dryden Aqua. It does not make sense not to have the right collection systems in place for our glass when companies in Scotland can create more jobs and do more business if they can get their hands on that glass. That is why we are addressing those particular challenges.

There is also much to do to improve householder participation in recycling. I am very

encouraged by the work of the zero waste task force, which I co-chair with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which is the local government body. The task force has been considering how to reap the benefits of a more circular economy through the services that are provided by local government. It has agreed to develop a charter for more consistent recycling collections in Scotland to improve participation and recycling rates, but also to improve the quality of the recyclate that is collected in the first place, the importance of which I indicated before. I cannot say too much more about that at the moment ahead of the final task force meeting in a few weeks' time, but I very much hope that the charter will be a significant step forward for recycling in Scotland.

We must remember that we have already picked the low-hanging fruit and we need to up our game on recycling. Simply more of the same will not capture the recyclate that otherwise will be wasted.

The question is often put to me whether the effort that is required to improve recycling outweighs the benefits and whether securing energy from waste, for instance, might be the preferred option in some circumstances. It is important that I am clear about that. Where there is genuinely no better use for materials, using them to generate heat and energy is always better than simply putting them into landfill—into big holes in the ground.

Once we have truly embraced a more circular economy, there may be some materials for which there really is no further use, and energy from waste will still be the only viable option. However, I believe that we are nowhere near that point. We do not want to direct materials down the waste hierarchy to disposal; rather, we want to move them up towards reuse and waste prevention in the first place. Indeed, we have to make the effort to find the game changers that we require that will create opportunities to do something better with our materials in this country. We have to be creative, and we want those ideas to come forward.

Recycling targets that are based on tonnage are pretty blunt instruments. Heavy materials score well on recycling rates, but they may not generate the greatest carbon benefits. Zero Waste Scotland has done some ground-breaking work on a carbon metric for materials to help to shape our future efforts to capture those with the greatest carbon impact. In parallel, it is assessing the scale of carbon savings that a more circular approach in our economy could achieve. We hope to publish the results of that work in due course.

We need to get the principles of a circular economy out to a much wider audience. The

Scottish Government is working with Young Scot to organise a weekend event in June for young people to explore the concept of a circular economy. I am very much looking forward to hearing what our young people say and what comes out of that discussion. If anyone is going to come up with out-of-the-box ideas and game changers, it will, we hope, be our young people.

We have to ask ourselves what will engage the public to the same extent as the carrier bag charge that came into force last year, for example. The 5p charge was the subject of conversation throughout the country and it affected everyone in the country. We now see a reduction of between 80 and 90 per cent in bag use in some stores in Scotland.

The carrier bag charge is a small example of action towards a more circular economy. People are now reusing bags rather than demanding a new bag, and they are recognising their value in the first place and the impact on their pockets and the environment.

What is the next big thing that will help us towards a circular economy? What will engage the people of Scotland in action? I do not know whether this is the answer, but this morning Zero Waste Scotland published a report on the feasibility of a deposit return scheme for Scotland, whereby we put in something that we have used, such as a bottle, to go for recycling, and we then get some of our money back.

Is deposit return perhaps the next big thing in Scotland? It makes sense that we should consider such ideas. Deposit return schemes have worked in many countries throughout the world, such as Norway, Germany and Sweden. There are even some schemes in Canada, the United States and elsewhere.

One of the benefits of such schemes, which we should consider seriously, is the fact that they tackle litter as well as improving recycling. If we attach a value to the bottles and cans that we see on the streets, in our communities and in the wider environment, they are more likely to be recycled, as people get money for them. That would help clear up Scotland's communities at the same time.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Wearing his fisheries hat, does the cabinet secretary think that the question of discards from the fishing industry will add an extra element to the recycling issue?

Richard Lochhead: Our fishing industry is involved in a number of initiatives, particularly the fishing for litter initiative, although that is not so much about discards. The discard ban and the landing obligations that have already begun to come into force in Scotland pose challenges in dealing with the fish landed ashore, which has to

be dealt with and cannot be sold commercially. I am confident that we will find sustainable good uses for it. That is certainly a waste issue. There are wider waste issues in many of our industries that we have to address.

The circular economy is an approach and a concept; it is about taking an overarching approach to everything that is happening within Scotland's economy at the same time.

Deposit return schemes might be one big idea that we want to take forward. We will consider the outcome of the report that has been published this morning, and we will consult business, the public, environmental organisations and others as we decide how to take it forward.

It might even be worthwhile speaking to the rest of the UK, which I plan to do. Perhaps we should take a lead in Scotland and try to persuade the rest of the UK that, if we decide to take forward such a scheme, we should do it in conjunction with the rest of the UK. If we can persuade it to do so, that will help to address some of the big issues and costs at the same time. I will certainly open up those conversations with ministers elsewhere in the UK.

Other ideas have been brought forward. The spring 2015 edition of Zero Waste Scotland's excellent newsletter "Towards Zero" has a whole lot of ideas in it. Lang Banks from WWF Scotland moots whether we can do more with universal adapters to help avoid the mountain of useless cables and chargers that we all have at home. Many other ideas have been brought forward.

I encourage everyone in the Parliament as well as the public and the rest of Scotland to participate in this debate and to recognise its importance to the future of Scotland's economy, the environment and indeed Scotland's global role. I want to encourage a debate on social media to flush out ideas, and in speaking to people I want to find the game changers that could help transform Scotland's traditional economy into a circular economy. I very much look forward to constructive and creative contributions from members across the chamber.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the potential opportunities for Scotland of moving toward a more circular economy, in which products and materials are kept in high-value use for as long as possible; recognises that realising the substantial economic and environmental benefits means rethinking the way in which products and services are designed and procured; welcomes the progress made in establishing Resource Efficient Scotland, the Scottish Materials Brokerage Service and the Scottish Institute of Remanufacture, building on the Scottish Government's Safeguarding Scotland's Resources strategy, and believes that Scotland should continue to show leadership in this important area while proposals for EU-wide action emerge later this year.

14:48

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I am pleased that the Scottish Government has called this debate and that we will thus be able to focus on how to take forward the circular economy, identifying opportunities and how to break down barriers to progress. A debate such as this is an opportunity for members and others with an interest to learn from each other by listening. That should lead to further clear action by the Scottish Government, local authorities, businesses and consumers.

Scottish Labour is supportive of working towards a circular economy. We have been determined to address the challenges that are posed by waste and resource use for many years. We brought in the first recycling targets in 2003, when Scotland relied on landfill for 91 per cent of its municipal waste and had deplorable levels of recycling, at 4 per cent. In that context, I look forward in particular to the findings of the task force on the issue of recycling, which the cabinet secretary raised.

Working towards the circular economy is key to dealing with a number of imperatives that must be addressed here and globally: concerns about climate change and the contribution of methane from landfill; the increasing scarcity of resources and the need to preserve them and share them justly on a global and national basis; and energy gaining. We are recovering energy from waste food, as the cabinet secretary mentioned, and in other ways.

We will support the Scottish Government's motion today. I look forward to the circular economy road map in the autumn and hope that people across the chamber, across Scotland and beyond can contribute to that.

Focusing on our amendment, before contributing to the exploration of the way forward, I want to highlight current concerns about workers in the waste and resource use industry, as expressed in Unison Scotland's survey of waste management staff, entitled "Dumped on: Working in Scotland's waste management services". Unison highlights the regulatory framework that governs waste management in Scotland, and its report notes that

"the amount of waste which will be required to be reused or recycled will continue to rise",

particularly as we move towards a circular economy. Concern is expressed that the concept of the circular economy, on top of existing regulations, will see budgets coming under further stress in the immediate future. Unison's report states:

"Councils are already struggling to balance their budgets as they bear the brunt of cuts in overall expenditure. Within local government budgets there is little sign—despite

increasing regulatory pressure—that councils seem in any way inclined to protect waste management spending."

It also states:

"Waste management staff are vital to any kind of civilised life."

I am sure that we all agree with that. It goes on to say of those staff:

"As we become ever more aware of the need to conserve resources their functions are becoming more of a social and political issue. This is not being reflected by how they are funded or treated and most definitely not in how they are paid."

I want to highlight the current recycling targets. Twenty-three councils in Scotland failed to meet the Scottish Government target for recycling 50 per cent of household waste by 2013. Will the cabinet secretary explain in his closing remarks how the Scottish Government is supporting the waste management requirements that are placed on local authorities now and as we move towards a circular economy, both to better support workers in the industry and to achieve targets that necessitate a shift in operational practices?

Starting in October 2013, the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee has been giving attention to understanding the circular economy; I admit that I had no idea about it until that time. Our inquiries led to a letter and written response last year from the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment.

The committee heard from Professor Walter Stahel of the Product Life Institute about a new economic model. He gave the example of Rolls-Royce, which changed from a model of selling engines and spare parts to selling power by the hour. He said:

"Under the new model, you make more profits by prevention. Basically, you want to keep the engines running, so you need to ensure that you have the lowest possible repair and maintenance costs ... Once you have done it, you are much better off, but the changeover is difficult."—[*Official Report, Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee*, 2 October 2013; c 2658.]

That is where Government advice and support are essential. "Safeguarding Scotland's Resources: Blueprint for a More Resource Efficient and Circular Economy" will be helpful in that regard, and its 20-point action plan must underpin the way forward.

In May 2014, the committee focused on stakeholders, which further informed our understanding and thinking. We heard in evidence

"that public procurement offers a good opportunity to stimulate the design of circular products and support the uptake of different approaches to the provision of services, for example, through leasing, lending, repair and remanufacturing."

Now that the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 has been passed for many months, it would be helpful to hear from the cabinet secretary about the development of the work of the Scottish Government's procurement professionals and waste policy team, as he stated in his letter to the committee in August of last year that they

"will work closely together to examine opportunities and support the application of relevant sections of the Act to future procurements."

The circular economy has been taken forward by the catalytic work of organisations and groups beyond Government, such as the Aldersgate Group and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. The foundation has made a significant contribution to analysing the way forward in a series of papers, including "Towards the Circular Economy: Economic and business rationale for an accelerated transition", which provides a real-terms exploration of how to achieve this change in perspective for businesses and consumers.

Calling the next five years the "pioneer phase", it dissects the circular economy success stories to find their common enabling factors. Under the current linear model, businesses are at risk of supply disruption, soaring resource prices and volatile levels of demand and competition. A circular economy paints a much more promising picture for businesses and the consumer. Change in design will result in an increase in product choice and convenience, and a reduction in material and warranty costs; it will also have environmental benefits.

The committee heard from Scottish Enterprise, which has a strong role to play in helping Scotland to become a world leader. The economic opportunities are irrefutable, as evidenced by the members of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's circular 100, which includes many big household names in retail, the automotive industry and design.

The importance of support for product development cannot be emphasised enough. Approximately 80 per cent of a product's environmental impact is decided by its very design. We must move away from technological obsolescence. Designing for regeneration will require the use of new materials such as biological ingredients that can eventually return to the biosphere. Alternatively, products must be developed using increasing modularity and being optimised for a cycle of disassembly and remanufacturing.

This step towards selling performance is an exciting opportunity for innovation. Studies show that taking up such an opportunity could be financially worth while. The waste prevention charity WRAP states that rapid development of circular economy activity

"could create around half a million additional jobs (gross) and reduce unemployment by around 102,000"

by 2030. Furthermore, those jobs would spread across the country, particularly to places with higher numbers of unemployed people where manufacturing industry once thrived.

Our amendment emphasises the fact that new skills will need to be developed, and there is already innovation in Scottish further and higher education. The University of Strathclyde new industrial biotechnology facility is leading the way in research to innovate in and invigorate industry through manufacturing. To ensure continuing professional development for designers, Education Scotland aims to provide design residencies. Designers will gain understanding of the challenges of waste recovery and how to embed the circular theory in their work. The knowledge will assist in designing products to be resources rather than throw-away goods.

Education Scotland is working with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation to ensure that the necessary skills are identified for curriculum for excellence in our schools. That will link with eco-schools. I hope that we will see new projects for the circular economy even in our primary schools. Primary and secondary schools are engaging with renewable technologies, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics are being encouraged by the Scottish Government and others. Professor Stahel told the committee:

"The problem is partly one of education and values. We come to the philosophy of how we should educate young people to define their basic needs and to focus on quality."—[*Official Report, Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee*, 2 October 2013; c 2657.]

Support for behaviour change on the society-wide scale to develop community commitment and consumer awareness is, of course, essential if we are to succeed together in developing the circular economy with all its benefits. That is one of the 20 actions in the Scottish Government's zero waste plan. If we can all work together to implement all those actions, we will indeed become a world leader in the circular economy and that will be to the benefit of everybody.

I move amendment S4M-13134.2, to insert after "procured":

“; recognises the necessity of developing new and transferable skills with Skills Development Scotland and industry and educational partners; recognises concerns about the pressures experienced by those working in waste management services, as Scotland implements its waste strategy, leading to the circular economy, evidenced in Unison Scotland's survey, *Dumped on: Working in Scotland's waste management services*; further acknowledges the funding pressures experienced by local authorities in meeting recycling targets and developing new models; also recognises the role of the third sector in developing the circular economy”.

14:58

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am pleased to take part in the debate and I thank the organisations that gave us useful briefings in advance of the debate, including Viridor, the Scottish Retail Consortium, Sainsbury's and the packaging recycling group Scotland.

We can all agree fully with the concept of a circular economy and the simple common sense of the idea that products and materials should be kept in high-value use for as long as possible. The whole developed world must reassess how it uses our planet's resources and look again at our culture and attitudes towards waste.

In 2009, Sir John Beddington, the then chief scientific adviser to the UK Government, talked about a perfect storm coming in relation to demand on energy, water and food security. The current reality is that, if everyone on the planet lived like the average European, we would need three planets to live on. Our earth's resources can only be expected to be under greater pressure in the years ahead as the global population rises, developing countries become more developed and we see a continued growth in the international middle classes who want the most modern consumer goods and an ever-higher quality of life. Indeed, it is estimated that there will be 3 billion of those new wealthier consumers by 2050—that is an incredible thought.

We recognise the work that is being done by the Scottish Government to develop the circular economy and the good work that is being undertaken by many Scottish businesses, charities and individuals, including in my region of the Highlands and Islands. We also recognise the potentially significant economic benefits to Scotland of moving to a circular economy. For example, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has estimated that the rolling out of anaerobic digestion technology to treat food waste in the UK could create 35,000 jobs. There is also considerable scope for job creation through the reuse, remanufacture and refurbishment of goods. The decommissioning of oil and gas installations in Scotland has the potential to create a substantial number of jobs as well.

The Scottish retail sector is to be commended for the real progress that it is making in improving resource efficiency, reducing waste and moving towards a circular economy. We recently debated the Scottish Retail Consortium's excellent strategy, "A Better Retailing Climate: Driving resource efficiency in Scotland" in the chamber, and it seems clear that other sectors can learn from its good practices and examples. The briefing from Sainsbury's for today's debate talks about reducing waste in the home through its

improvements in packaging—for example, the introduction of resealable packaging to reduce food waste and improved labelling guidance for home freezing, which now advises customers to freeze as soon as possible up to the use-by date instead of to freeze on day of purchase.

There are both current pressures and real challenges ahead for businesses working in the waste management sector and barriers that prevent other companies from being able to take actions that are part of the circular economy. I am delighted that Viridor, which works with 96 per cent of Scottish local authorities, has announced £357 million of Scottish investment in the past 18 months as part of an overall investment package of £500 million in Scotland. Viridor is, however, quite correct to warn that the declines in the value of commodities on global markets present a very big challenge to sustaining the progress that has been made to date and achieving the 2020 sector targets. In addition, Viridor highlights that the UK's recycling technology and systems are ageing rapidly and that a new economic realism is required if we are to make further progress. Ministers need to heed the stark warnings from Viridor and address those concerns.

On the subject of the Scottish Government's recycling targets, I am always reminded of an Inverness-shire constituent—he was also a councillor at the time—who said there should be no targets without markets. His point was that it is all very well to want to recycle, but there must be somewhere where people can recycle things. I have some sympathy with that view and agree that economic realism is also necessary.

My amendment simply seeks to put down a marker to avoid any additional, excessive regulation and costs falling on the private sector. Efficient regulation is also mentioned by Viridor as being very important, and the SRC refers to a number of regulatory barriers that can preclude innovation. We need to avoid creating any more regulatory barriers and costs, and I hope that all MSPs can support my amendment.

The recommendations that were made by the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee to the cabinet secretary last May are useful. The committee was right to highlight the challenges in developing a collaborative approach when 32 local authorities and numerous businesses and third sector organisations are involved, with many of them taking different approaches.

Support for partnership working and co-operation is important. The cabinet secretary talked about UK co-operation; that would be good. The committee was correct to highlight that skills development is vital—Claudia Beamish's amendment rightly focuses on that—and the

suggestion of embedding the concept of the circular economy within the school curriculum and the university sector as part of the necessary overall raising of public awareness is a brilliant idea. Again, the Scottish Conservatives welcome the debate.

I move amendment S4M-13134.1, to insert after “strategy”:

“; urges the Scottish Government to work with Scottish businesses and their representative organisations to ensure that unnecessary regulations and bureaucracy are avoided”.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Many thanks. At this stage, we have some time in hand for interventions. I can also give members up to seven minutes for their speeches.

15:05

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): Janez Potočnik, the then European Commissioner for the Environment, set the scene for the move to a circular economy perfectly when he observed:

“The soft laws of economics are coming up against the hard laws of physics as we hit physical resource constraints. We now start to see that tomorrow’s growth will depend on making environment part of our economic policy”,

and on making the transition

“now, in a managed way, rather than when we hit environmental limits, tipping points and catastrophes.”— [*Official Report, Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, 20 June 2013; c 2464-5.*]

Against that backdrop, surely it is therefore welcome that Scotland is recognised as being at the forefront of the circular economy movement in the UK and, internationally, as one of the early movers. As Dustin Benton of the Green Alliance, which earlier this year published the “Circular Economy Scotland” report, put it:

“Scotland is a long way ahead of other parts of the UK in its policy support for resource productivity”

and is

“in a strong position to develop the technologies needed to capture high value, innovative manufacturing opportunities in a circular economy.”

However, in a global—never mind UK—sense, given how far we have to go and the obstacles that we need to overcome, it is realistic to acknowledge that we are still at the baby-step stage in our progress towards having a truly circular economy, although there is quite an exciting prospect in front of us.

During its extended and extensive evidence gathering on the circular economy, the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee heard of the opportunity for different approaches to be taken to the provision of

services—for example, through leasing, lending, repairing and remanufacturing—all of which were very interesting.

I was particularly struck by the leasing option, not least because, in some regards, it would represent a return to a bygone era, rather like the cabinet secretary’s mention of a possible deposit return scheme for bottles. I recall that when I was a youngster in Aberdeen in the late 1960s, my parents leased our television set. It was quite a widespread practice then. I compare and contrast that with what happens nowadays, with many households purchasing widescreen TVs that litter family rooms and, in many cases, bedrooms, and recycling centres that are full of discarded sets as we move on to the next craze.

A major cultural change will be required to turn the clock back—

Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Graeme Dey: Absolutely.

Nigel Don: I am grateful to the member for— [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: My apologies, Mr Don, but we cannot hear you unless you face your microphone.

Nigel Don: I am sorry, Presiding Officer.

To extend the conversation that I had over lunch, my recollection is that those early TV sets were leased because buying them would have been silly as they were so unreliable. Interestingly, we have now got to the point where we want to send them back because we want the latest version. I think that the model has changed.

Graeme Dey: I thank the member for that.

As I said, a major cultural change will be required to turn the clock back, as it were, and there will be resistance—there is no doubt about that. However, we need to pursue that change.

There are certainly merits in repairing and remanufacturing, but there are also challenges. We will need to get supermarkets and high street electrical retailers to buy into the concept in order to reverse an ingrained attitude. They would have to be prepared to provide good-quality products that last longer and are easy to repair, rather than the bargain deals on certain appliances that they currently offer. If they do not, what motivation is there for the public to change their behaviour when they can replace items ranging from large kitchen goods to microwaves, kettles and so on for relatively little?

I highlight those points not to discourage the concept but to note the steps that will be required

to bring about a major, but necessary, cultural change. An acceptance of the concept of technological obsolescence or the attitude that it would be cheaper just to buy a new one pervades our daily lives—look at the scramble for the next smartphone or tablet device.

How many of us have repair contracts for our kitchen appliances or, when the TV goes on the blink, do not instinctively say that we will just buy another one? Zero Waste Scotland has estimated that within the 150,000 tonnes of potentially reusable items that go to landfill, 9,800 tonnes are made up of washing machines, and that, overall, 51 per cent of items at recycling centres could be reused after only a minor repair. That shows just how ingrained in our society is the premise of buying some items only to replace them when they break down or when a newer model comes along.

It was good to hear in the committee about the Hewlett-Packard factory in Scotland that is designed to reuse and remanufacture computers and other hardware from northern Europe. The £3.8 million loan fund that is managed jointly by Zero Waste Scotland and Scottish Enterprise to support circular economy businesses was also welcome news. Such companies and projects represent one of the ways in which Scotland is leading the way in the UK in building a circular economy, as I said.

Other developments are taking place, too: the Scottish Government was the first national government to become a member of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's circular economy 100 programme; and in October last year, as we have heard, the 5p plastic-bag charge was introduced, and the indications are that it is proving to be extremely successful.

In January, the cabinet secretary opened the Scottish institute of remanufacture, which is one of only four such institutes in the world, and the first in Europe. Such actions have led to Scotland being described as being

“a long way ahead other parts of the UK”.

We already have a reuse and remanufacturing sector that employs 23,000 people, all told. The remanufacturing industry is worth £1.1 billion to the Scottish economy, and by 2020 it could grow by up to £620 million, adding another 5,700 jobs to the mix.

There is scope to exploit the wider sectoral opportunities that exist. The by-products and waste from established industries such as oil and gas and food and drink provide great opportunities to reuse and recycle. For example, the “Circular Economy Scotland” report identifies a business opportunity worth a potential £150 million, converting whisky by-products to fish feed. It also suggests that carbon emissions from melting steel

from the decommissioning of gas and oil rigs could be reduced by 80 per cent if the steel is reused.

We hear that an estimated £50 million-worth of gold could be wasted in Scotland through the disposal of electronic items such as computers and phones over the next five years—that is another opportunity to make progress.

We in Scotland are well placed to move to a circular economy. However, while Governments can drive, incentivise and encourage change, we as individuals have to buy into the agenda and deliver a societal shift. To secure buy-in, we need to raise awareness. If nothing else, I hope that the debate raises awareness of a necessary step that Scotland and the rest of the world have to take.

15:12

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I am pleased to speak in the debate and to be part of the move to promote and build a circular economy. The commitment has been developed over the years in the Scottish Parliament, starting with the national waste strategy in 2003, which had a focus on increasing municipal recycling and waste reduction levels.

We have moved increasingly from setting targets to introducing regulations to act as levers to deliver more progress, and there is now an increasing focus on a circular economy. That presents big challenges, but—as the cabinet secretary said—it also presents many opportunities.

Scotland has done well on many of the domestic targets. The behaviour of many households has changed for the positive, supported by local authorities' waste management plans. Although 23 local authorities did not manage to meet the Scottish Government's target of recycling 50 per cent of household waste by 2013—and we need to consider the reasons for that—we have seen progress. More and more businesses are making positive changes to their use of resources, driven by demands on their energy and production costs.

Members may have received an email from Sainsbury's and a briefing from the Scottish Retail Consortium in which a commitment to a circular economy is demonstrated. We have seen fantastic efforts from many of our supermarkets in accepting their responsibility to address some of the challenges.

There are substantial economic and environmental gains to be made from promoting a circular economy, but much more collective action from all the partners, including our higher and further education sectors, is required as we improve the design and ensure that we have the right skills base to deliver.

I recognise the progress that has been made, but I believe that we need a more honest debate about what the options are as we move forward if we are to achieve a circular economy.

To return to the issue of council targets, I had a round-table discussion with council leaders a while back and I was amazed at the complexity of waste management: the contracts that local authorities are tied into, the high-value waste that they could sell, and the waste that they have to pay others to take away. I am not sure that we fully appreciate the economics of waste, and I welcome the cabinet secretary's comments today about a new brokerage service as a step in the right direction. I also note Jamie McGrigor's comments about the concerns that Viridor has raised regarding infrastructure.

The responsibility for moving a lot of this work forward lies with local authorities, which are facing substantial strains on their funding over the next few years, leading to the tensions that are described in Unison's report, "Dumped on: Working in Scotland's waste management services".

A fully functioning circular economy gives greater value to waste. That is recognised in the Ellen MacArthur Foundation report, which suggests ways forward.

I would like assurances from the Government that we have the infrastructure that everyone is working with right, because I am not sure that we do. For example, Avondale Advanced Waste Treatment closed its state-of-the-art recycling facility two years ago, the cabinet secretary having officially opened it the previous year. When it closed, one of the company's directors said that the closure decision was taken

"in light of the weak economy, increased operating costs, the reduction in volume and market value of recyclates and the lack of strategic facilities to handle the refuse derived fuel."

That quote was in a sector magazine, as members could probably tell by the technical nature of the language. Avondale's state-of-the-art facility was open for only a year and had to close because of economic problems and problems with the availability of material to feed the centre. The situation does not seem to have changed, because the centre has never reopened.

When the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee took evidence on the second report on proposals and policies and the zero waste strategy, it was recognised that progress had been made. However, a number of issues were raised, including by James Curran—then the chief executive of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency—who argued that there was a need to take a more national and

strategic approach to the development of infrastructure to support the zero waste plan.

There is a tension between, on the one hand, the desire for small-scale infrastructure and a drive towards reduction, which is favoured by many, and, on the other, the sheer scale of the national waste challenge that we face and the lack of national infrastructure to manage it. The Government sets the targets and makes the regulations, but it is local authorities, businesses and communities that are trying to deliver. Other countries have taken a much more national approach to their infrastructure needs. I would like to know more about the Government's view of that issue.

The Coca-Cola bottling plant in East Kilbride is a zero-waste-to-landfill site, and the company has a good UK record on the issue. To achieve that, the company had to invest heavily in its own recycling infrastructure and equipment as neither the public sector nor the private sector could meet its needs or standards. Waste from the Scottish plant is currently taken to a central plant in England that Coca-Cola owns.

Are we confident that standards in the recycling and waste industry are high enough to raise the value of waste, which is key to an effective circular economy? The industry is one of the most difficult sectors for SEPA to monitor, and the Unison "Dumped on" report talks about recycling and waste management being one of the "most hazardous occupations" in the UK. The cabinet secretary might want to say a bit more about what the Government is doing to raise standards in the industry to support the circular economy.

I want to mention a social enterprise that was based in Glenrothes in Fife. Castle RePaint Scotland diverted water-based paint from landfill and turned it into top-quality emulsion in a range of colours. Each year, more than 300 million litres of paint—retail and trade—are sold in the UK, but it is estimated that 50 million litres are unused and stored in homes or garages, or just thrown away. Although there are opportunities to reuse or donate paint, gallons of it still go to landfill and waste management centres. The RePaint project was able to remove paint from that linear journey and turn it into a new product, which was an excellent example of the circular economy. The project was creative and innovative—qualities that the cabinet secretary values. It also provided opportunities to previously unemployed young people to train and gain skills, which benefited the wider economy.

It was therefore very disappointing that the enterprise had to close due to the lack of viability of the project. A few reasons were identified for that, including public procurement constraints. As a small social enterprise, RePaint was not in a

position to bid for big public contracts. Although the enterprise could have provided paint for a cluster of primary schools, for example, the volume required to meet the needs of public sector contracts excluded it from bidding for them. The drive for value for money for the taxpayer in public contracts is important: bigger contracts give local authorities the best deal, and public bodies often tender collectively. However, that does not recognise the additional value that a project such as RePaint could have provided through its contribution to the circular economy, the opportunities it offered for training and skills and its ability to support community regeneration. The project said that an obligation could be built into public contracts so that 10 per cent of the paint used was recycled paint. I feel that public procurement needs to deliver more in such areas to support social enterprises.

It was difficult for Castle RePaint to be commercial. A commercial contract with any of the big DIY companies would have left the enterprise vulnerable. The situation was frustrating for it because everyone recognised that it had an excellent project—it had a stall in the Parliament for a week—and that what it was doing was fantastic in so many ways, but it just could not get a break. The project failed because the system operated against it.

I am sure that the debate will be very interesting. We have made progress on recycling and will continue to do so, but in many ways the earliest progress is the easiest. We need to have a much broader debate about how we achieve a truly circular economy.

15:20

Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): What an opportunity to talk rubbish, although some may say that that is my norm. I have always been a fan of the circular economy. When I was director of protective services for Highland Council, one of my responsibilities was waste management. My head of waste management was Hendy Pollock, who happens to be in the public gallery today along with fellow environmental colleagues Andy Little, Brian Donnet and John Hearmon. They have travelled from the north especially to listen to this exciting debate—actually, they were here already for a long-established lunch with me, but why let the truth spoil a good story? It was Hendy who drummed into my head the three Rs—reduce, reuse and recycle. Now, he and his colleagues have all been recycled into retirement, where I must admit they add great value to their local communities.

The modern notion of the circular economy has deep-rooted origins that are difficult to pinpoint,

but it is not really new. When I was a loon in Lossie in the 1950s and 60s, we wasted nothing, and I still hate waste. Food scraps went to the hens. What the hens did not eat went into the midden, and that in turn went into the ground as compost. Wrapping paper and string were carefully preserved and used again, clothes were patched and handed down, and rags went to the raggy manny, who gave us loons and quines a balloon or toy in exchange. Everything was repaired and reused if at all possible.

I made my first bike from bits that I collected from the local dump. The only problem was that I could not find any brakes, so I used the sole of my shoe against the front tyre. That taught me about friction and rapid wear, as the sole of my shoe soon had a hole in it. My mother was not too pleased about the shoe or the fact that I had been scavenging in the dump. It is just as well that she did not know that I also collected lemonade and beer bottles from the dump, washed them in the River Lossie and redeemed them through deposit return at the local grocer's. The grocer must have thought that my father was a secret alcoholic, as I told him that I got all the bottles at home.

After that golden era of the original circular economy, we arrived at the disposable economy and built-in obsolescence. My first experience of that was in the 1960s, with a small, cheap but excellent camera. After a good bit of usage, the button for the shutter jammed. I took it apart and found that the part of the button inside the camera had in-built serrations that were designed to damage the body of the camera and make it jam after a certain amount of use. That taught me that capitalism has only one overriding purpose: to make a profit. Therefore, if we are to get capitalists to embrace the circular economy, we must show them that it is more profitable, as legislation that forces change will never succeed on its own.

The general principle of a circular economy is that it is restorative by design and aims to keep products, components and materials at their highest utility and value at all times. There are different schools of thought, such as regenerative design, the performance economy and the blue economy. It all sounds good, but what does it mean in practical terms?

Significant amounts of fossil fuels are used in fertilisers, farm machinery and processing, and through the supply chain. A more integrated food and farming system would reduce the need for fossil fuel-based inputs and capture more of the energy value of by-products and manures. The circular economy also increases employment, which helps to fast track the use of more circular business models, and assists with our use of renewable energy in the longer term.

The World Economic Forum's circular economy initiative, which involves more than 30 global companies, has outlined three programmes to accelerate the transition to a circular economy. Focusing on plastic packaging, paper and paperboard, and asset tracking, the WEF aims to advance collaboration across major supply chains during 2015, to address current bottlenecks and leakages.

The annual material demand for polyester, which is used in plastic bottles and the textile industry, totals about 54 million tonnes, of which roughly 86 per cent leaks out of the system. It is estimated that nearly £2.8 billion in value could be created from better use of polyester alone.

In 2020, the total annual production of paper and paperboard will amount to about 480 million tonnes, of which some 130 million will leak out of the system. The WEF's project mainstream wishes to address that—doing so would have a value of around £7 billion.

Asset tracking is an interesting idea. The WEF is seeking to develop a design and implementation toolkit that includes technology choice, consumer incentives and collaborative information sharing to address the information gaps that prevent better decision making on what to do with a product when a first user is finished with it. Globally, consumer electronic and household appliances with a cumulative value of roughly £270 billion reach the end of their life each year. Asset tracking could help to unlock a potential value of about £37 billion annually in those sectors alone, through more reuse, remanufacturing and recycling.

Jamie McGrigor mentioned an Inverness councillor who told him that there should be no targets without markets. I know who he means: the councillor is not actually from Inverness but is from the west—from Kyle, I think. However, the point relates to my experience. When I took over as director of protective services at Highland Council, we collected paper separately from the main waste collection, ostensibly to go for recycling. However, at the time there was no market for paper, and we spent a huge amount of money collecting paper separately—in order to take it to the local dump. Hendy Pollock and I, and our colleagues, put a stop to that because it was a gross waste of money.

We have much to gain, both environmentally and economically, from the circular economy, and I hope that the motion and its amendments get unanimous support.

15:27

Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab): I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to today's

debate on the circular economy, and in particular, to speak in support of Scottish Labour's amendment.

There is no doubt that exploiting the opportunities of the circular economy could present a tremendous boost to both our local and national economies, to job creation, to our environment and to our well-being. At a time when we face huge environmental challenges, Scotland's future must be a sustainable one and the principle that resources and materials should be kept in use for as long as they can be must be central to our thinking and practice. We must maximise the value and sustainability of our finite and precious resources and ensure that goods and products are designed with that in mind. Other members have highlighted some good examples.

Repairing, reusing, remanufacturing and recycling—we support the moves towards a circular economy because, quite simply, the current model of resource consumption is unsustainable. However, Scottish Labour's amendment also highlights some of the pressures being experienced by those working in waste management services. Those have been highlighted by Claudia Beamish and Claire Baker. As we move towards a more circular economy it is important that we think about the knock-on effect on the people on the front line who are working to make it happen.

Unison Scotland's survey "Dumped on: Working in Scotland's Waste Management Services" tells us a story of increasing work pressures, as council budgets have been squeezed and the demands of the job change and grow. Many working in the sector are quite simply working harder for less, with the new initiatives that are being embraced making their jobs more demanding than ever, yet for less reward.

On top of that, to quote the Unison report directly,

"rubbish is a risky business".

The Health and Safety Executive reports that, between 2004 and 2012, 97 workers and 19 members of the public lost their lives and almost 4,000 employees suffered major injuries. That shows that working in waste management and recycling is one of the UK's most dangerous occupations. The HSE itself has said that action is needed to address

"the terrible toll of death, injury and ill health in the waste and recycling industry".

It is a matter of huge concern that, at a time of rapid change in the industry, very little account appears to have been taken of the health and safety risk, and I echo Claire Baker's request to the cabinet secretary to take more of a look at this area.

Although today's debate goes much wider than recycling and managing waste, I think that we need to look at the knock-on effect on the people on the front line. Ambitious targets will be difficult to reach if they are not properly funded and if staff are demoralised and are not properly valued and rewarded for their vital work. I hope, therefore, that members will support Scottish Labour's amendment and that we can take a further look at this area. After all, the staff who work in waste management provide an essential service to all of us, and it is time they received the recognition they deserve.

Members have already referred to the numerous briefings that we have received for the debate, and I am impressed by the work that Sainsbury's says that it is doing to drive change in this area. It has said that it sends no waste to landfill as part of its 20x20 sustainability plan, which commits the company to putting all waste to positive use. Such initiatives by retailers are extremely welcome, because they not only encourage customers to reuse and recycle through the provision of recycling facilities for a wide range of household goods, from batteries and light bulbs to books and even Easter egg packaging, but ensure that retailers look at all the materials that are used in their operations throughout the supply chain and that they seek to refurbish furniture, shop-floor shelving, shopping trolleys and food crates. Those are all positive steps to address waste and resource efficiency and help progress and drive a circular economy.

In conclusion—and it appears that I am not going to use up all my time this afternoon, Presiding Officer—the harsh reality in Scotland and around the world is that there is an ever-increasing demand for what are finite resources. Although embracing the circular economy will make Scotland more sustainable and offers us significant opportunities, we must also recognise that it is not a miracle solution. If everyone in the world consumed natural resources at the rate that we do in Scotland, we would need almost three planets—not just one—to support us. From the food that we eat, the air that we breathe, the fuel that we consume to the water that we drink, we rely on a healthy planet so that we can lead our lives. I therefore think it vital that, as well as embracing the circular economy, the Scottish Government also considers what more can be done to encourage Scots to consume less and better, to reduce our impact on the planet and to ensure that it has a sustainable future.

15:32

Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): Scotland is already internationally recognised as an early mover to a more circular

economy, but I want to look at certain issues that lie at the root of this matter. After all, this is all about reducing the amount of energy that we use and ensuring that we recycle and carry out the other activities associated with the circular economy at a scale that will allow it to be efficient.

Clearly, some of these matters are much more local than others, and what I have found interesting in the debate is the concern that has been expressed about local authority workers in the areas in question as well as workers in private firms. I wonder whether our local authorities could take a leaf out of the book of those in countries such as Norway that have formed their own companies to generate their own electricity—from hydro sources, in most cases—and get an income from that. Why can local authorities in this country not undertake commercial activities in areas such as anaerobic digestion? I know that various aspects of that are being trialled throughout the country, but those trials usually relate to on-farm anaerobic digestion and, as with recycling waste from gardens, it is far easier to do that sort of thing at municipal level. I believe that there are firms that could carry out that work, and if under the powers of general competence it were possible for local authorities to take such an approach, that would be a very good thing indeed.

The “Circular Economy Scotland” report, which shows how Scotland has been an early mover on the circular economy, has given us an opportunity to assess what we need to do to take things forward in a more general sense, and I think that one of the most exciting early moves that can be made in Scotland relates to remanufacturing activity, which has already been highlighted in members' speeches.

I understand from reports that the best areas for recycling and remanufacture are the energy and automotive sectors, information and communications technology and mobile electronics and medical equipment. Those sectors produce products that are shared around but which can be recycled here. As they say, we have the technology to do that.

Remanufacturing in Scotland is dominated by the aerospace maintenance, repair and overhaul sector. In addition to that sector, the top four sectors include the energy, rail and automotive sectors, as I said. Those sectors represent considerable opportunities, which we should not pass up.

On the issue of how people assess what we are doing in recycling and remanufacture, the Carbon Trust and the Knowledge Transport Network published a report in March this year pointing to the Scottish institute of remanufacture as a model of good practice for the UK and stating that the

rest of the UK is lagging behind on remanufacturing.

When the cabinet secretary talked about us working with partners beyond our shores and with our neighbours to the south, he was talking sense. There are particular elements that can be recycled in that fashion.

The European Commission is considering a recycling policy. Its original policy was knocked back for being too unambitious and the Commission is due to publish a new approach later this year. The scenario is that ambitious member states can and should work together to make the most of the opportunities from a more circular economy, so as to give others a lead.

People do not need to approve of the concept of Europe—although I understand that most parties agree that they would want to be part of the market in Europe—to see that agreeing the Europe-wide measures would deliver economies of scale and support the remanufacturing, repair and recycling markets. Guaranteeing a supply of suitable products for a circular economic system increases financial returns from collection systems and gives businesses the confidence to invest in remanufacturing and reprocessing infrastructure or to use second-life components and materials. Those arguments were put forward on businessgreen.com, and they are part of that view in Europe that sees Scotland in a clear leading position.

Scotland already exceeds European Union requirements in several areas of recycling. We have a landfill ban on biodegradable waste and a landfill or incineration ban on separately collected recycling. In comparison, the UK Government has no recycling targets other than the EU 2020 target.

This is one of the issues that crop up again in relation to the constitution, because there are reserved and devolved issues that affect us. On traditional waste management issues, almost all powers are devolved to Scotland. However, as policy broadens into the circular economy, some reserved areas become important. EU negotiations are reserved—Scottish ministers can assist, but Whitehall calls the shots and has never put this cabinet secretary in the position of taking a lead on Britain's behalf. Perhaps that is something that could change. Most national taxation is reserved—Scotland could not create a carrier bag tax but was able to require retailers to charge. Product standards are reserved—Scotland cannot require particular products that are sold in Scotland to have a set recycled content or minimum guarantee period but could require public bodies to set such criteria in their procurement processes. Product labelling is reserved—a deposit return study identifies that as

an issue that would need to be resolved with the UK as part of any future scheme.

We can see that there are issues on which we need to have good intergovernmental co-operation. Those are the sort of practical things that new discussions about the settlement that is being worked out for the devolution of powers under the Smith agreement should consider, because they are issues on which it will be quite easy to get agreement and which will have a beneficial effect in terms of the circular economy.

15:39

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to support the Government's motion and I hope that the debate increases awareness throughout Scotland of the circular economy. As a society, Scotland is becoming increasingly aware of its impact on the environment and the need to look after the finite resources we all depend on.

Every day, at home and at work, we all use and dispose of those resources, and too many of them end up being sent to landfill. In my constituency alone, an estimated £0.5 million is spent every year by Falkirk Council on sending resources to landfill that could have been recycled. I use the word "resources" deliberately to highlight that Scotland needs a cultural change to achieve a circular economy. It is not waste, rubbish or excess packaging that we throw away but a valuable resource, which takes time, energy and money to recreate.

Although more can and will be done to bring Scotland closer to being a zero waste country with a circular economy, credit must be given to the Scottish Government for the huge progress that it has made towards those goals to date. The Government's focus on the economic and environmental opportunities of better resource management has led to the creation of a national waste brokerage service. It has also highlighted the importance of international co-operation, because a circular economy requires changes to the material supply chains of national as well as multinational companies.

The use of Scottish Enterprise and Zero Waste Scotland to support a wide range of companies in the development of new markets for waste materials and products, and the use of public procurement as a tool to increase the market for refurbished and remanufactured products, all indicate that the Scottish Government's approach to the circular economy represents much more than just domestic recycling rates.

The leadership that our Government has shown in this area has led to the recognition by the international community that Scotland is at the

forefront of the circular economy movement in the UK—the cabinet secretary alluded to that in his opening speech. I am delighted to hear that the Scottish Government will continue that leadership and share its hope that the forthcoming revised proposals from the European Commission for an EU circular economy strategy later this year will be more ambitious than the previous ones.

In my constituency, the amount of waste collected has decreased over the past five years, and more than 50 per cent of the waste produced is now recycled or composted. We have met our target and dramatically cut the amount of waste that we have thrown away into landfill sites. However, we must continue to improve on that and work towards a truly zero waste country. It is the job of the Scottish Government and all of us, as MSPs, as well as our local authorities, to show leadership in this area and continually to provide pragmatic solutions to improve waste management.

Although I welcome and support the Scottish Government's progress with a circular economy, I believe that, at the moment, there is a limited connection with the local authority's process of collection waste and the process of remanufacturing those resources to create a circular economy. That said, my local authority very much has the circular economy on its radar.

Above all, we must make the connection at a cultural level and recognise that everything that we use and throw away is a resource that has a value. We should introduce into the mindset of every citizen the idea that we must preserve, capture and use resources wherever possible. It makes environmental and economic sense.

It is hoped that those points will form part of the Scottish Government's plans to move away from a traditional "linear" economy of make, use and dispose, to an economy that recovers and regenerates products and materials at the end of their service life. Simply put, an economy in which resources are used for a short time and disposed of and then new resources are introduced is unsustainable. We must address that through greater resource efficiency, where waste is minimised. By reusing, repairing, remanufacturing and recycling products and materials over and over again, we can ensure a more circular economy. My local authority, Falkirk Council, readily acknowledges that in its zero waste strategy for 2012 to 2022.

There are long-term benefits for business, too. It is recognised that Scottish businesses can save more than £1.4 billion simply by being more resource efficient. We must ensure that Scotland gets its fair share of the £1.3 trillion global benefit that the creation of circular economies can bring.

The Scottish Government has set out its zero waste plan, which establishes a vision for a zero waste society. It aims to bring a step change in how we use resources. The plan is supported by ambitious climate change legislation. I hope that there will be equally ambitious legislation to promote a circular economy and support action by businesses, householders and local authorities not just to recycle and reduce waste, but to improve their efficient use of resources.

The materials captured from recycling offer many business opportunities, from recycling and reprocessing to manufacturing, but achieving a zero waste country needs the commitment and resolve from each and every one of us. People in our communities are taking action to prevent waste and to use resources more efficiently. They are the champions of change. I am convinced that we as MSPs must lead the way, supporting those in our communities willing to take on the zero waste challenge.

I welcome and support the Scottish Government's action to date. A circular economy—a zero waste economy—is a realistic and achievable goal. More than that, it is a fundamental requirement and obligation of our generation if we are to give the next generation the same quality of life that we enjoy.

It is an undeniable fact that the majority of resources that we use are not renewable. We are increasingly at risk from resource scarcity and price volatility, which ultimately affects the poorest in our society the worst.

Over that past 10 years, we have seen a dramatic shift from access to cheap raw materials to restrictions on raw materials such as rare earth metals. We have also seen a doubling of food prices, a trebling of metal prices, and a quadrupling of energy prices. With the continued expansion of the global population and the development of the BRIC countries—Brazil, Russia, India and China—and other newly advancing economies, we cannot meet the growing resource demands in the same way we did in the 20th century by simply expanding extraction.

Let us ensure that everyone shares the Scottish Government's enthusiasm for the circular economy; let us support those in our communities who are willing to take on the zero waste challenge; and let us embrace Professor Walter Stahel's cradle-to-cradle approach, by designing goods for reuse, remanufacture and recycle as part of a strategy to improve resource efficiency and create jobs.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): There is quite a bit of time available to allow members, as in the past, to develop their thinking

as they go along. I would be grateful for contributions in that regard.

15:47

Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):

Waste affects every one of us. Every day, at home and at work, we acquire, use and dispose of resources. As individuals and organisations, we are becoming increasingly aware of our impact on the environment and the need to look after the precious resources that we all depend on.

Most people in Scotland will be aware of the mantra to reduce, reuse and recycle. Many of us have taken that to heart and are thinking global and acting local by recycling as much of our domestic waste as is possible given our local circumstances.

In the domestic setting, we can all do our best to buy fewer heavily packaged goods, avoid the two-for-one offers that see too much food wasted, reuse plastic carrier bags and learn to switch off lights, walk to the local shops and use public transport. We can recycle food waste on the compost heap and recycle old clothes and household goods at the charity shop. We might have cut our air miles by having staycations or reduced our business miles by videoconferencing.

With all that going on, we could be forgiven for thinking that the Scottish Government and the Scottish people are doing enough to protect the planet. Scotland has made huge progress on waste. We have cut dramatically the amount of waste that we throw away in landfill sites, and recycling rates have soared.

However, when the Scottish Government published its first zero waste plan in 2010, it recognised that everything that we use and throw away is a resource that has a value that we should try to preserve, capture and use again whenever possible. To do that, we must tackle all Scotland's waste and not just the waste that local authorities collect and manage, which is less than a fifth of all waste.

Many councils have failed to meet their landfill targets. There are many reasons for that, which are to do mainly with the challenges of increasing public awareness and commitment, contamination at the point of collection, the increased cost of collection and the cost of dealing with the methane gas produced by landfill sites.

Therefore, we need to seek commitment to and resolve for a zero waste Scotland from every one of us, and that commitment needs to extend beyond the domestic and public sector context. We need to take a strategic perspective and adopt a whole-system approach—the circular economy approach.

A circular economy is a system whereby materials are retained in use for as long as possible, which practically eliminates waste. Materials and energy are optimised, and goods and components are reused, repaired and remanufactured. That protects the supply of key materials, supports a sustainable supply of raw materials and boosts resource efficiency and recycling.

I first heard about the concept of a circular economy when the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee had an evidence session with the then European Commissioner for the Environment, Janez Potočnik, who usefully set out the broader context. He said:

“The transition to resource efficiency and a circular economic model is inevitable, particularly for Europe.”

He went on to say:

“Developing a new economy that has sustainability at its heart and is based on a more efficient use of our natural resources will create jobs, support competitiveness and cut costs while preserving the health of our environment. Frankly, there is no reasonable alternative to that approach.”—[*Official Report, Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee*, 20 June 2013; c 2465, 2468.]

He recommended that we make a change now, before our environment is even more limited.

The committee also heard from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation that a policy on a circular economy should not be a subset of environmental policy but sit at the heart of the development of sustainable economies and communities, and that Scotland, with its small, adaptable economy, is well placed to adopt that approach. In my view, such a change in perspective would radically shift the thinking on economic development at every level.

I was pleased when, in January, the Green Alliance published “Circular Economy Scotland”, which Zero Waste Scotland commissioned. The report highlighted the opportunities that exist to create a circular economy in two sectors—the oil and gas sector and the food and drink sector—and it outlined a series of measures that players in those sectors could take. The report illustrated a move away from the make-use-dispose approach to one that involves extracting the maximum value from resources at each stage of the process, then recovering and regenerating products and materials so that a continuous loop is created. That change in attitude and approach will have implications for how we think about design, for the skill requirements of such an economy and for Scotland's future workforce.

It is clear that, as the report rightly highlighted, the finance sector and Government policy relating to finance have a major role to play in enabling that change of emphasis. Attitudes to how we as a

society—and as consumers and producers—perceive, define and quantify value and measure return on investments will have to change. The third sector and the social enterprise movement have been championing such concepts for many years, so it is reassuring that they are being brought into the main stream.

In preparing for the debate, I read the many briefings that MSPs have been sent. I was struck by the efforts that are being made across Scotland to put into practice the circular economy's principles, and it is clear that long-lasting change can be achieved only if we adopt the whole-system approach and examine in detail the overall process, regardless of the type of business. There are challenges for all sectors in progressing the approach, one of which is how they will develop sustainable business models that maximise the potential of every resource at their disposal—of course, those resources include their workforce and their customers.

I cannot do better than quote from the report of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, "Scotland and the Circular Economy", which said:

"The world is undergoing an unprecedented period of resource stress, driven in part by the scale and speed of demand growth from emerging economies and a decade of increasingly constrained commodity markets."

Doing nothing is not an option. I commend the work that has been done and I look forward to seeing what unfolds as we move forward.

15:53

Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP):

This is a fascinating debate for those of us who have—as I have—been worrying about waste for a long time. In my first existence as a chemical engineer, the proper use of materials and in particular of energy was on my timetable at college, never mind in my working life.

We have rightly started with waste management, because that is the obvious place to start. From waste management, we get into material recycling, because that is obviously the thing to do. I am grateful to Angus MacDonald for pointing out for the first time in the debate that such materials should be regarded as resources. We should not regard anything as waste until we can think of nothing else to do with it.

We are really talking about limited resource use. Some things are not limited. We are not short of water or sunshine—although we cannot see the sun on days such as this—but almost everything else that looks solid is a limited resource, and we need to use such resources properly.

I welcome the Scottish Government's zero waste task force and recognise that industry has

to be nudged in the right direction. Although public bodies pick up the bits, industry manufactures the goods that need to be zero waste and circular from design.

Materials brokerage is absolutely fine. That is where we must be and where we must go but, with a rising world population, rising energy costs and a reducing supply of raw materials—especially of things that are already rare—we can see that we are fast approaching the point at which we must reuse, as we will have no option. Jayne Baxter eloquently made the point that we do not know quite when that will be, but we may as well start to reuse now.

Dave Thompson started by talking about his days as a lad. I well remember the things that we used to do, although in a very different part of the country. The food system is a classic case of an already cyclical system. Everything that we eat will, one way or another, finish up back in the ground to grow the next lot of things that we eat. The sun is the only energy input that is needed for that—I shall keep going at the theme of energy input, because it is the basic thing that we cannot avoid. That is why the planet is green, why it carries on and why it will carry on.

Production can be enhanced if another source of energy can be found. I forget who discussed fertiliser, which we can manufacture. Curiously, it is the nitrogen from the atmosphere and water that is turned into ammonium nitrate, which is the principal fertiliser. All that is needed is some energy. If energy comes from the sun, it is renewable. That part can be enhanced by totally renewable and natural processes.

In that context, I cannot avoid the fact that phosphorus, which is the other material that farmers need as fertiliser—as the Presiding Officer very well knows—is concentrated in the ground and has to be mined. That brings its own economic problems, but once it is out, it stays in the ecosystem.

I looked at the lists of raw materials that people have already decided at an international level we are short of, which nobody has yet mentioned—perhaps because of what is on the lists, although I as a chemist am not worried by that. Those materials are all metallic elements, with the exception of fluorspar and graphite. That was in a European Union study in 2010, I think.

The 2011 Scotland study finished up with aggregates—they are stones to us—as well as fish, palm oil, which must be substitutable, and timber. Everything else was a metallic element. I find it strange that some of the things that we are short of in Scotland are abundant in the world. There was a strange disparity between the two lists, but perhaps that is for another day.

We need more than regulation to reduce waste; we need a change in mindset. Going from waste to less waste to even less waste can come by Governments simply regulating and nudging and by us doing the things that we are already doing. Getting to the point at which there is complete reuse and a cyclical economy requires a change of attitude, which we must encourage.

I think that customers could cope with that. I would be happy if somebody provided me with a car that I knew they would eventually take back and re-engineer. If they had to do that, they would ensure that the original manufactured materials were in as refined a condition as they could be so that the minimum effort would be needed to recycle them.

That is a crucial point that I can maybe explain better by considering the humble plastic bag. We decided very recently that the ordinary plastic bag—I should have an example in my hand, but members know fine well what I am talking about—is not a terribly good thing. It is commendably light and does not cost a great deal, and one bag does not use huge resources, but we know that it is easily lost and broken. It then becomes pretty much unrecyclable, so it is bad news, and we have done what we know about.

What would I like to replace that bag with? Instinctively, we would think, “Give me one of those hemp ones—one of those natural materials.” I suspect that we all have such a bag, which we know will last a long time and which is the right shape and size. When it eventually falls to bits, the natural raw material will degrade and go back into the environment. We can convince ourselves that that is not a bad thing, and we would be right.

What would be even better would be a plastic bag. As long as it is made of one pure plastic that is resilient, we can use it for even longer and, when it finally becomes unserviceable, we can recycle it. As the material is pure, it does not need to be refined. All that we need is a bit of heat input to turn it back into in effect the raw material, from which we can manufacture the next plastic bag.

As I said—there is a theme here—we cannot avoid using energy, but we do not have to use anything else. The best replacement for my shopping bag would be made of a single plastic—a single polymer—that I can reuse for a long time and then recycle specifically to produce the same material again. If it can be reprocessed, that is relatively easy. If it needs to be refined, that requires energy, and that is what we need to avoid.

I am grateful to Graeme Dey for bringing up washing machines, which I have what is probably an unhealthy interest in. When I worked in the detergents industry, I knew more than one would

reasonably want to know about washing machines and I am not going to tell members it. However, I assure members that I really do not want to own one. I would much rather rent one because, if I did, the person who manufactured it would want to build in reliability, as it would not be in his interests for it to break down. He would use the right materials. If he had to take the machine back at the end of the day, he would use pure materials so that, when he had to recycle it, it would not have to be refined; it could just be taken apart and the bits could be reused as they stood. The only input, apart from a little bit of manpower, would be energy. I will not repeat the point.

We have heard about Rolls-Royce and aero engines. That is magnificent, because Rolls-Royce now concentrates on making reliable engines, which is good because we do not want planes to fall out of the air anyway. If the engines keep running for even longer, that is good, because it is cheaper. I bet that Rolls-Royce has also given serious thought to how it makes them reusable. If all those carefully machined bits—there are lots of them—can be reused in the next machine, or if they are made from a pure material that does not have to be refined when it is recycled, that becomes cheaper for Rolls-Royce, so it will automatically do all the right things.

I have managed to avoid using the word “thermodynamics”, but that is what I was just talking about. If we can keep it simple and not mix things, and if we have a renewable source of energy, we can do things efficiently and effectively. We cannot avoid using energy, but we have to avoid putting in the complexity of mixing things. As I hope I have explained, if we get this right, it is a win-win, because we finish with more reliable bits of machinery and everything else. That costs us less and saves the planet.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much for that well-informed speech. I call Linda Fabiani, who has a generous six minutes.

16:04

Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP): Thank you very much, Presiding Officer. I will try to follow Nigel Don’s lead on that.

This has been a really interesting debate, particularly for me, because—hands up—I really did not know much about the matter at all. The first reference to the circular economy that I heard was in an interview with Ellen MacArthur on BBC Radio 4 on the car radio a few weeks ago. I was amazed by just how much I got into it and how interesting I found what she was talking about. Overwhelmingly, it is just common sense; what was being said seemed very sensible to me.

Rob Gibson and I were smiling wryly earlier at talk of days gone by, and we were saying that things go in circles right enough, because we both clearly remember collecting lemonade bottles in Glasgow and taking them back to the shops so that we would have enough money to go to the cinema, but not together, I hasten to add; Rob is that wee bit older than me.

Things do go in circles, and Dave Thompson spoke about the raggy manny and other things that some of us have memories of. Much of that was related to coming out of the war years, but we have certainly moved from a culture of reuse, recycling—although we did not call it that—and remanufacturing into one of in-built obsolescence and throwing things away without batting an eyelid. It is something that we need to talk about now, and remanufacturing, recycling and reuse affect all the things that we know are problematic for our world today and in the future, including emissions and water and energy use. The circular economy can also mean having lower input costs if we do those things wisely.

I looked around my constituency of East Kilbride, because I knew that there were some good examples of such things happening there, but I was stunned to find out just how much goes on in my local area. I reckon that every member who looks at their constituency or region will find many good examples of larger companies and smaller organisations all doing things that work towards the circular whole that we are looking for.

In Langlands Moss in my area, most of which lies in Claudia Beamish's region, the walkways across the peat bog have all been made out of pellets made from rubber tyres. I am not convinced that the construction industry yet takes full advantage of recycling and reuse. I am thinking of building materials from old buildings that could be much better reused, rather than throwing up new kit houses all the time using brand new materials. There are some good examples, but we could do better.

There is a wonderful charity in my area that runs a scheme called house of hope, which as well as recycling aluminium cans does great work in recycling, remanufacturing and doing up furniture that people donate so that it can be bought, and it looks fantastic. Lots of initiatives are being pulled together, and I hope that the Government's launch of the Scottish institute of remanufacture, the Scottish materials brokerage service and resource efficient Scotland will help to pull all that together and look at all elements of it, so that we can achieve the targets that we all aspire to. Of course, Zero Waste Scotland has been excellent in pulling a lot of that stuff together.

Claire Baker mentioned Coca-Cola Enterprises, which is in my constituency of East Kilbride. Coca-

Cola Enterprises has an excellent waste-management record, although I took on board some of Claire Baker's comments about how to move stuff that is recycled, which is one of the things that we must look at in general to ensure that everything fits together in the circular economy. Coca-Cola Enterprises has let me know that it is the largest user of food-grade recycled PET—polyethylene terephthalate—plastic and aluminium in Scotland. Its supply chain buys glass, plastics and metals from all over the local area for reprocessing and filling at the plant in East Kilbride.

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I am interested in what Linda Fabiani says about Coca-Cola Enterprises, because I have met its representatives on one or two occasions and they have drawn my attention to the fact that they have concerns about the possibility of a deposit and return scheme because they believe that it would reduce the amount of material that they need for their own recycling programme. Is that a discussion that she has had with that company?

Linda Fabiani: Yes it is, and it is an interesting discussion. That is why I think that it is crucial never to look at just one element; we have to look at the bigger picture and the overall effect of all those things and how they tie in. The circular economy is a good term to use, and I am sure that the advice that the cabinet secretary has put in place for organisations will help us to have that discussion so that we do the best for everyone.

There is one thing about Coca-Cola that still fascinates me. Its sponsorship of the London Olympics supplied the Olympics with Coca-Cola soft drinks, and all the bottles and cans that came back to it from that went through the recycling process quickly enough to be reused during the Paralympics in the same location. That is real innovation.

Another big employer in East Kilbride is Sainsbury's, in conjunction with DHL. At their main site in East Kilbride, they also have a recycling plant, which is excellent. What really strikes me about that is the workforce's pride about what they are doing on that site, whether they work for DHL or Sainsbury's.

Sainsbury's also does something with food that has not been mentioned much here today. I do not know what the word is but it is certainly not "recycling". It donates food and makes sure that food waste is not just dumped. Dave Thompson talked earlier about what used to happen with food waste from school dinners and so on when we were kids. For example, 100 per cent of Sainsbury's unsold bread is turned into animal feed. It all contributes. I understand that—outside of what is left at Oxfam's shops—Sainsbury's is

the largest provider to Oxfam of clothing, accessories, books and DVDs.

In looking at information for today's debate, I came across something else that absolutely fascinated me. A company in East Kilbride called Re-Tek was highlighted as part of the launch of Zero Waste Scotland's circular economy business models programme. The company has 32 employees and a turnover of £3.3 million a year from repairing and refurbishing functional used information technology products. That is certainly something that I want to learn a lot more about and, if the company is quite happy that I do so, I intend to visit it. If the cabinet secretary has not already been, perhaps that is the kind of initiative that he would like to join me in visiting.

All in all, we have a fairly good story to tell. The cabinet secretary mentioned the low-hanging fruit that make things a bit easier when we start off, but as time goes on things get a bit harder. There is commitment and people are now getting it. Perhaps they do not get the terminology, however. I was up-front about not knowing what the circular economy was until a couple of weeks ago. Perhaps there is an issue about using language that people understand more readily so that it is immediately apparent to dumplings like me. That starts with schools and young people. East Kilbride has good form on that. Calderglen high school, Duncannrig secondary school, St Andrew's and St Bride's high school and Sanderson high school all take very seriously zero waste policies and how to achieve them.

At this point, I mention Viridor and the Engineering Development Trust who, every year, conduct schools competitions at which East Kilbride schools perform very well. It is about translating zero waste policy into practice and coming up with good projects. I will make quick mention of Calderglen high school, which won the Lanarkshire heat of the companies' Go4SET competition this year. I look forward to supporting it in the final very soon.

16:13

Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab): I am delighted to take part in today's debate. In my speech, I will focus on some of the work that has been carried out in North Ayrshire in developing a circular economy and in meeting the zero waste and renewable energy targets that were outlined by the Scottish Government.

It is disappointing that 23 Scottish councils failed to meet the Scottish Government's recycling targets. The target was to ensure that by 2013 50 per cent of all household waste was being recycled, with further targets of 60 per cent by 2020 and 70 per cent by 2025. There was an

additional target of reducing the proportion of waste going to landfill to a maximum of 5 per cent. North Ayrshire Council not only met but exceeded the target by 2012-13 and achieved a recycling and composting rate of over 53 per cent. In addition, it has reduced the amount of waste going to landfill by 17,000 tonnes since 2008. North Ayrshire Council seems to be one council that is well on its way to meeting future targets, and I hope that that continues.

Meeting the targets has been achieved through a number of initiatives; I will discuss two of them. First, I will focus on the work that North Ayrshire Council is doing with Cunninghame Furniture Recycling Company. The local authority encourages residents to send their unwanted good-quality household goods to the company, which then re-homes the items across Ayrshire. That new service moves waste material up the waste hierarchy and feeds into the circular economy. It is built around North Ayrshire Council's waste strategy, which is one of the first to include a reuse target. The project helps to meet targets for the number of household items going to landfill as well as promoting reuse. It also provides employment and training opportunities in North Ayrshire. Over the past three years, 39 unemployed residents have been provided with either paid employment or training opportunities, with 70 per cent leaving to go on to positive destinations.

As of March 2015, the project had won the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities' excellence gold award for strong and sustainable communities and had collected 360 tonnes of furniture from more than 2,500 collections, selling in excess of 5,700 items of furniture and white goods and assisting around 2,850 low-income families to furnish their homes on a budget. The charity has generated almost £190,000 of income from sales of furniture and recycled goods and has carried out almost 1,000 house clearances, void cleans and estate maintenance projects, which has generated £174,000.

Cunninghame Furniture Recycling Company seems to be going from strength to strength and is an excellent example of how the circular economy can work while providing opportunities for people who are on low incomes or out of work. I wish the team all the best for the future and hope that other councils will start to invest in similar schemes in their areas.

The second example that I will focus on is the Barkip anaerobic digestion plant, which was, when I visited it, the largest combined organic waste treatment and energy generating facility in Scotland. The plant not only helps us to meet renewable energy targets but assists in meeting diversion-from-landfill targets. It produces around

2.2MW of renewable electricity from waste foods, manures and organic effluent sludge. It does so by using bacteria to break down the waste to produce methane-rich biogas, which is then combusted in gas engines to generate electricity. Members might imagine that there would be a lot of waste lying around, but the plant is absolutely spotless. All the heat that is generated in the process is recovered from the engines.

Each year, the plant can process up to 75,000 tonnes of organic and food waste, which is turned into electricity instead of going to landfill. Furthermore, the Barkip plant was the first of its kind to incorporate a novel digestate processing stage, which produces a low-cost fertiliser to support local agriculture that meets PAS—publicly available specification—110. In my view, that is another great example of how the circular economy can work.

I have offered two very different examples that I believe are exemplary in sustaining the circular economy and which could be replicated across Scotland. They may seem to be old hat compared with some of the projects that we have heard about today, but they are equally important. Perhaps they are not as sexy as the cabinet secretary's handbags and glad rags, but they are essential if we are to meet our targets.

The Cunninghame Furniture Recycling Company project is grass-roots and community based; it provides jobs and helps low-income families while contributing to the local economy and reducing waste. I urge other councils to look into setting up similar projects.

On the other hand, the Barkip anaerobic digestion plant is an example on a much larger scale, which is contributing to renewable energy targets and landfill reduction targets while helping local agriculture. I believe that we should be considering investing in that form of technology across Scotland as part of our commitment to renewables and zero waste.

16:21

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): I agree with my colleagues across the chamber that there are many benefits in moving from a linear economy towards a more circular economy. We cannot simply apply 19th century solutions to the challenges that our country faces in a resource-constrained 21st century. Decoupling economic activity from the use of resources demands smart solutions—solutions circulating around the efficient use of resources while fostering future economic prosperity.

With new technologies come new risks. I believe that to successfully transform our economy, we need to consider all aspects of what a circular

economy encompasses. We should consider which economic sectors in Scotland can benefit most from a circular economy model and aim to maximise the resulting social and environmental advantages.

The Scottish Government has taken the first steps towards facilitating circular and performance-based economic measures. As in the renewable energy sector, Scotland has been internationally recognised for its efforts. Nonetheless, we should have a look at developments in other countries, in particular the Nordic countries, as they have been the forerunners in implementing policies based on circular economy principles and waste management.

Today, Scotland's remanufacturing industry alone is worth £1.1 billion and employs 23,000 people. Yet, as has been set out in the "Circular Economy Scotland" report, Scotland's economy has the potential to profit to a far greater extent from a circular economy approach. In place of repeating what the report says, I want to talk about one of its core messages: co-operation between key players. First, co-operation is crucial to enable innovation to move from the lab into the markets, thus close links between public research, companies, investors and enterprise agencies speed up the process. Secondly, co-operation among different economic sectors is fundamental to cross-facilitate the reuse, remanufacturing or recycling of products and resources. Efficient co-operation and co-ordination between stakeholders can unlock the potential of a performance-oriented economy that produces high-quality products.

One example of such co-operation focuses on reusing and putting value into by-products from whisky distillation. Draff—the spent grain that is left over from distilling, mixed with pot ale—is already used by some distilleries to produce methane, which is consequently used to fuel the distilling process. In 2013, Diageo's distillery at Cameronbridge opened its bioenergy facility, which now covers 95 per cent of the site's energy demands. Additionally, the whisky by-product can be made into protein meal for fish farming, displacing fish meal. According to the "Circular Economy Scotland" report, that idea has the potential to generate £140 million.

Apart from the economic gains, I want to emphasise two further aspects that highlight the advantages of a circular economy: the social and environmental benefits. The social benefits are manifested through boosting employment levels and creating new fields in the labour market. Jobs that arise in the remanufacturing and recycling sector are deemed to be permanent, as they are characterised by and go hand-in-hand with a structural economic shift. Generating demand for

labour, and thereby investing in human capital, has many positive implications for society as a whole. The environmental benefits are self-evident. Increasing resource efficiency leads to a reduction in landfill waste, and the close connection to the renewable energy sector further boosts the proportion of renewables in the energy mix.

The social and environmental advantages of a circular economy have been emphasised in a recent report, "The Circular Economy and Benefits for Society", published by the Club of Rome. The authors of the report studied the impact on Sweden of implementing a circular economy approach, and their findings are astonishing. They found that Sweden could increase material efficiency by 25 per cent overall if it organised manufacturing along the lines of a materially efficient circular performance-based economy.

The study suggests that that can result in the creation of 50,000 new jobs. If, in addition to that, Sweden focused on maximising energy efficiency by 25 per cent as well as increasing its share of renewables in the energy mix from 50 per cent at present to 75 per cent in future, a further 50,000 jobs—resulting in an economic benefit of €10 billion a year—could be achieved.

However, the authors stress that

"A lot of investments will be needed to make the decoupling-possibilities and, hence, a more sustainable economic structure come true."

It is clear, therefore, that a linear economy does not simply transform itself into a circular performance-based economy. Deliberate policy measures and targeted investments are—as so often—the key to success.

I want to focus again on our Nordic neighbours. Through a special focus on reducing food losses, on the collection of textiles for reuse and recycling and on improving plastic recycling rates, the Nordic Council of Ministers has set itself key targets. It evaluates progress regularly, which allows for constant improvements and enables it to learn from unavoidable mistakes. As an example, the council soon realised that for plastic collection and recycling a one-size-fits-all solution is impractical, and different collection systems need to be put in place at the local level.

Scotland too has been proactive, and I welcome the Government's steps towards a circular economy. The Scottish Government has set itself a target of reducing waste by 7 per cent by 2017 and 15 per cent by 2025, in comparison with 2011. Some improvements can already be seen. Between 2012 and 2013, the total amount of household waste generated fell by 3.5 per cent, resulting in a 20 per cent reduction since 2007.

In addition, the Scottish Government aims to recycle 70 per cent of all of Scotland's waste by 2025, which is the most ambitious target in the UK. Scotland has also joined the global network through the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's circular economy 100 programme. The introduction of the single-use carrier bag charge has been a milestone, and has raised awareness among Scots of the simple measures that each and every one can take to reduce waste and reuse items.

Over the past few years, my constituency of Kirkcaldy in Fife has made considerable efforts to increase recycling levels. Statistics indicate that people are becoming more aware of recycling. In 2013, households in Fife recycled more than 55 per cent of their household waste, which puts the region ahead in comparison with the rest of Scotland. In addition, up to 70 per cent of all waste in Fife is now further recycled, thereby reducing the amount of landfill waste. Paper is recycled into low-grade paper and cardboard products, and food and garden waste is transported to an anaerobic digestion plant in Dunfermline.

One organisation in particular that I want to mention is Greener Kirkcaldy. Among its other projects, Greener Kirkcaldy works with local constituents and provides them with information on recycling and reusing old materials. In its eco-shop on Kirkcaldy High Street, the charity encourages individuals, families and businesses to take action towards a more sustainable lifestyle. It also offers a sew-and-repair service, and a sewing skills and upcycled garments workshop. Just last week, Greener Kirkcaldy celebrated international compost awareness week. The organisation's work is truly inspiring, and I welcome its commitment to foster awareness of recycling in Kirkcaldy.

Notwithstanding the good work that is being done, more measures should follow to raise awareness of the importance of recycling and reusing of materials. We need further improvements to our infrastructure to facilitate waste management and support the remanufacturing industry. We should follow the Nordic countries in regularly reviewing our approaches to assure a lasting impact. The achievement of a lasting impact is also determined by the level of co-operation between all relevant stakeholders, most notably the public and private sectors.

We cannot continue to extract resources as we have done. As I said at the beginning of my speech, innovation comes with many challenges, but I am confident that Scotland has the potential and determination to foster and develop smart solutions and to continue to drive policies based on a circular economy model.

16:30

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):

Like Claudia Beamish, I had not come across the concept that we are debating until the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee started looking at it in 2013. However, I have to say that at first sight the idea of a circular economy seems such a simple no-brainer of a principle that one wonders how any other type of economy could have emerged over the decades and centuries that have gone by.

Of course, times have changed—particularly very recent times—and we no longer live in a world of apparently infinite resources, manageable demand and very limited wealth. Suddenly, we are faced with a world of very limited resources, almost unquenchable demand and ever-increasing wealth of individuals and nations.

That is the backdrop that demands a rethink of how we look at the traditional process of making, using and disposing, as others have defined the linear economy, and demands that we move to a circular economy model whereby we keep resources in use for as long as is humanly possible, extract the maximum value from them while they are in use and then recover and regenerate

“products and materials at the end of each service life.”

Like Angus MacDonald, I am indebted to the Waste and Resources Action Programme, or WRAP, for providing that definition of a circular economy, which accurately and neatly sums up exactly what the debate is all about. At its most simple, it is out with the disposable world that we inhabit and in with a new world that we need to inhabit if the world’s increasingly scarce resources are to satisfy its rapidly growing population.

As other members have pointed out, global statistics tell it all: by 2030, demand for water will have grown by 41 per cent, for steel by 80 per cent and for energy by 33 per cent. We will need to extract 75 per cent more raw materials by 2040 if we keep using them at the current rate. The most chilling statistic of all, which Jamie McGrigor highlighted, is that if the world’s entire population had the same standard of living as the average European has, we would need two additional planets to keep us going.

The more we look into this, the more we realise that not moving towards the circular economy model is not an option. However, the hard part comes with the question—I think that Claire Baker pointed this out—of how we move towards the circular economy. It is definitely not just a question of more and better recycling, although that is an important part of the equation. The much-quoted Professor Walter Stahel of the Product Life

Institute told the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee that

“the economics of the circular economy are very important, and the economics tell you that the smaller the loop the more profitable it is ... If you look at the economics, recycling is the least interesting option.”—[*Official Report, Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee*, 2 October 2013; c 2652.]

Of course, this is not and should not be all about profit but, if we are genuinely talking of a new model of economy, profit and profitability have to be a factor. We should not shy away from that, because the potential benefit is enormous.

The Aldersgate Group has noted that

“It is the componentisation”—

that was a new word on me—

“remanufacture, refurbishing and reselling of goods that is of most value to the economy and, in doing so, creates the most high value jobs.”

As Jamie McGrigor pointed out, DEFRA estimates that, if all food waste in the UK was treated through anaerobic digestion technology, 35,000 jobs would be created.

Whichever way we look at it, there are massive benefits to be gained from going down the circular economy route. However, the change that has to come about cannot be made by any Government or minister casually flicking on a switch, because to bring it about requires a complete change of mindset and behaviour, which can never be achieved overnight. We are talking of a complete change of culture and attitude towards waste, but most companies’ business models are—understandably—still centred on disposable goods and resources. Large-scale investment will almost certainly be required, and access to high-level funding is never easy, particularly at times such as those that we live in. In addition, there is always a reluctance to change from tried-and-tested models that have stood the test of time, although the big irony in that argument is that it is time that is running out.

As many members noted, it is good and encouraging that we received a number of briefings from companies and organisations that have clearly got the message and are looking to drive change towards a more circular economy. It is commendable that the Scottish Government was the first national Government to sign up to the circular economy 100 programme—an initiative that brings together corporations, innovators and regions to use a collaborative approach to scaling up to a circular economy. That has to be the right approach.

In reply to a question that I asked him on whether Government stimulus is needed to encourage the required change of mindset or

whether it could come from the bottom up, Professor Stahel said:

“I think that both are required. Big international companies probably do not need Government stimulus, but small and medium-sized enterprises normally lack the knowledge and the overall view. For SMEs, it would be useful if the Government, possibly together with the universities, could provide some kind of data bank that would allow them to see what other companies have done, what the successful models are, what new capabilities and skills they might need and where they can get those.”—*[Official Report, Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, 2 October 2013; c 2658.]*

We are looking at companies, universities and the Government working together through a collaborative and knowledge-sharing approach. That is clearly the way forward if the transition to a circular economy is to proceed successfully. One sure-fire hurdle to prevent that would be any increase in red tape or bureaucracy—hence our amendment to the Government’s motion. However, if a truly collaborative approach is taken, there is surely no reason why we in Scotland should not continue to play the leading role that we have already taken in bringing about the transition.

We simply have to move in that direction. Member after member has given great evidence as to why that is the case. The simple truth is that we have to do it, because we do not have two other planets to colonise. We have to make the most of this one, which means maximising the use of every resource that is available to us until it can be used no longer.

We have a long way to go, as the debate has shown, but the sooner we get there, the better.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Sarah Boyack. You have a generous eight minutes, or possibly nearer 11. *[Laughter.]*

16:37

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): It is usually the other way round, Presiding Officer. I will see how I get on.

This has been an excellent debate. The fact that the benches are so sparsely occupied does not reflect the quality of the debate. If I have one thought about how we take the issue forward, it is that it would be interesting to rerun the debate with all our colleagues who are on the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee and the spokespeople from all the parties who lead on the economy, and to push them through the learning and engagement process that I think everybody who has spoken this afternoon has gone through.

In particular, I refer to the points that Claudia Beamish made about the work of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee,

which were rightly echoed by several other members. Once we get into the issue of the circular economy, the case for it is unanswerable. It makes sense in terms of sustainable development principles and how we develop a green economy, and there are the 500,000 jobs that Claudia Beamish mentioned we could create.

However, weighed against that is what is happening in our economy with the financial pressures, the difficulty of making long-term investment decisions when people have short-term profits to make and the challenge of making our markets for reused goods sustainable. There are immense challenges in creating a green economy, but it has to be one of our objectives.

If we look at the human side, which several members mentioned, it is vital for consumers to have knowledge and interest. When we recycle, we need to know that we are doing it properly, and local authorities must design schemes that enable that. There is quite a challenge in that. Whenever there is a minor change in how our waste is collected, people are not sure whether they are doing the right thing, even if they are really interested in the topic, so there is an issue about consumers and how we come into this.

Then there are the massive pressures on the environment, such as the exploitation and use of scarce resources, the impact of waste and the pollution of water, and things at a more basic level such as fly-tipping. Everybody can see the impact of fly-tipping and landfill tips. The speeches this afternoon have been excellent in capturing that range of challenges and issues that we need to tackle.

We can all agree that there is more knowledge and expertise and more progress in the business community, from retailing to waste management. We have also had some warnings. The Viridor briefing put it in quite bleak terms. It said that we

“face a stark choice - further success or substantial failure”.

Viridor also suggests that

“Recycling and recovery have been real UK success stories to date BUT we do not have an institutionalised model.”

That success is not across all industries. It is not being done by everybody and there is a potential that we will stall or even reverse sharply backwards.

On the suggestion that we need a new economic model, I go back to my first point: those of us in the room who have been converted need to be joined by all our colleagues. It would be good to have that debate within the parties, to make sure that everybody is signed up to the agenda.

Alex Fergusson: Does Sarah Boyack share my surprise that we have not been joined by members of the Green Party in this debate?

Sarah Boyack: To be fair, there are only two of them so, proportionately, if we look at the representation from the rest of us, their share would be less than one person. Let us move on.

I want to say a couple of words about the Labour amendment. We wanted to add to the motion but also to throw some light on the importance of people and skills, highlighting the pressures on local authorities. Several members have talked about the fact that 23 local authorities have not met the targets. That is something that we should reflect on.

The challenges that local authorities are facing are acute. They need help, support for infrastructure investment and support from the Scottish Government to join up the dots in issues such as public procurement. Local authorities are looking for short-term value for money. It is hard to take in the longer-term investment challenge, which is also being faced by the private sector. The issue of markets for local authorities with new recycling or procurement challenges needs to be factored in. When we consider the acute challenges that local authorities face, such as demographic change, schools and social care, it is understandable why they have not cracked the issue. They need our support and support from the Scottish Government.

There has been a huge amount of progress in making more people aware of the challenges that we face. I am thinking of Scottish Enterprise's contribution and we need to think through what more it can do. It is clear that the Ellen MacArthur Foundation has been leading the way.

There is a lot more that needs to be done in product development, which several members have talked about. Dave Thompson gave an explanation of deliberate design obsolescence, Claudia Beamish made the point that 80 per cent of the environmental impact is all about design, and Claire Baker commented on action by colleges and universities. On one level, we know exactly what needs to be done. The briefings that we have received for the debate have been really useful.

I want to reflect on the issue of barriers. The Conservative amendment mentions the barrier of regulation. We must be careful about that. The Scottish Retail Consortium points out that the general approach is to minimise risk and wants to ensure that we get the regulations right and proportionate. That is right on one level, but if we consider why there is a risk assessment here, it takes us back to the section of the Labour amendment that talks about the "Dumped on"

report, which talks about the risk to human health—the risk to the health of staff working in the industry. We need to get the regulation right—there is no dispute about that—but we must be clear that when regulations that are there to protect public health are not followed, there is a consequence for people's health.

Change is difficult, but it is essential. We need to have that discussion and industry needs to be involved in that process. However, one person's bureaucracy is another person's transparency and monitorable form-filling that leads to accountability. We have reservations about the Conservative amendment because we must acknowledge the importance of proper regulation.

Over the past few months, some of us have been briefed about what is happening on the fringes of the waste industry, where there is criminal activity. We need proper reporting, regulation and enforcement. It has all got to be there.

The cabinet secretary made some important remarks about the leadership role that we can play not only in Scotland but in the UK. I think that he is right, but there is an economies-of-scale issue that needs to cut right across the UK. We want to be virtuous leaders, but we also want to ensure that we take the whole of the UK economy with us. Leading by example is important in that respect, and perhaps we should be doing a bit more in Scotland to make this work. It all comes back to the fact that the European regulatory framework is vital and needs to be right.

Going back to the local authority issue, I see a continuum from the very first Scottish Parliament to this Parliament in the way that we have been pushing this agenda. Perhaps I can give members an example from my own time as minister. The first Scottish Executive would not have started as quickly or worked as hard on recycling had it not faced the threat of EU infringement proceedings and financial penalties as a result of many of our waste dumps not being EU compliant. Regulation and the threat of financial penalties certainly have a role, but the fact is that we need to get the circular economy working so that we can get ahead of the curve and ensure that our businesses become the game-changers as well as benefit from the other parts of the world's economy that are coming along behind us.

We have heard some fantastic examples from across the country of the third sector's work on this matter. At some point in this post-election period, I will be taking to Remade in Edinburgh some of my old electrical equipment that has been accumulating such as the phone chargers that members have mentioned, old DVD players and so on. I have mountains of stuff that is gathering dust or festering, but Remade will take that

equipment to bits and harvest what is useful or will mend that kit and pass it on to people who cannot afford to buy what I now regard as waste. Several members were bang on in their comments on this matter; indeed, I want to repeat Nigel Don's comment that these things are not waste until we really cannot think of anything else to do with them. Remade is leading the way in this by training people in how to reuse that waste but, like all voluntary sector organisations, it is working to a difficult financial model.

I want to draw attention to Four Square's Edinburgh furniture initiative and the work of Garvald Edinburgh in training people up and giving them experience, and I come back to the examples highlighted by Margaret McDougall of goods being recycled back to low-income residents who would otherwise not be able to furnish their houses or have white goods if they did not get the absolutely reusable things that others have thrown away. We need to focus on reusing, refocusing and refurbishing. For example, the furniture that big companies get rid of is completely recyclable; indeed, I have heard of some fantastic examples of stuff being chucked out by the banking industry and recycled and reused by small firms and companies.

We can make this work, but the challenge is making the markets and the money work. Local authorities do not have the bodies with enough expertise to do as much as they would like to do and do not have as much money to give the voluntary sector to ensure that all the local community projects that we are really proud of have enough funding to be sustainable in the long term. The comments that Dave Thompson, Claire Baker and Jayne Baxter made about the importance of the third sector are crucial.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You might wish to start winding up now.

Sarah Boyack: This is a debate that we need to have across the Parliament. If there is one thing that the Scottish Government can do, it is to play a leadership role, bring everyone—the local authorities, the communities and the businesses—together and act as a kind of university, passing on the research, the knowledge and the information and ensuring that everyone acts in a collegiate way. Local authorities are already doing the exciting community energy stuff. The work that Edinburgh and Glasgow are undertaking will be transformative, but only if they get support and leadership from the Scottish Government.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excellent. Many thanks.

I call the cabinet secretary Richard Lochhead to wind up the debate on behalf of the Government. Cabinet secretary, you have until 5 o'clock.

16:49

Richard Lochhead: I very much welcome this debate. It has been heartwarming to hear the huge support that exists for ensuring that we elevate the concept of the circular economy up the Parliament's agenda. Many good points have been made by members from across the chamber.

Sarah Boyack is right to say that we want to ensure that the members of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee are aware of the subject. Although there is not a huge number of members in the chamber, there is a substantial number, so I remind members who are here for this important debate that we are just like recycled materials, in that it is quality that matters, not quantity. That was the message that I sent earlier in the debate.

I feel older than I did at the beginning of the debate, especially after listening to Dave Thompson and Linda Fabiani. I always thought that they were a huge number of years older than me, but I found myself remembering that I, too, used to return my bottles to pay for access to the cinema.

Linda Fabiani: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Richard Lochhead: Briefly.

Linda Fabiani: If the cabinet secretary knows what is good for him, he will apologise.

Richard Lochhead: I did not want Linda Fabiani to have to stand for too long. That is why I asked for a brief intervention.

I also remember the ironmonger's horse and cart coming down my road to collect scrap metal. As Dave Thompson and others have said, we have had a circular economy over the decades. Of course, times have changed and it is now a much bigger debate, given the scarcity of resources across the world.

Many members mentioned global trends and the fact that we are facing the prospect of there being 3 billion new and wealthier consumers by 2050, which will fuel demand for the planet's precious resources. That illustrates the scale of the challenge. Resources and materials that we perhaps take for granted today might eventually be seen as rare and precious. That poses an economic challenge as well as an environmental challenge.

Sarah Boyack: I had to miss a bit out of my speech, but I would have liked to talk about the fact that it is important to think not only about how we use new materials but what we do with our old materials, and the fact that there are parts of Bangladesh and India that have huge piles of our rubbish. One of our challenges, as part of our

global social responsibility efforts, is to make more use of those products in this country.

Richard Lochhead: I totally agree with that point, which goes to the heart of the debate. If the demand for those raw materials is going to increase, it poses an enormous environmental challenge to the planet and a huge economic challenge to every nation, including Scotland. That is why it is important that we show leadership, especially with the prospect of 75 per cent more raw materials being required in the coming 25 years. Indeed, we must view what we have traditionally seen as waste as precious raw materials.

When the previous European Commissioner for the Environment, Janez Potočnik, visited the Scottish Parliament, he gave a speech in which he said:

“Our old resource-intensive growth model is simply not feasible on this scale and on a limited planet. Many of the resources our economies depend on are already scarce, such as energy or some raw materials, and others are limited and vulnerable, such as clean water, clean air and nature.”

He also said:

“In concrete terms the global competition for resources will mean that we will be obliged to increase resource productivity, particularly in Europe where we are dependent on imports of materials.”—[*Official Report, Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, 20 June 2013; c 2465.*]

That is why creating a circular economy is important. It is about protecting our environment and our economy, but it is also about protecting our future quality of life, as a people.

The heart of the circular economy, as the Ellen MacArthur Foundation said, involves minimising the amount that a product has to be changed in order for it to be reused, remanufactured or refurbished; maximising the length of time that a product functions for and the number of times it can be reused, remanufactured or refurbished; optimising how materials that have degraded beyond their being reusable as a feedstock in one system can be used as a feedstock in another process or supply chain; and minimising contamination and maximising the purity of material chains to increase collection and value of materials. That all sounds quite technical, but it is what the recycling, reuse, repair and remanufacturing debate is all about. We have to keep our materials circulating in our societies so that we are less reliant on imports from other societies—because people in those societies want to keep their raw materials in order to reach the quality of life that we have—and so that we are able to maintain our quality of life here in Scotland.

That raises issues around the design of products, which many members have mentioned.

Product design is reserved to the UK Government, but it is important and we work with the UK Government and the EU on addressing it. About 80 per cent of a product's lifetime environmental impact is determined by its design, so we have to get that right. We cannot afford not to.

As many members have said, the solution of a circular economy very much relies on collaboration and everyone in society working together. Many members, including Claudia Beamish, highlighted local government's role, and the financial, training and skills pressures on councils. We must address those pressures. Zero Waste Scotland is working with local government employees and facilitates the Scottish waste industry training, competency, health and safety forum.

We are starting modern apprenticeships on sustainable resource management in Scotland's local councils; five councils are now working with 31 apprentices and the figure is expected to grow in the future. We want to build up skills in local government.

The key issue that is facing local government is the fact that we have 32 local authorities. In the past, there were 32 different ways of doing things, such as collecting recycle, the recycled materials. That has created problems and has meant that the reprocessing and manufacturing sector has not had the commercial confidence to set up new plants in Scotland to recycle the glass and other materials that are collected. The sector cannot get the quality or the volumes that it wants because the process is carried out in 32 different ways.

Sarah Boyack: It might be worth revisiting the idea of regional networks of local authorities. In the early days, the cabinet secretary was not convinced that that was a good idea, but now that city deals are on the agenda, a more regional approach might make a lot more sense.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can everyone be a little quieter, please?

Richard Lochhead: The way forward that we have identified is the best one, with the 32 local authorities working together on common procurement and a more uniform approach to collecting materials for recycling in Scotland.

The Scottish Government and local government face real financial pressures. I hope that, over the next few weeks and months, the position will change for the better, but it is in local government's financial interests to improve recycling and work with the circular economy. If councils have better recycling systems in place, they will get better income from the recycle that is collected—the recycle will be better quality, so the income will go up—and if the costs of carrying out the process are shared, they will go down.

Such an approach is also in the interests of local economies, because if we can collect in a more uniform fashion and give confidence to the commercial sector to set up new factories to process what is collected, that will mean local jobs in local communities and sustainable economic growth. We want those things to happen, which is why it is really important that the 32 local authorities work closely together.

Viridor, which sent out a briefing to all members for the debate, has announced £357 million-worth of investment in Scotland in the past 18 months, including its investment in the UK's most advanced glass recycling facility at Newhouse in Lanarkshire. The facility will process glass that will be collected from 17 Scottish councils and will create 30 full-time jobs. If Viridor gets it right, real jobs will be created in communities across Scotland. That is why it is so important that the 32 local authorities work together, just as they are now beginning to work with the Scottish Government.

As many members have said, it is important that Scotland maintains its leadership in this area. In the weeks and months ahead, I will be speaking to the new UK Government about the issues that relate to creating a circular economy and improving recycling and product design, because many of them are reserved. Europe is trying to do something about the area, too, but EU negotiations are also reserved. The UK recently opposed the package that the EU wanted to introduce, because it saw it as putting too much of a burden on business. However, the Scottish Government took the view that it was right to be ambitious and to promote the circular economy. We need the UK Government to change its position and to support the European Union and the environment commissioner in taking forward the agenda to create the circular economy.

If we get power over national taxation, there are other issues that we can consider. Product standards, design and labelling are reserved issues, so we need the UK Government to play ball.

However, we will continue to show leadership. I have been invited to speak on the subject at events in London, and we are inviting the environment commissioner to visit Scotland because he has a special interest in creating a circular economy and very much sees Scotland as a leader.

Over the past few years, we have been showing leadership with our new zero waste plan and the new safeguarding Scotland's resources policy. In Scotland, 1.4 million households have food waste collection services, up from 300,000 households in 2010, which is a massive advance. We have seen a threefold increase in food waste processing and

the setting up of the new local government brokerage service, with the 32 authorities working closer together. As I said, we set up the new, innovative and world-leading Scottish institute of remanufacture at the University of Strathclyde, and we are also looking at the introduction of a deposit and return scheme. In that regard, we will consider seriously the report that was published this morning and look at how best to progress such a scheme.

I thank everyone for their speeches. We support our own motion, obviously, and we will support both amendments.

I will finish where I started. Creating a circular economy is an economic, environmental and moral necessity. It will create jobs in our communities, it will improve our quality of life, and it just makes good sense. Let us get behind it and make it happen for Scotland and the world.

Decision Time

17:00

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

There are three questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S4M-13134.2, in the name of Claudia Beamish, which seeks to amend motion S4M-13134, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the circular economy, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-13134.1, in the name of Jamie McGrigor, which seeks to amend motion S4M-13134, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the circular economy, be agreed. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)

Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Against

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

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)

Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Meeting closed at 17:02.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 65, Against 6, Abstentions 35.

Amendment agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S4M-13134, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the circular economy, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the potential opportunities for Scotland of moving toward a more circular economy, in which products and materials are kept in high-value use for as long as possible; recognises that realising the substantial economic and environmental benefits means rethinking the way in which products and services are designed and procured; recognises the necessity of developing new and transferable skills with Skills Development Scotland and industry and educational partners; recognises concerns about the pressures experienced by those working in waste management services, as Scotland implements its waste strategy, leading to the circular economy, evidenced in Unison Scotland's survey, *Dumped on: Working in Scotland's waste management services*; further acknowledges the funding pressures experienced by local authorities in meeting recycling targets and developing new models; also recognises the role of the third sector in developing the circular economy welcomes the progress made in establishing Resource Efficient Scotland, the Scottish Materials Brokerage Service and the Scottish Institute of Remanufacture, building on the Scottish Government's Safeguarding Scotland's Resources strategy; urges the Scottish Government to work with Scottish businesses and their representative organisations to ensure that unnecessary regulations and bureaucracy are avoided, and believes that Scotland should continue to show leadership in this important area while proposals for EU-wide action emerge later this year.

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