Thursday 26 March 2015

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Enterprise and Environment

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what support it is giving to help reshape how energy is delivered and used in communities throughout the country.

(S4O-4182)

Fergus Ewing: Practical and reasonable support is being provided.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met the Crown Estate and what matters were discussed.

(S4O-4183)

Fergus Ewing: Scottish Government officials meet regularly with the Crown Estate to discuss a range of rural, coastal and marine issues.

Michael Russell (Argyll and Bute) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government when it will respond to the findings in Scottish Marine and Freshwater Science Volume 5 Number 14: Electrofishing for Razor Clams (Ensis siliqua and E. arquatus): Effects on Survival and Recovery of Target and Non-Target Species

Holding answer issued: 24 March 2015  
(S4W-24798)

Richard Lochhead: This report was published by Marine Scotland Science and the Scottish Government is now considering the policy implications arising from it, noting that fishing with electricity is currently illegal under the terms of EU legislation. To assist the consideration of policy, officials will meet with a number of interested parties at the end of March 2015.

Michael Russell (Argyll and Bute) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of the findings regarding electrofishing for razor clams set out in Scottish Marine and Freshwater Science Volume 5 Number 14: Electrofishing for Razor Clams (Ensis siliqua and E. arquatus): Effects on Survival and Recovery of Target and Non-Target Species, whether it will establish a pilot project in Argyll and Bute to help inform national policy on this matter and, if so, whether it will meet the Razor Fisheries Forum to discuss the (a) licensing arrangements for and (b) setting-up of such a scheme.

Holding answer issued: 24 March 2015  
(S4W-24799)

Richard Lochhead: The government has no plans at present to establish further pilot projects involving fishing with electricity. During the preparation of the report noted in the question, field studies were undertaken that involved the use and operation of commercial fishing vessels. The government therefore considers that this work has collected the information required at present to assist the consideration of policy on this matter. Should further or different information be required the government will consider additional research activity, which may again involve the use of commercial fishing vessels.

Marine Scotland has met with the Razor Fisheries Forum twice in 2014 to discuss licencing arrangements for the fishery and will meet with them again at a razor stakeholder event at the end of March 2015.

Michael Russell (Argyll and Bute) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government how much damage is caused to (a) the seabed and (b) sustainable fisheries by the use of dredging to collect razor clams, and how this compares with electrofishing.

Holding answer issued: 24 March 2015  
(S4W-24801)

Richard Lochhead: A recent Marine Scotland Science report on electrofishing for razor clams suggests that electro-fishing is potentially less damaging than other traditional fishing methods,
including the use of dredges, with the exception of hand gathering by divers. The study did not address the broader question of long-term sustainability of razor clam populations under various levels of commercial fishing activity, nor the medium and long-term effects of electrofishing. It also concluded that electrofishing is a much more efficient method of harvesting. The report does not offer any advice on the amount of fishing effort which could be applied in different areas supporting razor populations and recognised that further research is required to establish this.

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government on what date the formal review of waste spreading will commence, and whether the public will have the opportunity to respond.

Richard Lochhead: The review into the spreading of sewage sludge on land began on 6 March 2015 when the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Water and Scottish Government met to finalise the terms of the review.

The review will take into account the views of a range of stakeholders and community groups. A meeting has already taken place with representatives of the Avonbridge and Standburn Community Council to hear their views and concerns.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to prevent the loss of the grass species, or landrace, Scots’ Timothy (phleum pratense).

Richard Lochhead: The Scottish Government operates the Scottish Landrace Protection Scheme (SLPS). This scheme is designed to prevent the genetic loss of Scottish landraces by providing a safety net in the event of harvest failure or other loss of seed. The Scots Timothy Seed Growers Association has not yet entered Scots’ Timothy into the SLPS but has been encouraged to do so.

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what the participation rate is of each local authority in national contracts through Scotland Excel.

Keith Brown: The Scottish Government does not track participation rates of local authorities in national contracts through Scotland Excel. This is a matter for Scotland Excel and each local authority.

The lead authority for Scotland Excel is Renfrewshire Council.

Finance

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government when it will clarify future funding arrangements for Scotland Excel.

Keith Brown: The Scottish Government are not involved in funding arrangements for Scotland Excel. This is a matter for Scotland Excel.

Scotland Excel is governed by a Joint Committee comprising at least one elected member from each of Scotland’s local authorities. The committee meets twice a year and is responsible for the strategic direction of the organisation and for approving the annual budget and business plan.

The lead authority for Scotland Excel is Renfrewshire Council.

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to consult on legislation to put the Scottish Fiscal Commission on a statutory footing.
John Swinney: I have published a consultation paper today inviting comments on a draft Scottish Fiscal Commission Bill.

Health and Social Care

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government how many additional whole-time equivalent staff are employed by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde compared with 2007 and what impact this has had on patient care.

(S4W-24907)

Shona Robison: The following table shows that as at December 2014 there are 34,082.2 whole-time equivalent (WTE) staff working in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. This is 919.8 WTE more than September 2006.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has seen an 83% fall in cases of clostridium difficile infection in those over 65 since 2007 (472 from January to March 2007 to 79 from July to September 2014), and a 94% fall in cases of MRSA since 2007 (68 from January to March 2007 to 4 from July to September 2014).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall staff</td>
<td>33,162.4</td>
<td>34,082.2</td>
<td>919.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total consultants¹</td>
<td>1,131.3</td>
<td>1,411.3</td>
<td>279.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency medicine consultants¹</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>42.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nursing and midwifery</td>
<td>15,277.1</td>
<td>15,232.4</td>
<td>-44.7</td>
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Source: Scottish Workforce Information Standard System
Notes:
1. Consultant figures include medical and clinical directors and directors of public health.
2. To allow a comparable trend with post 2007 information, adjustments have been made.

Michael Russell (Argyll and Bute) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the finding of the recent significant case review undertaken by South Lanarkshire Council regarding the care given to Stephen Armstrong and, in light of this, whether it plans to (a) amend the legislation or guidance and, if so, when and (b) revise the Adult Protection and Support Code.

(S4W-24953)

Jamie Hepburn: The Scottish Government accepts the findings of this review and is taking forward the recommendations for the Scottish Government, which are:

To clarify the relationship between the role of the convenor of an adult protection committee in respect of significant case reviews and the guidance to Chief Social Work Officers on significant case reviews, and

To clarify with the Care Inspectorate the position regarding registration of services provided under the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013.

Following this the Scottish Government will consider whether further changes are required to the guidance that is being developed on significant case reviews in adult protection and to the code of practice for public bodies and office holders involved in adult protection.

The Scottish Government expects all the agencies involved to consider the findings of this review and to take action on the relevant recommendations.

Learning and Justice

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government, other than exam results and qualification attainment, what national indicators or measures it will use to monitor progress on closing the attainment and achievement gap for pupils.
Angela Constance: As clearly set out in our Programme for Government, we are committed to ensuring that educational outcomes for all learners are improving and that inequity is eradicated. A range of educational performance data, including school-leaver destinations, exam results, literacy and numeracy survey reports and international Program for International Student Assessment figures currently provide information about attainment in Scotland.

I have announced in recent weeks extensive measures we are putting in place including the Attainment Scotland Fund, Read, Write, Count and local support. Working with key partners, we are developing a national improvement framework which will build on the existing data to help us make further progress on narrowing the attainment gap for pupils.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will measure the delivery of vocational qualifications alongside other school performance measures and publish the results.

Angela Constance: Data on qualification awards, by type of qualification, are currently published annually (in August and updated in December) by the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

In addition, the Scottish Government will publish an annual report on progress in implementing the Developing the Young Workforce programme, including data showing progress towards the 11 key performance indicators. This will include key performance indicator 3: Increase the percentage of school leavers attaining vocational qualifications at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework level 5 and above by 2021.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what evaluation it will make to ensure that spending is effective in improving pupil attainment and wider achievement.

Angela Constance: We are working with key partners to develop an improvement framework which will set out clearly how we will monitor and evaluate the progress and impact we are making in improving attainment and wider achievement. This will ensure that all partners in education are clearly focused on improving educational outcomes and increasing equity, and will include evaluation of the impact of spend on raising attainment.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to better understand the reason for levels of attainment varying between (a) local authorities, (b) schools and (c) different groups of pupils.

Angela Constance: Evidence from reports such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education published in May 2014 and School Education, prepared by Audit Scotland in June 2014, have helped to inform work on raising attainment, including the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Through our inspection processes and using the new Insight benchmarking tool for the senior phase in secondary schools, we are able to focus on the disparities between different pupils, across schools and local authorities. The Scottish Attainment Challenge will give support further analysis and research at local authority and school level. We will continue to work in partnership with local authorities and schools to better our understanding in this area.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what strategic approach it will adopt to reduce the gaps in performance between the highest and lowest performing schools in similar areas of deprivation.
Angela Constance: Our approach to raising attainment is universal, and has a firm foundation in all our key policies and programmes which affect children and young people, the pillars of which are Curriculum for Excellence, Teaching Scotland’s Future, Getting it right for every child, the Early Years Framework and Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce.

There are a range of activities already underway and planned, which are supporting authorities and schools across Scotland to raise attainment and reduce the attainment gap. These include the innovative Raising Attainment for All programme; the new Read, Write, Count literacy and numeracy campaign; attainment advisors in every local authority in Scotland; roll out of the Insight tool to help authorities and schools to analyse strengths and identify areas for improvement; and the £1.5 million Access to Education Fund, which is available to schools to help reduce barriers to learning experienced by pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We recently launched the Scottish Attainment Challenge, backed by the £100 million Attainment Scotland Fund over four years to drive forward improvements on educational outcomes in Scotland’s most disadvantaged communities. This fund will complement the existing activities and programmes which are available in all areas of Scotland by developing a new, targeted initiative focused on supporting pupils in the areas of Scotland with the highest concentrations of deprivation.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what is being done at (a) local authority and (b) national level to consistently measure achievement and performance of pupils from P1 to S3.

(S4W-24944)

Angela Constance: Local authorities and schools have tracking and monitoring arrangements in place to measure achievement and performance of pupils from P1 to S3, and report on this locally to elected members and parents. At a national level, the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy, the Programme for International Student Assessment and other educational performance data provide us with information on learner achievement and progress. The Scottish Attainment Challenge and a national improvement framework will help provide increased focus on improvement and achievement at both national and local level.

The following question received a holding answer:

S4W-24874