

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 27 June 2007

Session 3

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 27 June 2007

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 14:30*]

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection, and our leader today is the Rev George Whyte of Colinton parish church in Edinburgh.

The Rev George Whyte (Colinton Parish Church): Jesus said:

“The poor you will always have with you”,

but he did not know about my parish on the south side of Edinburgh. Not only have we managed to exclude the poor by having no social housing, the booming property market is now stripping out people on other income levels, too. If there is such a thing as a sink estate, I am the minister of a swim suburb.

The parish of Colinton, perhaps like some others, is becoming a monoculture of double-income professional couples, most of whom work in the financial sector. They are not bad people—far from it—but as Evelyn Waugh once said, it is neither the quality nor the quantity but the variety that is the problem in a place where only a narrow stratum of the community can afford to live. With a family house starting at more than £250,000, we will simply not have the teachers, the police officers, the nurses, the social workers, the shop assistants, the office staff, the bank clerks and the stay-at-home parents who have in the past provided the range of talents and availability that makes a community work. The super-busy, target-driven, not-home-till-seven people who can buy into my parish do not have the time to lead our youth organisations or, indeed, to get to know their neighbours. The social divisions that rightly concern this Parliament have an effect on those who might be considered to be on the right side of the divide.

It is true that, when the so-called successful in our suburban communities live only with people who are just like them, there is an isolation from the pressing, basic needs of those who are less fortunate. When the dinner party chat is so focused on equity release, there is little stomach for discussing how life is for those who cannot join the property ladder or those who must commute ever-longer distances to service the city’s life, never mind those who struggle for survival in the developing world.

The rules of this speaking spot and my limited knowledge prevent me from reflecting on a solution to the issue. All that I do know is that, living in a tied house in a hot spot of the property market, I am in a better position than some to remind my neighbours and friends that, even if they do not live in the same streets, the poor are still with them. Such awareness of our common humanity will enrich their lives in ways that no amount of capital appreciation could. [*Applause.*]

Point of Order

14:33

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I want to raise a point of order that is germane both to the ministerial statement and to the motion on transport that we will debate this afternoon.

The Scottish National Party promised to come back to the chamber before the summer recess for a vote on the Edinburgh trams and the Edinburgh airport rail link. During the debate on 7 June, the minister Stewart Stevenson specifically stated:

“We will consider the report”

of the Auditor General

“swiftly and return to the Parliament before the summer recess, to set out our position clearly and concisely.”—
[*Official Report*, 7 June 2007; c 460.]

Whatever else today’s motion is, it does not set out a position that is clear and concise. It is an abdication of responsibility by the Government on this issue. The SNP motion simply invites the Parliament to read the SNP manifesto—an obsolete document if ever there was one, given the number of key commitments that have already been binned.

It cannot be in order for the Government to bring to this chamber a motion that ignores the future of the issue that the Government promised to bring to us—the motion simply notes the manifesto. However, the situation is worse than that: the motion asks the chamber to endorse the SNP’s transport priorities. How can we possibly do that? The Government has published no transport plans.

We are about to hear a statement that the spokespeople of the other parties received an hour or so ago, and of which the rest of the chamber has no knowledge. That is no way for a modern Government and Parliament to conduct business. I therefore ask you, Presiding Officer, to advise the chamber whether that is in order, and whether you approve of the Government’s renegeing on its promises to the chamber in this way. What action can you take as a consequence?

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): I thank the member for giving notice of his point of order. I gave careful consideration when selecting the motion for debate, and I am satisfied that it is competent for these purposes. While I am sorry to say that the issues raised by the member are matters for debate rather than a point of order for the chair, I have no doubt that other members may wish to air similar concerns during proceedings this afternoon.

Business Motion

14:35

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-247, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revision to the business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following revision to the programme of business for Wednesday 27 June 2007—

after

followed by Business Motion

insert

followed by SPCB Motion on Members’
Allowances Scheme—[Bruce
Crawford.]

Motion agreed to.

Transport

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is a statement by Stewart Stevenson on transport. As the minister will take questions at the end of his statement, there should be no interventions. Given the fact that a debate on transport follows on from the statement, I make it clear that, as I have intimated to business managers, questions should be for clarification only.

14:36

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): I want to tell members about how the Government is going to manage and take forward our capital investment programme for transport to ensure that it is ambitious, achievable and, above all, value for money.

We must continue to invest in our transport infrastructure. The Government is committed to doing exactly that to support sustainable growth. We are committed to a programme that must be founded on sound justification and robust business cases. With that firmly held belief, we consider it our duty and our responsibility to assess the major transport project portfolio for trunk road and rail that we have inherited. With this statement to Parliament, we bring that process to a close. We are absolutely certain that taxpayers in Scotland expect nothing less from the new Government.

Members are aware that we invited the Auditor General for Scotland to review procedures used for the proposed Edinburgh trams and Edinburgh airport rail link. Audit Scotland's work is complete and the report has been published. We have taken on board the Auditor General's comments in our review of major projects and our decisions on next steps. Based on the report's findings, I am all the more convinced that what we inherited is neither sustainable nor sensible.

The overall programme has not been prioritised. Many projects are likely to start at the same time, creating a high risk of overheating the market and making it difficult for contractors to plan properly. That approach is storing up problems for us. It is, quite simply, old-fashioned boom and bust. We need a better approach. We need to plan—and we will plan—our programme in a more sensible and sustainable way to attract world-class construction firms to bid for what is by any measure an ambitious and world-class programme. That means bringing forward a programme that is properly prioritised and that matches industry's capability to deliver efficiently, sustainably, affordably and on time. The programme that I am outlining to Parliament meets those objectives.

I now set out our priorities for rail and road and what that means for the current programme. Our priorities for rail investment are to improve connectivity, to maximise the contribution of the rail network to our sustainable transport system and to improve services for commuters. Having reviewed the existing programme for rail, we have reached some conclusions. Last week, I attended the start of work to double the track from Bathgate to Newbridge. We will press forward with the delivery of the full Airdrie to Bathgate scheme by December 2010, and I expect costs to remain in the outturn range of £300 million to £375 million. The project will connect communities in North Lanarkshire and West Lothian with employment, education and leisure opportunities in Edinburgh and Glasgow. It will provide a real alternative to the M8, and the early works on the Bathgate branch will improve reliability of the already popular commuter service.

Transport Scotland is continuing a due-diligence review of the Borders railway as it prepares to take on the role of authorised undertaker for the railway—a role that it is assuming at the behest of the previous Administration. However, we have learned that the Waverley railway partnership's proposed funding package will not be sufficient to deliver the project and that opening in December 2011 is not achievable.

We expect Scottish Borders Council and Midlothian Council to work hard with developers to close the funding gap. We reaffirm the Scottish Government's commitment—which we inherited from the previous Administration—to provide £115 million in 2002 prices towards the scheme. Our continuing support depends on the project meeting the three remaining funding conditions that the previous Administration set. First, the assumptions underlying the business case must hold. That condition includes the achievement of patronage levels, the containment of costs, the active management of risks, and housing growth projections that are achievable and based on identified market demand. Secondly, a clear and comprehensive risk management strategy must be developed and delivered. Thirdly, the railway must be integrated with local bus services to ensure that it has the widest possible impact in the Borders and Midlothian.

Glasgow airport rail link will provide an easy, dedicated, reliable service between the airport, Paisley and Glasgow city centre. The way forward on procurement is clear: Transport Scotland will lead the project, Strathclyde partnership for transport will deliver the civil engineering for the new railway and Network Rail will deliver the track and systems.

SPT and Network Rail are working together to combine GARL with necessary signalling

improvements on the existing railway to Paisley. Earlier this year, it became apparent that, if those projects were delivered separately, there would be a need to rip out newly installed infrastructure, which would create unnecessary disruption for passengers. Therefore, we have decided that the best way to proceed is to combine the two projects, the consequence of which is that GARL will be delayed by about a year.

We expect the core of the current work on Waverley station—which will increase capacity and ease congestion at the station—to be completed on time at the end of 2007 and within budget. However, Network Rail continues to work with the Balmoral hotel to reach agreement on proposed improvements to the Waverley steps. Network Rail is now planning a new approach, which will still deliver escalators and lifts to Princes Street, combined with further improvements to the station itself.

We are disappointed and concerned that the important project to reconnect Alloa to the national rail network, provide a more efficient route for coal trains to Longannet power station and free up capacity on the Forth bridge has run late and over budget. We will implement a simpler project structure to strengthen governance and take the project through to opening in the spring of 2008 at a cost of £80 million to £85 million.

I will move on to my response to the Auditor General's findings on the Edinburgh airport rail link and the Edinburgh trams scheme, which were published last week. The Auditor General highlighted that EARL is not in as good shape as he would have expected for a project at the current stage of development. He confirmed that EARL is unlikely to be delivered by the target date of the end of 2011, has no clear governance framework and has no procurement strategy in place. He also confirmed that the project board did not meet between April 2006 and February 2007, that it has met only twice since then, that its membership and role are no longer agreed between the main stakeholders, and that there is no date for the next meeting. That is a litany of unfinished work and incomplete governance, and the Government has been utterly vindicated in its decision to invite the Auditor General to review those projects. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order. Best of order, please.

Stewart Stevenson: As a result, I have no confidence in the projected timescales.

The Auditor General found that the tram scheme had more of the features that we would expect in a well-managed project. However, he highlighted TIE's own assessment that phase 1b to Granton is not affordable within current funding. The

affordability of phase 1a depends on successful value engineering and negotiation with bidders. We will not know whether that has succeeded until January 2008—fully four months after TIE originally promised. In that time, TIE proposes that we invest a further £60 million on top of the £79 million that has already been spent—£140 million without a single metre of track laid.

We are being asked to take significant risks with Scottish taxpayers' money on two all-or-nothing projects. Quite simply, I cannot recommend that we do so, given that there are other more important priorities for the use of funds on that scale.

Edinburgh airport needs an effective public transport link, but it does not need a tunnel under its main runway. I have therefore asked Transport Scotland to investigate alternatives to EARL and the trams project and to report back to ministers in the autumn.

I want to consider the most cost-effective way to improve public transport in Edinburgh. The city already has a strong bus service, and excellent value can be achieved from investment in bus, which is flexible and reaches across the city. We can do a lot to work with operators and with City of Edinburgh Council to consider further guided bus routes, improved waiting facilities, greener vehicles and enhanced park-and-ride facilities, and I want to do that over the summer.

I want to focus on our priority for the rail network, which is to improve the reliability, attractiveness and journey time of the Edinburgh to Glasgow route, which will improve significantly the connectivity between those two fine and important cities. Transport Scotland will work with Network Rail and First ScotRail on a package of measures, including infrastructure improvements such as a new station at Gogar as an alternative link to the airport, improvements at Dalmeny and firm proposals for the most cost-effective ways to improve reliability, bring down journey times and provide capacity for the expected continuing growth in rail passenger numbers.

I am pleased to announce that Transport Scotland has today published its initial assessment of the electrification of the Glasgow to Edinburgh rail line. The Government is absolutely determined to attach the highest priority to achieving that truly strategic project, which will establish greater connectivity between the major central Scotland cities. That is the type of project that should command scarce resources to improve significantly our transport connections.

For roads, our priorities are: first, maintaining and operating the existing network safely and efficiently; secondly, managing demand to reduce congestion at key locations to minimise the impact

on the economy; and finally, investing in new capacity where it has been demonstrated through robust appraisal that it is appropriate to do so.

Having reviewed the existing programme for major strategic trunk roads, we have reached the following conclusions. We are committed to the completion of the motorway network. The extension of the M74 will reduce congestion on the busiest stretch of the M8 through Glasgow and provide links into key regeneration projects of national significance in Glasgow's east end, which will bring much-needed new investment in homes and jobs.

The M74 project has only one preferred bidder, which makes the need to demonstrate value for money more challenging and all the more essential. We expect to award the contract later this year and to complete the project by the end of 2011. However, we will award the contract to the bidder only if the bid is clear value for money—we will not be held to ransom by a single bidder, and we will benchmark the single bid against an independent cost comparator. That will be a tough and robust process to protect the public purse.

The case for the M80 Stepps to Haggs project is also clear: it will complete the missing gap between Stirling and Glasgow. Two major consortia are bidding for the scheme as a public-private partnership contract. We are committed to continuing with the competition. Changes to the tendering process would add delay to this much-needed improvement. Subject to value-for-money tests, I expect contracts to be concluded soon and the road to be opened in 2011.

On the M8, we are committed to completing the key link between Baillieston and Newhouse as well as carrying out associated improvements and upgrades to the notorious bottleneck at Raith. We will continue to take those projects through the necessary statutory processes and, in relation to the M8, we will publish orders later in the summer. Previously published draft orders will be republished to comply with recently implemented European legislation. A decision on how those projects will be funded will be taken within the year.

The Aberdeen western peripheral route is vital to the north-east and we are committed to its delivery. The project has entered its crucial statutory consultation phase and it is important that we proceed with that. As with the M8, draft road orders will be republished over the summer, to comply with recently implemented European legislation, along with compulsory purchase orders. It is clear that the original timetable for the project cannot be met, and we are looking at the project being completed around the end of 2012. We will continue to work with our local authority partners to deliver that.

An update of the full trunk road programme covering the other important planned projects was published on the Transport Scotland website earlier today.

As members know, we are committed to making decisions on the new Forth crossing. The reports that were discussed by Cabinet yesterday recommend the option of a bridge close to the existing crossing. We are pleased to announce to Parliament that a programme of public information exhibitions will be held during the summer on the proposal and on the possibility of a tunnel upstream from the existing bridge. Those exhibitions will present the full facts that have informed the reports. A decision will be taken in the autumn, alongside decisions on finance, legislation and governance.

The reports have been published today. At 2016 outturn prices, the estimated cost of the bridge option is between £2.5 billion and £3.5 billion, and the estimated cost of the tunnel is £3.6 billion to £4.7 billion. Those figures demonstrate that Parliament must be careful and prudent when considering the projects. The eyes of the world will be upon us as we proceed to construction of this major project that will deliver benefits not just for the people of Fife but for the economy of Scotland. I am determined that the world will witness the delivery of a world-class project in a world-class way.

We have set out for Parliament today an ambitious transport investment programme. Because of the time that we have taken to review the projects, I believe that we can assure Parliament that the programme is achievable.

The Presiding Officer: The minister will now take questions. I will close this question-and-answer session at 5 minutes past 3. I remind members that their questions should be ones of clarification only.

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): In justification of the proposed cancellation of EARL and the trams project, the statement notes that there are more important priorities for the use of funds on this scale. What are those more important priorities?

I understand that the Scottish National Party has called a press briefing immediately following the conclusion of today's debate. Will the party honour this place by making the same case behind closed doors at 5.15 that it will make in the chamber all afternoon?

Stewart Stevenson: Having spent 15 minutes describing a wide range of projects, I would have thought that the member would recognise the significant number of priorities that I delineated. [Interruption.]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Stewart Stevenson: In particular, I am sure that people throughout the central belt will welcome our support to progress the electrification of the Glasgow to Edinburgh railway line. That is an example of a project that meets the needs of many people in central Scotland and, along with the Aberdeen western peripheral route, to which we are also committed, shows our support for projects throughout Scotland.

Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD): Will the minister confirm that he is pushing ahead with Airdrie to Bathgate, the Glasgow airport rail link, Waverley station, Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine, the M74, the M80, the M8 and the AWPR but that he plans to ditch EARL and the trams and is backing away from the Borders railway? Will he confirm that at the recent election, every SNP candidate north of the Highland line, including his good self, said that a nationalist Government would switch expenditure away from the central belt and towards the north? Where is that switch?

Stewart Stevenson: I hope that the member heard me restate the commitment to the Borders railway. If he did not, I say it again. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Stewart Stevenson: I draw the member's attention to an interesting point about the amendment that he appears to wish to support at 5 o'clock. The amendment would delete support for the Government's statement and therefore delete support for the Aberdeen western peripheral route, the M80 and all the projects that he wishes to progress.

Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP): I welcome the minister's commitment to a new Forth crossing. Is he aware of the concern, particularly among businesses in Fife, that there could be a gap between 2013, when it is possible that the existing bridge will close to heavy goods vehicles, and 2016, when it is expected that the new crossing will be complete? Does the minister agree that the gap would have been shorter if the previous Government had acted more quickly? What comfort can he give that he will do all that he can to ensure that this vital link for the whole of Scotland is completed before 2016?

Stewart Stevenson: We are, of course, working with all possible speed. I assure colleagues that, in exploring the continuing possibility of one of the tunnel options, no change has been made to the timescale. It is important that Parliament understands that we remain on the same timescale—2016 is the best and earliest opportunity to deliver what the people of Fife, the Lothians and wider Scotland need.

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): Will the minister clarify whether the new Forth road crossing will be a replacement bridge or additional to the existing bridge? Has he considered the public transport component of the new bridge? What modal split does he envisage? In the light of last week's statement and debate on climate change and carbon offsetting, has he factored in the carbon emissions of the various options that are before him? I would have looked up the answer but, although the minister said in his statement that the information was published on Transport Scotland's website today, it was not available before we came into the chamber.

Stewart Stevenson: When we consider the strategy and we have the details, we will consider all aspects, including environmental aspects such as carbon.

On the issue of replacement, the member must recall that we do not know the lifespan of the existing crossing. All efforts are being made to extend its life. We have to protect the link between Fife and the Lothians. In doing so, we wish to enhance the public transport options. We also want to consider the use of multi-occupancy vehicle options to ensure that people who use their own transport to cross from Fife to Edinburgh and vice versa do so in an optimal way.

Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con): The previous Government instituted quarterly reviews of projects against time and cost. Will the minister clarify whether, in any of those reviews, the concerns that he has outlined today were picked up? If so, when were they picked up and what was done about them?

On the Borders railway, will he clarify whether the conditions and financial contribution that he has outlined today are in any way different from those of the previous Administration?

Stewart Stevenson: Derek Brownlee should perhaps direct his question on what happened before this Administration came in a few weeks ago to someone sitting rather closer to him. The important point is that we have—as is normal, natural and necessary—reviewed what we have inherited. I spelled out the financial commitments in relation to each and every project, and we propose amendments only in the cases of the Edinburgh trams and EARL. I also indicated our support for some new strategic projects, and I hope that the member was listening when I did so.

Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): I welcome the minister's comments about the Forth crossing. Will he give us more information about the consultation? Will he be interested in hearing public opinion, or will it simply involve exhibitions telling people what is going to happen? Will he

confirm which type of tunnel he will consider? Will it be a bored tunnel or a submerged tube?

Crucially, given that geological site investigations have not taken place at all sites, what is the basis for the costs that have been outlined today? Can the minister explain how the cost of a bridge has leapt from £330 million in a Faber Maunsell report to the Forth Estuary Transport Authority in 2004 or from the £1.2 billion that he quoted to me in our meeting last week to up to £3.5 billion today?

Stewart Stevenson: Margaret Smith's first question was on what we will do over the summer with the communities. The consultation will be about engagement and discussion, and a vital part of the process will be to hear the views of the people who will be affected by any or all of the proposed developments.

On the tunnel, we have not yet concluded whether it would be a deep tunnel or a semi-submerged tunnel. On costs, to ensure that it is possible to compare projects coherently, I have used outturn prices throughout. The prices that were quoted previously were for the outset of projects. It is important that we understand what projects are likely to cost in 2016 as well as what the budget might be today. I am making a fair comparison today.

Christopher Harvie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I have three detailed questions for the minister. Costs have already been covered by Margaret Smith, but can I ask for the minister's attitude to the fact that the number of bus passengers in Scotland—an awful lot of emphasis has been placed on bus carriage as an alternative—fell by 16 per cent between 1993 and 2003? That figure comes from Kenny MacAskill in 2004.

The Presiding Officer: Can we have a question, please?

Christopher Harvie: I want to know the minister's attitude to the bus as an alternative.

Second is the question of a multimodal tunnel. Will that multimodality include the possibility of high-speed rail links through the tunnel? Thirdly, how do we plan for the expected explosion in oil prices when we hit peak oil, with the \$200 barrel and the £12 gallon? Those considerations must be factored in.

Stewart Stevenson: I am sure that the bus passenger figures that Chris Harvie used are correct. It is worth making the point that, since 2003, bus patronages have risen somewhat. They are now at approximately half the level that they were in 1960, but they are heading in the right direction.

On the multimodality of the tunnel, no options have been ruled in and no options have been ruled out.

On oil prices, the member may be interested to know that the power requirement for the electrified line between Edinburgh and Glasgow may be 10MW. That is equivalent to five wind turbines. I have made the connection.

The Presiding Officer: I apologise to the many members who wanted to ask a question but whom I have been unable to call.

Transport

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-243, in the name of John Swinney, on transport. I call Mr Swinney to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament endorses the Government's transport priorities and notes that the Government party proposed during the election campaign not to proceed with the Edinburgh Trams and current EARL projects, but planned an additional crossing for the River Forth.—[*John Swinney.*]

The Presiding Officer: I call Wendy Alexander to speak to and move amendment S3M-243.1.

15:05

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): I suspect that, as the debate progresses, nobody will be in any doubt that the statement that has just been made was simply a cover for killing the Edinburgh airport rail link and trams projects. In response to a question from Derek Brownlee, Mr Stevenson made it clear that every other element of the previous Administration's programme remains in place. When I asked about the new priorities, the minister cited the Aberdeen western peripheral route, which, as he admitted, is already in the programme. He then mentioned the study on electrifying the Glasgow to Edinburgh rail line. Therein lies the sleight of hand—the costs of electrifying that line would fall not to the Executive, but to Network Rail's capital programme. The Executive would not have to make any payments until after 2012. The same applies to the Forth road bridge. Let no one be in any doubt that EARL and the trams projects are being killed because the Executive cannot make its sums add up in this session. Any Glasgow to Edinburgh line or Forth road bridge costs will fall in the next session.

Today's debate is about the Parliament's will and whether Edinburgh deserves the proper infrastructure for a capital city. The Scottish National Party has simply lost the argument on EARL and the trams. The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change claimed that the costs were out of control, but they are not. It is telling that the minister did not mention the costs of the projects in his statement. He claimed that he had been vindicated, but he is, in fact, dangerously exposed by briefing against his department and claiming that costs are out of control. The Auditor General for Scotland made it clear—as Mr Stevenson made it clear in his statement—that the real issues relating to EARL are management issues; they are not money issues. Those management issues are for the Executive to fix.

In recent weeks, the Executive has spent money as if it were confetti, and its claims do not wash. It stands condemned of short-sighted self-interest. All the Opposition parties are acting in the interests of the country; the Government's motion, on the other hand, puts party above country. It has been left to the Opposition parties to put the capital first.

Many people in Scotland wanted to give the new Administration the benefit of the doubt. They knew that the SNP's style in opposition had always owed more to the art of condemnation than to compromise, and more to noisy public protest than to quiet negotiation, but many Scots hoped that power would change that. For a little while, we heard promises such as:

"The days of Scottish Government imposing its will on the Parliament are behind us".

It was said:

"My pledge to the Parliament today is that any Scottish Government that is led by me will respect and include the Parliament in the governance of Scotland".—[*Official Report*, 16 May 2007; c 25, 36.]

That is what the First Minister said. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Ms Alexander: The First Minister also said:

"we need a Government that is prepared to listen to the Parliament."—[*Official Report*, 23 May 2007; c 68.]

Such promises will turn to dust today.

In his conclusion, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth might reflect on his own statements. He once mentioned speaking to

"people who cannot believe that, although the Parliament voted for something ... the Executive is able to wriggle out of implementing the will of Parliament.—[*Official Report*, 15 March 2001; c 592.]

The cabinet secretary is wriggling out of the will of Parliament today. There will be a post-Parliament press conference when the SNP loses the vote. How graceless can things get?

The motion oozes party prejudice and geographic grudge. The cabinet secretary has told us that the costs are out of control. However, encouragingly for Scottish public life, Audit Scotland simply would not be cowed into validating that untrue claim. The Auditor General concluded that the trams projects show clear corporate governance; well-defined project management; sound financial management in reporting; good risk management procedures; and a procurement strategy aimed at minimising risk. Yet, prejudice still prevails. The minister still wants to cancel the projects, washing more than £100 million down the drain to satisfy party prejudice

and geographic grudge. So much for the protestations of prudence that we have heard.

The Auditor General states that the Edinburgh airport rail link project remains within the cost envelope of £650 million, as previously stated, with a rise of less than 4 per cent over earlier budget estimates. That is hardly out of control. I pay tribute to the other Opposition parties for their willingness to come together with us in supporting the same amendment. We do not want to burst the budget; we want the leadership that can properly be expected from a Government.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): Does Wendy Alexander accept that there must be constraints on the ability of other parties to commit the Government—or to infer that the Government should be committed—to financial commitments outwith the budget process?

Ms Alexander: If the cabinet secretary had one shred of evidence that costs were out of control, the word “cost”, in respect of EARL or trams, would have appeared in the statement today.

On EARL, because we believe in prudence, we have given the Executive the summer to sort out the governance issues before returning to the chamber. That is entirely reasonable for anyone whose true interest is the delivery of the project. However, we will not allow the SNP to dress up cancellation as prudence or value for money. The truth is that Audit Scotland is telling the Executive that the costs are currently within the financial envelope, and Transport Scotland has told it that EARL has the highest cost benefit ratio of any infrastructure project, including every one that has been mentioned today. Yet the Executive still holds out, refusing to go ahead with the current project.

The Executive is simply wrong on the merits of the schemes. At stake is the future of our capital, which is the powerhouse for Scotland’s economic growth. Scotland’s capital should not become the victim of the SNP’s increasing inability to make its own sums add up in the Parliament. The ministers have known definitively for a week that there is no smoking gun, yet they will not rethink their opposition to the projects.

There are still a few hours left before the vote and, no doubt, SNP members are considering their tactics for their press conference. I ask them to ponder the following. Five weeks ago, our new First Minister promised:

“Our job in the chamber is to lead and to persuade”.—
[*Official Report*, 23 May 2007; c 60.]

The Executive has not succeeded in persuading anyone—not the business community; not the Auditor General; not the Parliament.

The Opposition parties are not offering any blank cheques. If we agree to the amendment, the cost of the trams will be capped and the ministers will return to us with a delivery strategy for EARL. If they do not, they will set themselves on a collision course with the parties in the Parliament and send a signal to the people of Scotland that, in the Parliament, it is the Opposition parties and not the Executive that speak for Scotland. Sidelining Parliament just because the Executive can is not smart; it is simply smug and will, ultimately, be self-defeating. The ministers should listen to the siren voices on their own side. Today is the day when, if the Executive does not start listening, it will start losing—now and in the future.

I move amendment S3M-243.1, to leave out from “endorses” to end and insert:

“notes that the Edinburgh Trams project and EARL were approved by the Parliament after detailed scrutiny; further notes the report of the Auditor General for Scotland on these projects and, in light thereof, (a) calls on the Scottish Government to proceed with the Edinburgh Trams project within the budget limit set by the previous administration, noting that it is the responsibility of Transport Initiatives Edinburgh and the City of Edinburgh Council to meet the balance of the funding costs and (b) further calls on the Scottish Government to continue to progress the EARL project by resolving the governance issues identified by the Auditor General before any binding financial commitment is made and to report back to the Parliament in September on the outcome of its discussions with the relevant parties.”

15:14

Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con): Of course, we would not be having this debate had the Conservatives not pushed for it during the debate that we had some weeks ago. I am sure that those who are in favour of Parliament making decisions will congratulate us on that.

Notwithstanding the minister’s statement, it is difficult to support an Executive motion that endorses the Government’s transport priorities when we do not know precisely what those priorities are. Simply publishing the Government’s view on each individual project is not the same as indicating which ones are the priorities. That is no different from what the previous Administration did.

On that great day of consensus some weeks ago, when the SNP accepted the amendment to its motion that said that it would not act arbitrarily, it also accepted that all future major transport projects would be properly costed, evaluated and prioritised. When priorities are being set, we have to state which projects rank above the others; it is simply not enough for the Government to say which projects it supports and which it opposes.

We welcome the publication of the Auditor General’s report, as we welcomed its invitation. The report is a useful piece of work that provides

Parliament and the public with additional information with which to judge the performance of two important transport projects. We therefore commend the Government for inviting the Auditor General to undertake the work, and we commend the review team for producing a comprehensive document in a tight timescale. The more information that we have on any transport project, the better.

At the time, the Audit Scotland review was not universally welcomed; indeed, some condemned it. Today's colleague, Tavish Scott, made the terrible allegation that the cabinet secretary was using the report as a means of trying to find the evidence to support a political decision. I merely point out that in Wendy Alexander's amendment, which I and Tavish Scott support, we are using the Audit Scotland report to support a political decision.

Perhaps the Liberal Democrats have changed their position from that of some weeks ago, when they said that all the projects should go ahead as planned; today's position—that EARL should not go ahead until the problems that were identified by the Auditor General have been sorted—is because the Auditor General indicated that there was precious little planning as far as EARL was concerned.

We will support Wendy Alexander's amendment for several reasons. We support the notion of a cap on the Executive's contribution to the trams. As Wendy Alexander said, there must be no blank cheques. By supporting that amendment, Parliament has the opportunity to send the message that we are in favour of the trams project, but not at any cost. We can also send a signal to TIE and to the City of Edinburgh Council that we will not support a bail-out if they fail to control costs. The Auditor General did not find evidence to suggest that costs are spiralling out of control, but it is up to the promoters to ensure that that remains the case.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Does the member agree that it would be only fair that any additional costs that might be incurred by a delay in either project until autumn should be borne by the Executive?

Derek Brownlee: I do not agree with that point in relation to the trams, because I see no reason for there to be a delay on the basis of the Auditor General's report and, unless the issues around EARL can be resolved, I can see no reason for it to continue. The issues have to be addressed and they are serious enough to suggest that, until they are resolved, the project should not proceed, which is what the amendment suggests.

I do not think that the fact that a significant sum of money has already been spent on the trams is

in itself sufficient reason for saying that the project should continue. However, the promoter needs to take a long, hard look at the project, given what the Parliament is likely to say today. If the promoter cannot finance the construction of the project within the budget it is allocated, it will bear responsibility for the public money that has been spent.

In the light of the Auditor General's report, it would be reckless to support EARL without seeking to have the issues raised. The report does not kill off EARL; it gives the Government the opportunity to rescue the project and today's amendment provides the Government with the opportunity to come up with options for how EARL could be maintained. There is no objection to Transport Scotland considering alternative methods provided that, in doing so, it does not prevent the existing project from sorting out the issues that were raised by the Auditor General.

All responsible parties in the Parliament accept the need for a new Forth crossing and recognise the scale of the budget that that is likely to require. It would be irresponsible of any Government not to consult properly both on the alternatives for the crossing and on the methods of financing it. We support a new Forth crossing and hope that in procuring one the Government will not put ideology ahead of value for the taxpayer.

Winning today's vote is not the same as forcing the Government to proceed with either EARL or the trams project, but neither is the Government's losing today the same as ending the prospects for a new Forth crossing. It is for the Government to decide what it will do in the light of how Parliament votes today, just as it is for us to decide what we will do in the light of how the Government responds to today's vote.

15:20

Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD): I thank Wendy Alexander and offer qualified thanks to Derek Brownlee for working together with us on this important issue. The Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative parties are prepared to put aside political differences to work constructively for Scotland.

I agree with the points that Mr Brownlee made on the Forth crossing. Liberal Democrat members support the work that is being and will be done on the crossing. However, we, the Labour Party and the Conservatives will not be deflected from our purpose this afternoon of pinning down the SNP on an issue that it said it would bring back to Parliament. It has not had the courage to do so. [*Interruption.*] SNP members are shouting, but Mr Swinney should read his motion, which is not about EARL and trams but about many wider

issues. Mr Swinney, Mr Stevenson and Mr Salmond said that they would bring EARL and the trams project back to the Parliament, but they have not had the courage to do so. *[Interruption.]* I ask for quiet from SNP members.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): Order. The member has only six minutes.

Tavish Scott: On EARL and trams, the SNP has dug a hole for itself. Originally it supported both projects. Then SNP members changed their mind and pledged to scrap them. After the election, realising that the Opposition parties were not playing their game, they backtracked and started to spin themselves into costs being out of control. Messrs Salmond, Swinney and Stevenson claimed on the record that costs were running out of control, but they refused to publish any evidence to prove that.

As the hole got deeper, they commissioned Audit Scotland to find a justification for their position. I accept Derek Brownlee's mild remarks on that point, but the problem for Mr Swinney is that Bob Black did not play ball. The Auditor General concluded that there was no evidence that costs were out of control. I am sure that Mr Swinney is writing down something useful, but he should write down that the Auditor General repeated to the Audit Committee this morning that the cost estimates were robustly prepared. I hope that Mr Swinney will quote those comments back to me when he winds up.

Because the SNP would not publish the evidence to support its cost assertions and blamed Transport Scotland—the Government's own agency—for that, I asked the permanent secretary for an explanation. His letter to me this morning states that Transport Scotland provided incorrect figures to ministers. The permanent secretary tells me that those figures were corrected within a day, so presumably ministers have now been assured by their officials and by the Auditor General that the estimates are sound. Should one day's uncertainty kill a project? No. However, Alex Salmond has pronounced. A day after the publication of Mr Black's report, he kept on digging—he is already halfway to Kirkcaldy. Perhaps the SNP should keep Mr Ewing's policy of tunnelling under the Forth.

The main argument that ministers are now making concerns the management of EARL. Let Parliament be clear about Audit Scotland's report. The Auditor General could have said that governance on EARL was irretrievably broken; he did not. He could have said that the matters that he identified could not be addressed; he manifestly did not. He could have recommended that the project stop because of procurement; he did not. He found no evidence for a

recommendation to stop the Edinburgh airport rail project.

Any capital project at this stage in its delivery has governance issues and EARL is a complex project. What, therefore, is the SNP's plan for rail links to the airport? Perhaps in Mr Swinney's winding-up speech, which I am sure will be entertaining and robust, he will elaborate on that plan. I am sure that Mr Swinney accepts that procurement and governance will be issues no matter what the proposal. The SNP has been disparaging about the work that the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee did on the alternatives.

Keith Brown (Ochil) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP) rose—

Tavish Scott: I will give way happily to Christine Grahame, because she was a member of that committee. She will confirm that the committee found a quarter of the benefits at half the cost of the current proposal. So, the SNP alternative produces much less value for money.

Christine Grahame: As Tavish Scott is aware, two out of five members of that committee voted against the bill proceeding any further—Jamie McGrigor and me.

Tavish Scott: I am happy to accept that, but I notice that Christine Grahame did not agree with my central proposition about the value-for-money exercise.

A rail link from all over Scotland to Edinburgh airport is a good project for Scotland. Today, when the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism gave evidence at the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, he spoke sensibly about the importance of infrastructure. Jim Mather quoted the four lessons of success of the Irish Minister for Finance, Charlie McCreevy, who advises as much investment as possible in infrastructure. In Dublin, that now includes an airport rail link.

The SNP is wrong in its assessment of such projects' value to Scotland. Alex Salmond has made much of building a consensus in Parliament and on this issue, there is one: it just does not include the SNP. Let us be clear—if Parliament supports trams and EARL today, and the SNP stops the projects, Alex Salmond will defy the will of Parliament and no amount of spin will get him out of that hole. I urge Parliament to support the amendment in the name of Wendy Alexander.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. Speeches will be a tight six minutes because I wish to call many members to speak.

15:27

Gil Paterson (West of Scotland) (SNP): I declare an interest: my business, which is Scotland-wide, delivers to and services the motor industry.

I know how important trams are to many members in the chamber, but as this is a transport debate, I will speak about a couple of other areas. Although I am in the motor industry, my pet subject, strangely enough, is undergrounds. Why would someone in my industry be interested in undergrounds? The simple, straightforward reason is that undergrounds provide the ability to move folk underground at a time when an increasing number of vehicles are on the roads. We need to make room for a more efficient way of moving people about.

Again, because of my type of business, I have to be abroad a lot. I have been to a number of places and looked at their underground services, which are quite different in many parts of the world. I use the example of Santiago in Chile; although its economy is not exactly cutting edge, it has one of the finest underground services that members could imagine. The number of people that that service can move is quite fantastic.

I was able to go to Prague with the tartan army. That was just—

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Will you confirm whether this speech is relevant to the debate?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Paterson, I was about to say to you that we are talking about the Edinburgh trams, the EARL project and an additional crossing over the River Forth. I wonder whether you are straying a bit away from that subject. I will listen very carefully to what you have to say over the next minute or so.

Gil Paterson: I am sorry; I will need to ask for guidance. The *Business Bulletin* says that this afternoon's business is a transport debate. I am clearly talking about transport.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The motion is quite specific. However, I ask you to carry on. I will listen to your next couple of sentences.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I must point out that the first words of the motion are:

"That the Parliament endorses the Government's transport priorities".

The member's point is that underground is a priority.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The motion goes on to be quite specific. I have said three times—[*Interruption.*] Do not speak to me from a

sedentary position. I have said three times that I will listen to what Mr Paterson is about to say. I said that members have a tight six minutes, and he has now lost three.

Gil Paterson: I will just have to miss out the comments on my forays abroad that prove my point that underground systems are very efficient and should be constructed in Scotland.

When, as a member of the Local Government Committee in the first session of Parliament, I asked representatives of the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority about underground services, I was greeted with the same sniggering and sneering. People in Scotland do not seem to think that they are capable of bringing an underground service to fruition. However, the Glasgow underground system, which is the second oldest in the world, is about to undergo improvements. I am sure that people who were around when it was first opened would see no difference in the present service.

One issue that I think is quite apt in this debate is the M8—or, as I call it, the biggest car park in the United Kingdom. The M8 is the UK's most congested motorway.

Mike Rumbles: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I do not think that the M8 was mentioned as a priority of the SNP Government. In any case, as I understand it, this debate is supposed to be about the major priorities of the SNP transport policy, which are to cancel the Edinburgh trams and EARL. Many members want to speak on that subject.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I suppose that one could argue in the loosest sense that those projects will take traffic off the M8. Mr Paterson, I wonder whether we could keep things a bit tighter, please.

Gil Paterson: Well, we are talking about a transport strategy and opportunities that might arise if these projects fall. For example, more money will be available for other areas. Surely—

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Gil Paterson: For goodness' sake.

Surely if resources became available for the M8 to be expanded, that would benefit Glasgow and Edinburgh. I should be allowed to speak about that subject. The fact is that, if we could open up the M8 to three or four lanes, that would be the best investment that we could make in Scotland. Everyone in Glasgow and Edinburgh would benefit from such a move.

Indeed, I have an awful strong feeling that the people of Edinburgh want something material that will benefit them instead of a straight tramline that

goes nowhere. I believe that, if those people knew that they would benefit from investment in improvements in the M8, they would support the SNP today.

15:34

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): It has taken us some time to reach this point, but I want to state my support for the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative amendment to the SNP motion. The projects are absolutely vital to the sustainable economic progress that is encapsulated in the cabinet secretary's portfolio. They reflect years of consultation and development and are vital to the capital's future development—which is, in turn, vital to the future of Scotland.

In the early days of the Parliament, those of us who were in the Executive were criticised for our lack of ambition because, at that time, we were not proposing trams. Over recent years, a revolution has taken place in transport funding but, for all that, John Swinney will still face challenges in managing his responsibilities. He inherits a budget that has increased massively since the Parliament's early days. His challenge is to retain that level of expenditure through the spending review.

The three projects that are mentioned in today's motion are all crucial for Scotland. Although they are at different stages, have different management structures and stakeholders and face different financial challenges, the Government cannot run away from managing and delivering them. That it takes years to develop major transport infrastructure does not fit easily with the four-year term of office that we have as members of the Parliament, or with the recycling of transport ministers that takes place.

Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Sarah Boyack: Not just now, thank you.

I hope that the SNP will listen to the voices of members from all round the chamber on the trams project and EARL.

Transport connections in the east of Scotland have been improved, with crossrail and phase 1 of the Waverley project. Plans are progressing for an interchange at Haymarket and there are park and rides around the city, but they and all the developments that Stewart Stevenson mentioned are simply not enough. An excellent bus service is not enough for the capital's future—more strategic investment in capacity on the key corridors in the city is needed. Our roads in the city and across central Scotland's motorway network are grinding

to a halt, so the trams project and EARL are vital if we are to achieve modal shift.

Over the past decade, we have created 50,000 jobs in Edinburgh. The future development of the city region will require mass transit, which means trams. The Auditor General's report highlights the robustness of the approach that has been taken to management of the trams project. The explanation for the enthusiasm of business for trams in Edinburgh is that businesspeople know that if we want to create 35,000 new jobs in our capital, we will need the infrastructure to service them and to get people from their houses to those employment opportunities. We must do that by delivering reliable, high-quality services that connect with other types of public transport.

Parliament has discussed the National Audit Office's report on several occasions and the lessons from it have been learned and built into the trams project. The proposals that we are discussing seek to integrate bus, rail and car. More can be done on cycling.

The business case has yet to be produced, but we cannot stop the trams project now. Are the ministers seriously suggesting that we should stop it and wait until we have the business case, which would mean losing months of progress? I ask the ministers to reflect on the fact that we are at a critical point in the process. In his statement, Stewart Stevenson expressed regret that a great deal of money has been spent on trams without a metre of track being laid, but no one would build an office block without putting in secure foundations. The whole point of the money that is being spent is that it is needed for the preparatory work for the laying of the tracks.

Today's debate is a useful reality check for ministers. If they think that the trams project is a difficult scheme, they should wait until they manage the Commonwealth games project, if Glasgow's bid is successful. Managing the trams project will be good practice for that. The key questions are whether it stacks up and whether it is well managed. The Auditor General gave it a clean bill of health.

I ask John Swinney to listen to what members who have debated the topic for years, and people outside Parliament, are saying. He should listen to the business community, to the further and higher education institutions that need to be connected to the tram system and to residents and environmental groups in Edinburgh, who are all asking us to proceed with the trams project.

Stewart Stevenson was wrong to say that if we proceed with the Edinburgh projects, he will be in charge of "boom and bust" in transport. He has the opportunity to manage for the long term. That is his inheritance—it reflects the fact that the Scottish

Parliament has worked with the UK Labour Government, with the result that our spending on public services has more than doubled. That represents a massive opportunity, which Parliament must seize.

It is not acceptable for the Government to exercise prejudice by selecting two from a raft of projects and to condemn Edinburgh to years of congestion then grinding to a halt by putting a stop to new developments that are crucial to the city's development. We must tackle congestion and provide improved connectivity and increased capacity in our rail infrastructure: the trams will link in with those objectives. The Edinburgh projects are ambitious, but they are achievable and they represent value for money. In other words, they perform the very tasks that Stewart Stevenson set out in his statement.

We cannot allow the new Government to condemn our capital city to grinding to a halt, nor can we allow it to condemn Scotland's sustainable economic future by cancelling the EARL and Edinburgh tram projects. They are vital if our city region is to remain competitive with the rest of Europe, which is why I urge every member to think seriously about voting for the amendment, which commands support not only across the chamber but outside it.

15:40

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I regret that we are debating the two separate transport projects under a single motion. The arguments for the two projects are different and neither project is contingent on the other.

Public support for the trams project is overwhelming, as members will have seen in a research report earlier this month. There is support for the project from businesses, from local employers and from people who would use the tram service to commute. There is support across the political spectrum and, with the exception of the SNP, all political parties have consistently supported the tram scheme. There is also support from sustainable transport organisations and non-governmental environment organisations. Given that level of broad support for the tram scheme, it is time just to "Get on with it!", to quote the *Evening News*. The project is on course and does not have the complex governance problems that the Government claimed it would find. I fear that raising issues around utilities diversions in the project is close to clutching at straws.

On the EARL project, there is less consensus, not necessarily in Parliament, but outside it. Sustainable transport organisations and environmental organisations in Scotland oppose EARL. There are options other than that scheme

and difficult management issues in the scheme have been identified, so the issues around EARL are different.

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): I seek clarification from Patrick Harvie. Previous contributions from the Greens on EARL were based on the Greens' fundamental opposition to transport links to airports because they would feed the increase in the use of airports. However, the Greens' amendment, which was not accepted for debate, seemed to suggest that the Greens prefer an alternative airport link project. Will the member clarify the basis of the Greens' opposition to EARL?

Patrick Harvie: I am happy to do that. Mr McNulty is simply misinformed. We do not have a fundamental objection to public transport routes to airports. In fact, we supported the Glasgow airport rail link, albeit that we did so with not a great deal of enthusiasm, but we came down in favour of it.

The answer to Des McNulty's question, like the answer to Tavish Scott's earlier question, hangs on something that Chris Harvie said in his question to the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change. Chris Harvie talked about peak oil, and about our need in the 21st century to burn less of the stuff, full stop. We will be unable to afford, financially and environmentally, to burn more of it. Therefore, a project such as EARL, which is contingent on continued dramatic expansion in aviation, is unsustainable and unjustifiable. However, a smaller-scale project—in the context of a reduction in the expansion in aviation that we must find a way of explaining to ourselves—which Tavish Scott might feel had a less favourable cost-benefit ratio, would become much more justifiable.

The EARL and Edinburgh tram projects are different and exist in different contexts, so it is a shame that we are debating them together under a single motion. However, even without our amendment, which proposed to remove the call in Wendy Alexander's amendment for work to continue on EARL, many of us feel that the EARL project is so fatally flawed that it will kill itself off without the need for a parliamentary motion.

I acknowledge that only one political party—the Scottish Green Party—currently rejects the expansion of aviation on which EARL hangs, and recognises the unsustainable nature of the project.

John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Patrick Harvie: No, thank you.

Because of that situation, there is a case for saying that Parliament has endorsed EARL and that work on it should proceed. Given that argument, I will certainly not want to throw the

baby out with the bath water, so I will support Wendy Alexander's amendment. [*Applause.*] Oh, it is nice to have an effect, isn't it?

On the need to recognise the will of Parliament, I ask members to listen to this, whatever side of the argument they fall on: members of all parties should remember that one day they may find themselves trying to run a minority Administration and that the precedents that we set now will apply at that time. Anybody who wants minority Government to be workable should acknowledge that there are questions that we have not even begun to articulate about how the budget process can work under a minority Administration and still reflect the democratic will of Parliament.

If we are willing to put the country ahead of our parties, as Wendy Alexander rightly calls on us to do, we can resolve those questions. The best thing the Government can do to strike the right tone for that debate is to accept that, on this first and most contentious occasion, it must bite the bullet and build and pay for the Edinburgh trams.

15:45

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Today's debate and decision will have a major effect on Scotland's transport network and on how Scotland is governed. The question of how we will proceed with a minority Government is pertinent. If we agree that the criteria of there being sound justification and a robust business case, which the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change mentioned in his statement, are those on which we should move, we must acknowledge that some previous projects did not meet those criteria. Our manifesto said that we would remove the tram and EARL projects so that reconfiguring of Scotland's transport priorities could be undertaken. That is the key to much of what I will say.

There are large areas that have unmet need, none of which was addressed by the previous Government, which went from project to project without a strategy. The ability to deliver the EARL project has already been called into question—the amendment acknowledges that the Auditor General's report reveals that the project has many flaws. That said, it is important to consider the alternatives, which the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee could not discuss, such as the Turnhouse rail airport integrated link—TRAIL—project, the Dalmeny loop and the potential for a siding or a short loop beside the existing railway that would go past the airport. Those projects would cost a lot less, fit into a transport strategy and help to speed up the journey time between Glasgow and Edinburgh.

I welcome the minister's commitment to the proposals for electrification of the line between Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Sarah Boyack rose—

Rob Gibson: I am not taking an intervention from Sarah Boyack.

The circumstances of the tram proposals are a problem. As a member of the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill Committee, I saw a proposal for the circular route of tramline 1. However, only a small fraction of that proposal is to be delivered. We will not get until later—and then only if the figures stack up—the part of the line that would include the social inclusion area at Granton. We will not get the tram proposals that Parliament approved; we will get a travesty of them. That is what the Opposition is asking us to sign up to today.

On the ability to pay, United Kingdom ministers have already turned down tram projects in Leeds and Liverpool, and the extension of the Manchester system on the basis that it could not be guaranteed that the costs would be kept down. Therefore, given Parliament's budget constraints, it is prudent for our Government to take stock and to ask Parliament to have a care in doing the job.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Will the minister accept an intervention?

Rob Gibson: I would love to be a minister.

Kenneth Gibson: Sorry.

Does Rob Gibson agree that one of the difficulties with EARL and the trams project is that, if we invest in those projects, many worthy projects in Scotland will be denied money? For example, the Glasgow crossrail proposal would cost approximately a quarter of the cost of either of those two projects and would, if progressed, open up the north, south, east and west of Scotland.

Rob Gibson: That is exactly the point that I am making. That kind of project, which could help us all, was not part of the project-by-project approach that we had in the past.

We should listen to people from other parts of Scotland. In the north, we have been virtually excluded from the transport strategy. I will mention three aspects of that.

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Rob Gibson: No.

The Sutherland Partnership's transport group has talked about the need to fulfil the potential of Sutherland's railways for growth in passenger and freight services. We need extra train services to the far north, increased use of rail for moving

timber, and shorter journey times brought about through rail infrastructure improvements, which I say should include the Dornoch rail link. However, we cannot deliver those projects, because they were never thought about earlier. Transport partnerships are submitting plans to the minister that are far from being ambitious enough to be part of a strategy.

The contradictions in the ways in which members from the north have been behaving are shown up by their attitude towards the proposed new Forth crossing. In a column in the *John O'Groat Journal*, Jamie Stone took Fergus Ewing to task for saying that the number 1 priority of the SNP was a new Forth road bridge. Jamie Stone claimed that that would "scupper all the improvements" in Highland constituencies.

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): Will the member give way?

Rob Gibson: Not yet—I will finish quoting first. Mr Stone continued by saying that Mr Ewing

"would do well to remember the Highlands—a good distance from the Firth of Forth and the central belt."

Despite that, Mr Stone will be voting for these projects in Edinburgh and not for projects in the north of Scotland. How interesting.

Mr Stone: The member may like to consider why I wrote to the minister, Stewart Stevenson, a month ago to ask that previously agreed improvements to the A9, such as those at the Ord, would be continued. Five weeks later, I have received no reply. Why is that, if what the member says is so true?

Rob Gibson: I think that we will see that Stewart Stevenson will be able to deliver that kind of project, and I look forward to the Scottish Government doing just that.

"From the point of view of Scotland—and Inverness—cancellation is certainly the best option."

So said the *Inverness Courier* yesterday. The editorial continued:

"So we urge all our area's MSPs, of whatever party, to vote against the Edinburgh schemes as currently proposed tomorrow."

That is the view from outside Edinburgh, and that is the view that suggests that we do not yet have a Scottish strategy. This Government is likely to create such a strategy, despite having inherited a mess.

15:51

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): Three weeks ago in the chamber, the decision of the Scottish Executive to invite the Auditor General for Scotland to report on the Edinburgh trams project and the EARL project was

scorned and criticised by the parties of the former Executive—particularly by the touchy Mr Tavish Scott, who seems unduly sensitive about the pet projects that, until recently, fell into the domain of his leader Mr Stephen and himself, as the ministers who were responsible for transport. By contrast, the Scottish Conservatives fully supported the invitation to the Auditor General. Not only did we argue, quite correctly, that an incoming Scottish Executive is entitled to review the spending priorities of its predecessor, but we argued that, in the case of these two major projects, nothing was to be lost and everything was to be gained by the review. We said that the ultimate decisions would be better informed as a result. We were right and the Scottish Executive was right. The parties of the previous Executive were wrong. I say that in relation both to the Edinburgh trams project and the Edinburgh airport rail link project.

The Auditor General has given a clean bill of health to the management of the trams project. That is good news. Any sensible person would say that it was well worth a fortnight's wait to have that confirmed. The terms of the Auditor General's report enable us to proceed with greater confidence in that major project. I hope that the report will also go some way towards countering mounting public concern. There is absolutely no doubt that public support in Edinburgh for trams has waned significantly over the past two or three years. Although the project once enjoyed widespread if—some might say—uncritical support in the capital, I now find, as an MSP with an Edinburgh constituency, that opinion is very evenly divided.

One reason for the waning in support has undoubtedly been a severe loss of confidence in the outgoing Labour council, which was recently confirmed at the ballot box. However, let us not forget that the project as originally conceived in the two bills that were passed during the previous session for tramline 1 and tramline 2, has been scaled down considerably. That has been euphemistically described by the promoters of the scheme as "phasing". We now have phase 1a, phase 1b, phase 2 and phase 3. However, there is not a penny piece in the pot for the later phases.

It is interesting that although the project has been scaled down, the financial contribution of the Scottish Executive has not. The contribution was set by the previous Executive at £375 million, index linked, and the promoters of the scheme were supposed to find the balance that would be required to complete the two lines in their entirety. However, as we know, that will not now happen.

However, there has been no corresponding pro rata reduction in the financial commitment of the Scottish Executive. Instead, it was confirmed that

the full funding allocation would be made available to the City of Edinburgh Council for the construction of phase 1a from Leith to the airport. We simply cannot go on like this in relation to the trams project, which is why, on publication of the Auditor General's report last week, the Conservatives said that not a penny more of public funding should be committed by the Scottish Executive to the project. It is, in our view, time to volley the ball back into the court of TIE and the City of Edinburgh Council, and to make it clear to them that as promoters of the scheme it is their responsibility to bridge any funding gap, and that they alone are responsible for deciding whether to proceed with the project and how that gap will be funded.

Margaret Smith: I do not disagree with David McLetchie on that. Does he agree that, given the importance of the trams project to the waterfront area and the great deal of work that has been done there on building homes, there is also a part to be played by the private sector in Edinburgh?

David McLetchie: I agree entirely with Margaret Smith on that, and I very much hope that TIE and the council will be able to obtain financial contributions from that source for the extension of the scheme.

John Swinney: I am interested in Mr McLetchie's line of argument about the need for the project to be delivered as people expect it to be delivered. If a cap is applied to the project in the fashion that he envisages, would it be legitimate for TIE or the City of Edinburgh Council to come back with a proposal that had been scaled back from the one that we have before us?

David McLetchie: No, it would not. We have got to the end of the line—if I can put it that way—in relation to scaling back. The responsibility now lies with the council either to commit or not to commit to delivering the project as currently envisaged, on time and on budget. If it cannot do so, it should not go ahead.

In relation to EARL, the Auditor General's report has disclosed a disquieting state of affairs. No responsible Government or political party could vote to proceed before the issues relating to the governance and management of the project have been properly addressed. The second part of the amendment echoes what the Conservatives said when the report was published; namely, that those issues have to be resolved before we go any further with EARL and before any more public money is committed to the project.

As members know, the Conservatives were critical of aspects of the EARL project, particularly whether it represented value for money, given its price tag. We pressed the promoters for further information about alternatives, such as the

Turnhouse option. As a result of our efforts, such information was made available to Parliament. At the time, that constructive approach to EARL was in stark contrast to the Scottish National Party, which professed support for a rail link to Edinburgh airport but failed to specify the nature of its alternative. I understand that the Government will make alternative proposals. Although it is belated, that is welcome. The necessary pause while the governance issues are resolved is, equally, an opportunity for other options to be considered. The Conservatives will give that fair consideration when those options are presented. I support the amendment.

15:58

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): I was one of the members who very much welcomed the talk of new politics after the election, which was variously described by ministers as including the Parliament, co-operating with other parties, and deploying rational argument instead of mere assertion. We will see how the Government includes Parliament later on in the day, but there was precious little sign of rational argument against the tram and EARL in the statement today. There were only some spurious points about Glasgow to Edinburgh rail electrification and a new Forth bridge, both of which Labour supports, but neither of which will involve any capital expenditure in this parliamentary session. I suppose that the Government tried out those new spurious arguments because its old spurious arguments were blown out of the water by the Audit Scotland report.

On trams, emphatically nothing in the report said that the cost of the trams was running out of control, as the transport minister rashly put it a week or two ago. Indeed, Audit Scotland said that there were sound arrangements in place to manage the project.

Of course, Audit Scotland made different points on EARL but, in our amendment, we take on board the recommendations for governance arrangements that are proposed in the report.

In flapping about to find arguments about the trams—in the past few weeks in particular—the Government has continually confused EARL and the trams. It has also rolled up the costs of phases 1a and 1b of the trams project although it is phase 1a for which Parliament has given money and there is £45 million more than is required for the completion of that phase. It has also ignored Audit Scotland's evidence that there is a series of measures in place to keep the price of the trams project under control, including fixed-price contracts. All that it has been able to refer to in the past week or two is the cost of utilities diversion,

but there are significant contingencies in place for that. Indeed, nobody with more experience of digging up Edinburgh can be found than the company that has been awarded that part of the contract.

I am astonished that the Government is ignoring all the evidence and the long list of supporters of the trams that TRANSform Scotland sent to us in its briefing today. It is also ignoring the long list of countries that have developed trams—countries that, in other circumstances, the SNP has been pleased to praise. I mentioned the example of Dublin to the First Minister three or four weeks ago. I seem to remember that he said that he would examine the trams there, so I hope that he will do that quickly. I remind members that the tram network in Dublin was built only two years ago and is now being developed. The trams there are becoming longer and more frequent, and new lines are being developed, some of them with the help of the private sector. Congestion in Dublin is down and economic development that is directly attributable to the trams is up.

Keith Brown: On ignoring evidence, does Malcolm Chisholm remember that, when he was a member of the first Scottish Executive, it approved the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line at a cost of £13 million? It has been announced today that the project will cost between £80 million and £85 million. The previous transport ministers—Tavish Scott and Sarah Boyack—would not take interventions from me earlier in the debate, so will Malcolm Chisholm apologise on behalf of the previous Executive to the constituents who moved into my area but will be unable to use the link until next July?

Malcolm Chisholm: There is a valid discussion to be had about that point, but it is of no relevance to the point that I am making about the Edinburgh trams project. We cannot say that inevitably there will, because there have been cost overruns on one project, be cost overruns on the other. The people who are involved in developing the Edinburgh trams project have learned the financial lessons of other such projects. They have also learned the lesson of the necessity of integrating trams with buses, which is at the heart of the proposal.

Buses alone, which seem to be the SNP's favoured option, will not in themselves solve Edinburgh's congestion problems. We all know that Princes Street and Leith Walk, both of which are in my constituency, are already at saturation point with buses. We need trams to complement buses in order to stop Edinburgh and Leith from grinding to a halt in the years to come. That might not happen tomorrow, but we must look to the future.

Trams are also catalysts for investment, jobs and regeneration. The pace and scale of the waterfront development in my constituency will be curtailed if the trams do not go ahead. They will bring jobs to the people and connect people to the jobs.

The other crucial issue is the environment and climate change. I praise the new Government for the emphasis that it has placed on climate change, but it is utterly inconsistent to speak of that and to scrap a project that will reduce emissions, run on renewable energy once the Government's policies on renewable energy have been implemented and is proven across the world to be the most effective way of getting motorists out of their cars.

Today is a defining day for the Parliament. It is a defining day for being serious about climate change, congestion in Edinburgh and economic development throughout Scotland. It is also a defining day for the new politics and responsible minority Government. For all those reasons, I hope that the Government will accept Wendy Alexander's amendment.

16:04

Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): I welcome Stewart Stevenson's comments about the new Forth crossing—that has obviously shocked him so much that he has had to leave the chamber. I am pleased that the Government has decided not to make a quick decision on the basis of the recommendation to have another bridge close to the existing crossing. When I met the minister last week I made the case for a tunnel further upstream and pointed out the need to stream traffic across the river Forth and the great impact that another bridge at Queensferry would have on my constituents. It is only right that not only my constituents but people in Fife and West Lothian have the chance to be involved in a consultation on what is probably the most important transport project for our country.

I heard what the minister said about being committed to the Borders railway. However, I remember that the SNP was once committed to trams and the Edinburgh airport rail link, so I take his statement with a pinch of salt.

I will focus the rest of my remarks on trams and EARL. We need modal shift in Edinburgh, which the trams can help to provide, and we need integration and a robust approach to Edinburgh's congestion problems, which the two projects would also provide. Whether we like it or not, buses are not enough.

Over the past few weeks, the SNP has scaremongered that costs were running out of control and even enlisted the independent Auditor General in an attempt to prove it. It then spun the

Audit Scotland report on trams and EARL to suggest that it said something that it quite clearly does not say. The Auditor General said in the report, and repeated at today's meeting of the Audit Committee, which I attended, that the financial management of both projects is sound. I can only imagine the disappointment of Messrs Stevenson and Swinney when they read what the Auditor General said about the trams project:

"Arrangements in place to manage the project appear sound with:

- a clear corporate governance structure for the project which involves all key stakeholders
- clearly defined project management and organisation
- sound financial management and reporting
- procedures in place to actively manage risks associated with the project
- a clear procurement strategy aimed at minimising risk and delivering successful project outcomes."

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): I repeat that we still support the Borders railway.

Did the Auditor General not say to the Audit Committee this morning that unless and until the main organisations involved in the rail link, including Network Rail and Edinburgh airport owner BAA, were fully signed up to the project, its progress would be uncertain? As yet, there is no sign that Network Rail and BAA are fully signed up.

Margaret Smith: The minister will have to live in anticipation of what I will say next on that.

On trams, Audit Scotland made it clear that

"unless work progresses to plan, the cost and time targets may not be met."

The Government's approach is therefore hardly prudent, given that the Audit Committee heard today that every month of delay costs the taxpayer £4 million.

As I said in a previous transport debate—I am happy to send Derek Brownlee a copy of that speech—it is not about signing a blank cheque, but about monitoring the project and taking it through the final business case, having the City of Edinburgh Council and TIE work within the budget given to them and making progress on the delivery of a modern transport system for our capital.

Christopher Harvie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Margaret Smith: No.

Anyone who listened to the Auditor General at the Audit Committee today could be in no doubt about the robustness of the trams project. Many of the key issues about contracts, tender contracts

and the funding in place for phase 1a were well covered in that exchange.

I have supported the airport rail link, which is a nationally important project, but we accept that, given Audit Scotland's comments about governance and procurement, it is right that those issues should be re-examined. That is what the Opposition amendment allows the Government to do. Surely ministers' role is to try to tackle the sorts of problems that have arisen, which are not insurmountable. I stress a crucial point: I expect ministers to get BAA and Network Rail to the table and to tackle the issues, not to run away from them.

It is worth remembering that the Audit Scotland report confirms that the financial management appears sound, but that the rail link project is

"at a relatively early stage".

It is only weeks since the bill was agreed by Parliament. If the SNP is going to re-examine and stop every major transport project every time there is a problem, we will never see another Forth crossing, the Borders railway or the dualling of the A9. The Opposition amendment represents a sensible, balanced way forward. It is time for the SNP to accept that it did not win a majority of seats and that the Opposition parties are united against it in supporting the proposals that we, too, took to the Scottish electorate and for which we secured greater support.

It is time for the SNP to listen to and respect the will of Parliament. A few weeks ago, the SNP won a famous victory, possibly because many Scots felt that it was time for a change, time for a new politics. What they have got instead is old politics in which, for some MSPs, the only good idea is one that they have had themselves and the arguments of robust commentators, independent auditors, free spirits on the SNP's back benches and civic Scotland are to be treated with contempt and ignored.

I hope that, tonight, Parliament will vote for a better transport future for our capital city and defeat the Government. I hope that Parliament will endorse progress on these important projects for the good of Edinburgh and Scotland and will ensure that the will of Parliament prevails. It's time!

16:10

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): That woke me up.

I welcome the commitment by the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change to the re-establishment of the Borders railway by means of the Waverley Railway (Scotland) Act 2006. Of course, I am concerned about the

statements about other issues relating to funding, but I and members of other parties have been raising those issues for some time. For example, on 15 June 2006, Derek Brownlee asked a parliamentary question about the increase in the cost of the Airdrie to Bathgate line. The question was:

"To ask the Scottish Executive whether any of the factors which led to the reported increase in cost of the Airdrie to Bathgate rail line could recur in the construction of the Waverley line and, if so, what these factors are and what the financial impact might be."

In the interests of fairness, I will quote Tavish Scott's whole answer. He said:

"The increases in cost estimate associated with Airdrie to Bathgate are a result of scheme refinement and clarification issues in the early stages of scheme development. The scope of the Borders railway is more defined and therefore further cost increases from such refinement processes are not anticipated, apart from those which may come about from amendments to the bill by the bill committee."—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 16 June 2006; S2W-26449.]

That is a fairly recent answer. I am, therefore, delighted that Transport Scotland is undertaking a review of the situation because there have been issues about whether the funding structure that was in place for the line would deliver. Indeed, when David Mundell asked the Liberal Democrat minister with responsibility for transport, Nicol Stephen, whether the Executive would fund any shortfall in the final cost of the Waverley line over and above the £151 million that had already been identified, Nicol Stephen replied:

"Responsibility for identifying and securing any additional funding required for the project rests with the bill promoters."—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 2 June 2005; S2W-16645.]

That was the Liberal Democrat position. It is most unfair of the Liberal Democrats to criticise us. We have been in Government for only 42 days; they were in Government for 2,921. I have a feeling that it is reminiscent of Oliver Hardy looking at Stan Laurel and talking about another fine mess.

There is a huge amount of good will towards the Borders railway in this chamber—there has been since 1999—but we must examine the financing of it. I invite the minister or the cabinet secretary to meet me and councillor David Parker to discuss the issues and lay to rest any fears that might be being falsely spun—heaven forbid—by the Liberal Democrats.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Does the member accept that the authorised administrator, as announced by the previous Administration, is to be Transport Scotland, which is the responsibility of transport ministers? Given that the authorised administrator is, indeed, the Scottish Executive, why should Borderers be asked to fill a gap the size of which

we have not been told? Why should Borderers be asked to pay for what the authorised administrator—

Christine Grahame: Rather than stirring up mud, Jeremy Purvis should wait for the due diligence that is being undertaken by Transport Scotland to show him what the actual position is. I repeat, if there is a funding deficit, it certainly was not created by those on this side of the chamber; it will have existed before we took office. That is the issue. There is no one who is more committed to the Borders railway than I am, but if there is a funding gap, Liberal Democrat ministers were in charge of it.

It is a falsity to say that, if we do not proceed with the Edinburgh airport rail link, the Borders railway will stop. In fact, if we proceed with the particular airport rail link that is being proposed, we might not have money in our pockets to pay for other transport schemes. The EARL project is a specific link; it is not simply a surface route to Edinburgh airport. It is a link that diverts the River Almond, the Gogar burn and goes under a live runway and there are indemnity issues associated with all that.

I sat through the committee proceedings. At the end, hand on heart, I could not say that the evidence showed that the project should be funded for £650 million, £1,000 million or whatever the sum would turn out to be. I know that members agree that, when projects involve spending such large amounts of money, the private bills procedure is not the right way to proceed because there is simply not the scrutiny of funding that there ought to be. The scrutiny is wholly inadequate.

I acknowledge Patrick Harvie's fair comments on the Edinburgh airport rail link, but I do not see how he can vote for the Labour amendment. During the debate on the motion to pass the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill, Chris Ballance said:

"we do not support the Edinburgh airport rail link. We remain absolutely unconvinced that it is a priority as a way to connect Edinburgh airport to the rail network or as a missing link in the national rail network."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 2007; c 33148.]

I do not think that it is enough for Patrick Harvie to say that the project will wither on the vine and die. He should come clean. He should say that he has been stitched up and that he wants to vote against the amendment.

Patrick Harvie: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in her last minute.

Christine Grahame: I will take a brief intervention from Patrick Harvie.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are in your last minute.

Christine Grahame: Do I have discretion?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No.

Christine Grahame: I apologise to Patrick Harvie.

In conclusion, the Edinburgh airport rail link simply must not proceed. Despite what David McLetchie said, I do not know how the projects could be capped. Would we start building the railway or trams and then stop at some point? We should come clean and say that the Edinburgh airport rail link project is a disaster. We need a surface link. I thank the minister again for endorsing the Borders railway.

16:16

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): The two Edinburgh tramline bills were introduced in January 2004. While our new First Minister was relaxing at Westminster, MSPs were working hard for the future of Scotland. There was extensive consultation during the two years that followed and overwhelming support was expressed by the public and in Parliament. The bills were passed in March 2006 and royal assent was given to the Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill in April 2006 and to the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill in May 2006.

That support continues. Some 77 per cent of students at Telford College would use the tram, more than half of them leaving cars to do so. At the Scottish Gas headquarters at Granton, 81 per cent of staff would use the tram, 63 per cent of whom currently drive to work. Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce announced that an online poll of its members showed that 75 per cent were in favour of the tram. In the Parliament, 84 MSPs voted for line 1 and only 17 voted against it. For line 2, 88 voted in favour and only 20 voted against. There was support from throughout the chamber—from Labour, Liberals, Tories, Greens, the Scottish Socialist Party and independents. The supporters included two SNP members—Rob Gibson and Alasdair Morgan. A majority of members supported the tram.

We have had more than a year to work towards implementing the acts. The project is robust and financially secure, as John Swinney demanded, unless the Executive has made it otherwise. By last month, £79 million had been spent. Cancelling the project now would be an enormous waste of public funds and an affront to public aspirations. However, our minority Executive is attempting to overturn the result of the democratic process, not in an up-front, principled, democratic way, but by avoiding votes that would be lost, by creating

uncertainty through delay and by using that uncertainty and delay to undermine the project. That is shabby treatment of the public and those who have worked hard to make trams a reality. It is also another example of a policy that is inconsistent with the Executive's avowed concern for the environment.

If the Executive does not respect the wishes of Parliament, the Executive does not deserve respect. If we are heading in the direction of chairman Salmond developing his dictatorial tendencies, it is the Parliament's duty to assert democratic control. Parliament must protect the democratic process and must not allow a minority to derail the trams. Otherwise, what will happen next? Is anything safe from the clutches of nationalist mismanagement?

It should be noted that the SNP's conversion to dictatorship from the Executive has been somewhat sudden.

With regard to the Presiding Officer's ruling that the Executive does not have to accept the views of Parliament except for acts, motions of no confidence, tax-varying powers and so on, I note that the question has been raised before. I recall what happened in 2001 when the Executive did not feel bound by a vote when it was defeated on a casting vote against the status quo. I also recall the outcry—the stushie—from folk such as Alex Salmond, John Swinney, Fiona Hyslop, Nicola Sturgeon, Kenny MacAskill, Richard Lochhead, Linda Fabiani, Bruce Crawford, Adam Ingram, Shona Robison, Fergus Ewing, Michael Russell and many others, including a certain Mr Alex Fergusson, who signed a motion stating that

"Parliament agrees that it is the national representative body of the Scottish people, with responsibility to make decisions on behalf of the people on devolved matters, and therefore, in keeping with Scotland's democratic tradition, demands that the Scottish Executive implement all such decisions of the Parliament".

I also recall it being said that

"We are not interested in the Executive's 'having regard to' or listening to Parliament; we want the Government to tell us how it will implement the will of Parliament."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 2001; c 590.]

That was from John Swinney. I agreed with him then, and I agree with him now—the Executive should implement the will of the Parliament.

Legally, the Alex Salmond for First Minister party, which appears in the motion to have been—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. Is the member going to address the motion in the near future?

Cathy Peattie: I have.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are beginning to stray from it. You should come back to it in your last minute.

Cathy Peattie: I am not straying. Morally, the Executive should support the legislation. It was passed by the Parliament, and it should be supported. I have no confidence in an Executive with such blatant disregard for democracy, the will of the people and the will of the Scottish Parliament. I support the amendment in Wendy Alexander's name.

16:21

Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP): I point out to Cathy Peattie that the Presiding Officer, regardless of who it has been, has never voted against the status quo. He has always voted for the status quo, which is why the Government was defeated when it was.

I welcome the minister's commitment to a new Forth crossing. He is well aware that I am not concerned about whether it is a bridge or a tunnel, but that whatever is chosen is started and completed as quickly as possible. I continue to be concerned that there will be a gap between 2013, when the bridge is likely to be closed to heavy goods vehicle traffic, and 2016, when the new crossing is expected to open.

I recognise that the delay can be laid exclusively at the door of the previous Executive. In November 2005, I asked:

"Does the First Minister recognise or even acknowledge the strategic importance of the Forth road bridge for the whole of Scotland? Does he understand that, at the very least, the bridge is facing frequent closure for repair, that heavy goods vehicles are likely to be banned from it from 2013 and that the Executive needs to have a plan B in place? Will he therefore give an undertaking that the work on the case for a new Forth crossing will begin now?"

The First Minister said:

"It would be particularly stupid of us to start to carry out the work on a new Forth road bridge ... That is a particularly daft suggestion and we will not take it up."—*[Official Report, 17 November 2005; c 20862.]*

That is the reason why there is likely to be a gap between 2013 and 2016.

Notwithstanding the tardiness of the previous Executive, I hope that, in summing up, the cabinet secretary will give some comfort on that matter. I urge him to take the opportunity to give confidence to the businesses from the east of Scotland that the gap can be closed. We cannot have a situation in which there is no Forth crossing for HGVs between 2013 and 2016.

Let me turn to public transport options on the bridgehead. We need better and cheaper train journeys from Fife if we are to reduce both the pressure on the bridge and carbon emissions.

Until the rail prices are reduced and there is a more frequent service from Edinburgh to Fife and northwards, there will be continuing pressures on whatever crossing is built. Whether we keep to the existing bridge, build a new bridge or build a tunnel, there will always be pressure at that point unless we do something about the number of commuters going in each direction. That is why I urge the minister to look seriously at what can be done to ensure that the rail operators reduce fares. It costs over £14 a day for a return ticket from Markinch to Edinburgh. That is simply out of many people's reach. I understand why people take their cars to work in such circumstances.

The question whether an incoming Government should be allowed to determine its own priorities has been thrown up several times today and in previous weeks. Margaret Smith said that we are engaging in the old politics and that we will have our way, regardless. I refer her to what Sarah Boyack—who is not in the chamber—once said. In 1999, as the Minister for Transport and the Environment in the incoming Labour-Liberal Executive, Sarah Boyack made a statement in which she ditched the previous Conservative Government's commitment to improvements to the Preston roundabout on the A92 to Balfarg, which is in my constituency, and reduced the A8000 from trunk road status. There was a debate, but the majority Government held no vote on whether what was proposed should be implemented.

I was the convener of the Waverley Railway (Scotland) Bill Committee, not one member of which was convinced of the robustness of the funding and the business case for the Borders railway, which is why we insisted on the Minister for Transport and Telecommunications coming to the committee and giving commitments. It is important to keep commitments.

I welcome the minister's statement and the debate.

16:26

Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): For transport specialists like me, this is a significant day. We are debating the Edinburgh trams schemes and the Edinburgh airport rail link—two major transport projects. It is also pleasing and—I admit—surprising, that we have been given more details about the Scottish Government's transport project priorities.

The Auditor General's report on the two Edinburgh projects was the subject of extensive questioning and discussion in this morning's meeting of the Parliament's Audit Committee. We agreed to note the report and we noted the Auditor General's previously planned review of major capital projects, which will appear on the

committee's future agendas. That said, any views that I express in this debate are not necessarily the Audit Committee's views.

The ministerial statement that preceded the debate has tended to overshadow it, which was clearly the Government's intention. The Government intended a pre-emptive strike—or perhaps I should say a pre-emptive smokescreen. To be fair, Labour supports much of the Government agenda that the minister outlined in his statement. I refer to the Airdrie to Bathgate rail link, the Glasgow airport rail link—although I am disappointed by the year-long delay in that project—the Waverley station improvements, the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine—

Stewart Stevenson: It may be helpful to the member to know that, by consolidating the GARL and signalling improvement projects, the overall work between Glasgow and the airport will be completed sooner. We regard that as an important guarantee that there will be no disruption as a result of work on that line in advance of 2014, which is an important year for Glasgow.

Charlie Gordon: I am grateful to the minister for that clarification.

We have a shared agenda on the completion of the M74, the M8 link at Baillieston to Newhouse, the M80 Stepps to Haggs project, and, of course, the Aberdeen bypass. Like the Government, we support a new Forth crossing and electrification of the Glasgow to Edinburgh rail line, but those schemes do not impact in a major way on the Government or on this parliamentary session. The new Forth crossing is at least nine years away and electrification of the Glasgow to Edinburgh line could be funded by Network Rail under its United Kingdom responsibilities, albeit that there would be a revenue impact—not a capital impact—on the Government's programme. Therefore, the Government's counterposing a new Forth crossing and electrification of the Glasgow to Edinburgh rail line against the EARL and Edinburgh trams projects is a smokescreen.

That leaves the question why the SNP Executive really wants to cancel EARL and the Edinburgh trams. I presume that it is because it wants to spend the money on other things. There is nothing wrong with that per se, but what other things are they? The ministerial statement that preceded the debate did not tell us. The statement highlighted the projects that I have detailed, which were already being undertaken by the previous Government. It also mentioned projects that could be funded in other ways or that will be funded for in the future. The statement mentioned other trunk road projects, the details of which we were told had been placed on Transport Scotland's website; however, at 2.30 pm today, no such details were available on that website. A ministerial

smokescreen is one thing, but a minister misleading the Parliament is quite another.

The question remains: what does the SNP Executive want to spend the money on if it cancels the Edinburgh airport rail link and the Edinburgh trams? Parliament has not yet been given the answer to that question, but it appears that Rob Gibson, who has left the chamber, may know. He made an unashamedly pork-barrel contribution to the debate. There is evidence, too, of double standards and pork-barrel politics in the Government's continuing support for the Borders rail link. There, evidence of financial shortages is being set to one side, whereas false condemnation is being made of the two Edinburgh projects.

I respect the minister and the cabinet secretary as parliamentarians and as individuals; however, for the sake of our country's economy, they must maintain a strategic approach to their ministerial responsibilities. They must not let themselves be overwhelmed by pork-barrel considerations; they should remain conscientious adversaries and recognise that they have not yet made the case for the drastic change that they want to make to schemes that have been agreed by the Parliament.

16:32

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): I am pleased to sum up on behalf of the Scottish Liberal Democrats. The outcome of the debate will be of great significance to Scotland's transport future. I am, however, disappointed that, after promising us a dedicated debate on trams and EARL, the SNP did not have the courage to allow that but, instead, tried to obscure the matter with a general debate on transport issues. I am also disappointed that SNP back benchers such as Gil Paterson took time away from other members who wanted to speak on the Edinburgh projects.

The minister has outlined his transport priorities, which, frankly, are unambitious. In the chamber a few weeks ago, I predicted that no transport project, however far advanced it was, would be safe with the SNP. Well, the minister has certainly proved me right on that. He has informed us that there is now some uncertainty about the Borders railway. He has informed us of a year's delay on the Glasgow airport rail link. He has also informed us that the Aberdeen western peripheral route—a project in which he should have a keen interest in driving forward—will not be delivered until around the end of 2012.

Stewart Stevenson: The member should reflect that the delay was predicted before this Administration came into office and that we had nothing to do with it.

Alison McInnes: I cannot accept that. My latest information, when I stepped down from the north-east Scotland transport partnership, was that the project was still on target for 2011.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): Does the member share my surprise at the extra year's delay in the western peripheral route, given the fact that, only two weeks ago, the minister told me that there was no review and no prospect of delaying the route? Is not that extremely disappointing?

Alison McInnes: I share Richard Baker's disquiet.

The minister has also said that he will scrap the key capital city projects of trams and EARL. What has he promised us in their place? He proposes uncosted, ill-thought-out proposals for investment in buses with no indication of a timetable for implementation. I am a great supporter of buses as a means of transport—buses are one of the most flexible systems we have—but, as Malcolm Chisholm pointed out, we have the opportunity to use trams and buses to even greater effect in Edinburgh, complementing each other to cut congestion and bring about the kind of modal shift that we can only dream about with buses.

We are more ambitious than the SNP. We want Scotland to have a world-class transport system that is fit for the 21st century. In government, we increased transport spending to record levels and put 70 per cent of that £1 billion spend into public transport. That investment was welcomed throughout Scotland. Certainty was needed to give Scotland the sustainable transport system it required. That is why national, regional and local transport strategies were developed and why they must be given due regard.

The Auditor General's report acknowledges that the Edinburgh projects

"have been through the Parliamentary approval process to obtain statutory authority to proceed and have been developed in response to national, regional and local transport strategies."

That is more than can be said for the SNP's transport plans. The Government is being thrawn over the Edinburgh transport projects, and showing an obstinacy that is born out of over-generous promises made during the election—promises that the SNP did not think it would have to deliver.

As Tavish Scott said, the SNP has dug itself into a hole with a series of ludicrous U-turns and misinformation. It has wasted time and untold amounts of money with its futile attempts to justify its unpopular political decision. As Sarah Boyack said, trams are more than just an improvement to public transport—they will give rise to new jobs, new homes and many new opportunities. They are

critical to delivering 35,000 new jobs in the city, and a comprehensive transport infrastructure needs to be in place to ensure that the current bus system can cope. The trams will link new communities and make a major contribution to much-needed community regeneration.

City business leaders believe that halting the trams projects would undermine economic growth and inward investment, and threaten other infrastructure proposals that are predicated on the trams going ahead. For example, we know that Telford College and Scottish Gas based location decisions on forecasts about the trams.

I am not sure that the minister has been reading the same report as me. He said that there is a litany of unfinished work and incomplete governance, but the report I read concluded that the trams project demonstrates a "clear corporate governance structure" with

"clearly defined project management and organisation ... sound financial management and reporting"

good risk management procedures and a

"procurement strategy aimed at minimising risk and delivering successful project outcomes."

In so far as there are any problems, the report says that they are largely caused by uncertainty about whether the new SNP Administration will allow the work to go ahead. The stated utilities diversion work risk would exist in any large project.

On EARL, the report concluded that the project demonstrates sound financial management and reporting, costs

"based on a thorough estimating process",

sound project management arrangements and good risk management. Because EARL is at an early stage, the estimated cost and time targets remain uncertain and more progress needs to be made before definite conclusions can be reached. There are issues to be addressed, but the project's foundations are unassailable.

Contrary to the claims from the SNP's front bench that costs are overrunning and out of control, the Auditor General concluded that

"The cost and time targets for the Edinburgh trams project have been developed using robust systems".

The Government has no evidence from the report to cancel the projects and it must commit to funding immediately. No major transport project is without risk, but the risks must be managed. Is the Government saying that it is not up to the job? Margaret Smith reminded us that the SNP's election slogan was, "It's time." It did not tell us that it meant that it is time for uncertainty, time to backtrack and time to unravel. It is time for the SNP to show that it understands that the new

politics it has been so keen to talk about works both ways.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): It is time to wind up.

Alison McInnes: The SNP must recognise that the will of Parliament is to allow these well-developed projects to continue without further delay. It is clear that a majority of members will support the amendment tonight. It will remind the Government that it is a minority Government and that it has a moral responsibility to act on the majority view of this Parliament.

16:38

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): Tonight, I and the Conservatives will vote for the amendment in the name of Wendy Alexander—although I suspect that our reasons differ slightly from some that have been given during the debate. The black-and-white attitude towards who is to blame and who is not does the Parliament little credit. A great deal of the disappointment that is being experienced by those who believe that funding difficulties are ahead is caused by the ambitious projects that were put in place by Liberal Democrat and Labour ministers without the necessary robust financial and scheduling applications.

We must thank the Executive for making a statement today, but I will take this opportunity to criticise elements of it. Three weeks ago, the Parliament passed a motion—comfortably—that asked the Executive to come forward with a costed, evaluated and prioritised programme for transport projects. There has been some effort to achieve a costed evaluation, but I am not convinced that there has been prioritisation.

Today, we heard an attempt by the minister to toss projects into two bins, one marked “priority” and the other marked “not a priority”. I hoped that we would get—I still want to see one—a genuine prioritised list, in which one item is prioritised over another and we can see which is at the top and which is at the bottom. I do not believe that we were given such a list today.

In general terms, we must take into account an issue about which we are all beginning to learn—the fact that, over the past 10 years, costing and timing major public projects of this nature has become a much less exact science. Consequently, Governments of all kinds have begun to fear the prospect of costs running out of hand and schedules running over time. In today’s debate it has been suggested that, in the eight weeks since the First Minister was appointed, the minority Government that the SNP is running has been responsible for a lot of those cost overruns and time delays. That cannot be the case, and some of

the blame must pass to the predecessors of the current Government and Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change.

Mike Rumbles: Does the member agree that the delay on the priority of the Aberdeen western peripheral route, which the minister announced today, is outrageous and will cost an absolute fortune? Two weeks ago, in an answer to Richard Baker, the minister said that there was no delay to the project; now, he is blaming the delay on someone else.

Alex Johnstone: In the long term, the proper prioritisation of projects will help to prevent further delay.

Jeremy Purvis: Will the member give way?

Alex Johnstone: I must move on to other aspects of the debate.

We have a robust report from the Auditor General on the trams project and the Edinburgh airport rail link, and we must take the issues it highlights seriously. The Conservatives have always said that there should be no blank cheques. I welcome the fact that the amendment makes it clear that no additional money from the Scottish Executive should be committed to support the Edinburgh trams project.

Margo MacDonald: Will the member take an intervention?

Alex Johnstone: Not at this stage.

We have grave concerns about the nature of the Edinburgh airport rail link and the current weakness in the project’s governance. Consequently, we welcome the fact that we have an amendment that demands that there be proper delays to ensure that we overcome some of those governance problems before any further resources are committed to EARL. It has been interesting to hear SNP members, especially Rob Gibson, put forward arguments for cheaper alternatives to the project. Where was Rob Gibson when the Conservatives proposed exactly that during consideration of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill? We will not tolerate a pick-and-mix attitude to priorities—there must be structure to the process.

The phased development of the trams project allows us to say that we do not want any more to be spent on it. The project may be reaching the end of the line—we must be careful to ensure that we understand the technicalities behind that.

Under recent Governments, transport projects have been characterised by delays, expense and failure to prioritise. We must not allow that to continue with the replacement Forth crossing. I welcome the fact that the motion contains a commitment to initiate the project and to get work on it under way. It is disappointing that the

previous Executive failed to make appropriate commitments in that way. I welcome the commitment that the Executive has made and ask it to ensure that the Forth crossing is at the top of its list of priorities, as it is of ours.

16:44

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): There was some sympathy for Mr Swinney when, a few weeks ago, he was appointed to his new job. A lot of people felt that the job of chief drone to Mr Salmond's queen bee in the SNP Government would test even Mr Swinney. We can see today that the reality of the competition between political imperatives arising from manifesto commitments and where Mr Swinney would like to be—presenting sound finance and prudent government—is like a string being stretched too far.

Four weeks ago, Mr Swinney spoke in the chamber about a strategic transport review process. He gave every impression that it would be a serious, detailed and systematic examination of all the transport projects. Today, Mr Stevenson said that that process has now come to an end. What has come out of that four-week review? Not very much, really. The substance of what was announced in today's transport statement is pretty much the same as the substance of what was in previous transport commitments.

We learn that there is a delay in the Aberdeen western peripheral route, I think a station on the Airdrie to Bathgate line has been removed—although that was not mentioned in the statement—and there was a statement about a commitment to electrification of the Edinburgh to Glasgow route but, essentially, the projects that existed before are those that the SNP is now endorsing.

Stewart Stevenson: I am slightly puzzled by the reference to the Airdrie to Bathgate line. There is no removal of any station.

Des McNulty: Perhaps the minister should look at what Ms Hyslop has said in the *Evening News* on that issue. Anyway—

Stewart Stevenson: There is no removal of a station; it is exactly—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Des McNulty: Let us deal with the issues before us. There is no substantive change, but there has been an attempt to use the Auditor General to remove two projects that were previously in the package. The justification for that is essentially supposed to concern value for money, but the reality is that the Auditor General's report provides no such justification.

The Auditor General does not say—as Mr Stevenson does—that costs are out of control. He does not say that there is no basis on which the projects should proceed. In relation to EARL, he says that there are governance and management issues that need to be addressed—which is the responsibility of ministers. On the trams project, he says that effective systems are in place. On what basis does the Government want to subtract those two projects? As Charlie Gordon said, what does the Government want to use the money for? I do not think that there was any honesty in the statement from the minister on what any diversion of the £1.1 billion or £1.2 billion is to be used for.

We expect ministers to address the chamber honestly and to state what they are going to do. I challenge Mr Swinney to state in his winding-up speech what he will do when the amendment is agreed to at 5 o'clock—which it will be. We do not want another statement after 5 o'clock. We do not want a statement to the press at a quarter past or half past 5; we want the Parliament to be told what the Government's intentions are. Ministers know the political arithmetic, they know the reality and they know the substance of the issue. What exactly is the Government going to do? Parliament and parliamentarians should hear ministers' response first.

The Government has made much of its ambitions for Scotland, how it wants to promote sustainable growth and its ideas about a new beginning for Scotland. Can it be sensible that its first major decision on projects that cost very significant amounts of money is in effect to remove projects that are crucial not just to the future of Edinburgh, but to the future of Scotland? The trams and EARL will deliver significant economic benefits to Edinburgh. Those benefits were identified in the analysis that was done in the Parliament—in the systematic work that was carried out during 200 hours of parliamentary scrutiny. Evidence was taken from all the experts, who gave their verdict on the projects; Mr Swinney's verdict is different, but he has not justified it.

It was clear from the statement that the way ahead will be defined by the criterion of value-for-money, but although the funding package proposed by the Waverley railway partnership will not be sufficient to deliver the Borders railway, and although its opening will not be achievable by 2011, we have been told that that project will go ahead. Will Mr Swinney make it clear what will happen if the project does not meet the three remaining funding conditions set by the previous Administration? When will he let us know that? When will he give the Parliament the honest answers and the straightforward rationale and justifications that it needs from a minister?

I make it absolutely clear that none of us in the Parliament has a monopoly on wisdom and that none of us is the sole voice of Scotland. The responsibility of the whole Parliament and all the parties in it is to ensure that the best decisions are made. Such decisions are based on evidence and systematic analysis not just of cost control, but of the engineering elements and the economic benefit arguments. That process, which has been carried out on these two projects, cannot be set aside for short-term political gain or simply because the opinion of the likes of Mr MacAskill, who previously favoured the projects, suddenly shifts against them. How are we to proceed in Scotland if people see politicians making judgments and decisions that are based purely on short-term, rather than strategic, considerations?

Tonight, this Parliament will make the correct decision on the basis of the evidence that we have all been given on these projects. We need to take Scotland forward, but we need to do so on an agreed basis, with proper justifications and with evidence-driven policies. Particularly in this epoch of a minority Administration, the responsibility of the whole Parliament is to ensure that that Administration does not play politics with our—by which I mean Scotland's—money.

16:52

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): In closing this debate, I want first to give Parliament some more details about the Government's investment programme beyond what Stewart Stevenson mentioned in his earlier statement. In the next month, the Government will deliver its input into Network Rail's high-level operating statement. Obviously, that information will be subject to further discussion and debate. One of the priorities that we inherited from the previous Administration, the strategic transport projects review, is under way and will report next summer.

I must also reiterate a point of great significance that was made by Mr Stevenson and with which we must all wrestle. There has been a lot of talk today of how we all have to be part of these decisions and how we must all be aware of the contractual pressures in major transport projects in Scotland. Mr Stevenson said that, with the congestion of projects that are coming forward, we will have to wrestle with the significant factor of construction inflation. Although he made clear our determination to go ahead with the contract for the M74 extension, he also pointed out that we must wrestle with the fact that we have only one bidder for the contract and that we must demonstrate that it provides clear value for money. That will be a major test for the Government and the processes

over which we preside, and will form part of what we take forward in relation to the programme.

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): I am interested in the minister's comments on Stewart Stevenson's statement, in which he indicated that the main issue was prioritisation. However, from what I can see, the Government has taken out two major projects without putting anything else back in. Does that mean that it is significantly cutting investment in public transport in Scotland?

John Swinney: No. I do not know how much of the debate Mr Smith bothered to take part in, but Mr Stevenson made it clear that some major strategic projects that would really deliver connectivity in Scotland, such as the electrification of the Edinburgh to Glasgow rail line, are a greater priority for this Administration than they were for the Liberal Democrat and Labour Administration.

The speech that I enjoyed the most was that of Sarah Boyack, in which she told the Government that we had a number of difficult issues to resolve in relation to transport projects, but that they would be as nothing compared with the complexity of the issues that we would have to deal with in relation to the Commonwealth games in 2014. I am glad that she believes that the Government will be around for such a long time.

Today we draw to a close the process of examining the transport projects that we inherited, as we said that we would do. Stewart Stevenson outlined the Government's transport programme. I thank the officials of the Executive and of Transport Scotland for their assistance in developing that work over the past few weeks.

Ms Alexander: Can Mr Swinney confirm that, in that official examination, the EARL project had the highest benefit cost ratio of any project in the entire Scottish transport programme? Given that it was at the top of the list on benefit cost, why is it the one that he has chosen to kill?

John Swinney: One of the problems with the EARL project, with which Wendy Alexander is so heavily associated and about which the Auditor General has raised such fundamental questions of governance and progress, is the fact that we do not even have trains that can operate compatibly with the recommended system. That sounds like a pretty elementary problem with a major project, and it is one that we inherited as a result of the previous Administration's approach.

It is clear from the debate that, as Mr Gordon said, we must have imaginative major strategic projects. We have set out our arguments on the electrification of the Edinburgh to Glasgow line and we want improvements in capacity to be made on the links to Fife. This Government wants a link to Edinburgh airport, but we want a link that is sensible and not one that is unsustainable.

Tom McCabe (Hamilton South) (Lab): I note what the cabinet secretary has said about the plans for the existing rail link between Glasgow and Edinburgh. Can he confirm whether those plans represent the extent of his thinking or whether his mind is open to the possibility of a fast rail link between those two important cities?

John Swinney: The Government will progress the electrification project as a major priority, but we are obviously prepared to consider other suggestions as part of the process of consensus government of which we are all part.

I turn to the Auditor General's report, which has been the object of great controversy in the debate. If I had followed the advice of the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats some weeks ago, I would not have invited the Auditor General to examine the Edinburgh transport projects. The Auditor General said that EARL was

"unlikely to be delivered by the target date of the end of 2011",

and that it had

"no clear governance framework"

and

"no procurement strategy in place".

He went on to say that the EARL project board

"did not meet between April 2006 and February 2007 and has met only twice since then. Its membership and role is no longer agreed between the main stakeholders and there is no date for the next meeting."

I know that people think that, as a cabinet secretary with extensive responsibilities, I am very busy, but what was Tavish Scott doing when EARL was hitting the buffers?

We cannot ignore the evidence that the Auditor General's report has identified.

Tavish Scott: Where in the Auditor General's report does it say that the costs are out of control?

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): You have about a minute left, Mr Swinney.

John Swinney: I am glad that Mr Scott intervened on that point. One of the points that Wendy Alexander made was that the Auditor General's report was about management, not money. What a ridiculous proposition. Unless tight management is in place, the money will never be under control—that is why the EARL project was heading for the rocks.

On the trams project, the Auditor General highlighted TIE's own assessment that phase 1B of the project—the section to Granton—was not affordable within current funding. Mr McLetchie pointed out that the tram project has been constantly scaled back. The danger with the project is that there is an unwillingness to deliver it

as the people of Edinburgh expected it to be delivered when it was launched; there is also a lack of focus. That is why people are concerned about the whole issue.

Cathy Peattie said that we should support legislation that Parliament has passed. Parliament is not, even on the current spending plans, supporting the legislation that it passed, because the legislation that Parliament passed was for a tram scheme that was more extensive than the scheme that is being put in place. Members should not lecture us on that issue. We are determined to ensure that projects work. I am happy to support the motion in my name, which sets out the Government's commitments on these important issues.

Business Motion

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-248, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 5 September 2007

2.30 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Executive Business
followed by Business Motion
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 6 September 2007

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Executive Business
 11.40 am General Question Time
 12 noon First Minister's Question Time
 2.15 pm Themed Question Time—
 Justice and Law Officers;
 Finance and Sustainable
 Growth
 2.55 pm Executive Business
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business—[Bruce
 Crawford.]

Motion agreed to.

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of motion S3M-233, in the name of Tom McCabe, on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, on the members' allowances scheme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament—

(a) amends with immediate effect the Resolution of the Parliament of 21 June 2001 agreeing to motion S1M-2034 by substituting "is employed by a member or members" for "remains employed by a single member" in paragraph 1.(7)(a) of Part B of the Members' Allowances Scheme referred to in that Resolution; and

(b) confers functions upon the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body to pay allowances in each financial year in accordance with the amended Members' Allowances Scheme.—[Tom McCabe.]

The Presiding Officer: The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motions S3M-249 and S3M-254, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the establishment of a committee and on committee membership and substitution on committees.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) to establish a committee of the Parliament as follows:

Name of Committee: Scottish Parliamentary Pensions Scheme Committee;

Remit: To inquire into and report with recommendations for a Committee Bill on a replacement for the Scottish Parliamentary Pensions Scheme rules;

Duration: Until the Parliament has completed its consideration of the committee's report;

Convenership: The Convener will be a member of the Scottish National Party and the Deputy Convener will be a member of the Labour Party;

Membership: Alasdair Morgan, Peter Peacock, David McLetchie and Hugh O'Donnell; and

(b) as an alternative to Rule 6.3.2 of Standing Orders, that this committee shall have four members.

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) that Helen Eadie be appointed as a member and that John Park and Dr Richard Simpson be appointed to replace George Foulkes and Elaine Smith as members of the Subordinate Legislation Committee; and

(b) the following nominated committee substitutes, as permitted under Rule 6.3A—

Labour Party

Audit Committee	James Kelly
Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee	Irene Oldfather
Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee	George Foulkes
Equal Opportunities Committee	Claire Baker
European and External Relations Committee	Karen Gillon
Finance Committee	Peter Peacock
Health and Sport Committee	Helen Eadie
Justice Committee	Mary Mulligan
Local Government and Communities Committee	Rhoda Grant
Public Petitions Committee	Marilyn Livingstone
Rural Affairs and Environment Committee	David Stewart

Standards and Public Appointments Committee David Whitton

Subordinate Legislation Committee Richard Baker

Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee Malcolm Chisholm.

Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party

Audit Committee Derek Brownlee

Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee Alex Johnstone

Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee Ted Brocklebank

Equal Opportunities Committee Mary Scanlon

European and External Relations Committee Jackson Carlaw

Finance Committee Murdo Fraser

Health and Sport Committee Jamie McGrigor

Justice Committee John Lamont

Local Government and Communities Committee Margaret Mitchell

Procedures Committee Elizabeth Smith

Public Petitions Committee John Scott

Rural Affairs and Environment Committee Nanette Milne

Subordinate Legislation Committee Bill Aitken

Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee Gavin Brown.—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

The Presiding Officer: Questions on the motions will be put at decision time, to which we are about to come.

Points of Order

The Presiding Officer: I take the member's point, but I am not entirely sure that it is a point of order. However, we will look into the matter.

17:01

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I seek a ruling from you in relation to the terms of motion S3M-254, in the name of Bruce Crawford, which he has just moved. The motion proposes a number of appointments, including that of Helen Eadie MSP to the Subordinate Legislation Committee. Now, I know that I am getting old but, unless my memory fails me, I seem to recall that some two weeks ago we overwhelmingly passed a similar motion; I recall voting for it.

On that day in the chamber, we were compelled to listen to some petulant and ill-mannered remarks from Mrs Eadie about my party's convenership of the Equal Opportunities Committee. She went on to complain about being proposed to serve on both the Subordinate Legislation Committee and the Equal Opportunities Committee without her consent and she promised to resign from both committees in protest.

I am sure that none of us would want to see a repetition of the infantile behaviour that was displayed by Mrs Eadie on that occasion, if motion S3M-254 should be agreed to at decision time. Before we vote on the motion, therefore, I ask for clarification from you as to whether on this occasion Mrs Eadie agrees to her appointment to the Subordinate Legislation Committee. If that is the case, can she be given the opportunity to apologise to the chamber for her remarks about my party's convenership of the Equal Opportunities Committee, which she clearly now repudiates?

The Presiding Officer: I am sure that we are all grateful to the member for the point of order, which is not a point of order—it may be a point of revenge.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I prefer to sit in the cheap seats, but I believe that from your elevated seat you are responsible for good conduct and the effective passage of business in the chamber. It has long been my belief that we should have proper microphones in here. As you are responsible for the effective conduct of business, I ask that, during the summer recess, you undertake to investigate better miking for the chamber. No one could hear a word that any of us up here was saying earlier. [*Interruption.*] I have been rudely interrupted by Mr Ewing, but it is okay, Presiding Officer—you do not need to discipline him.

Decision Time

17:04

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S3M-243.1, in the name of Wendy Alexander, which seeks to amend motion S3M-243, in the name of John Swinney, on transport, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)

McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)

Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tymkewycz, Stefan (Lothians) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 81, Against 47, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that motion S3M-243, in the name of John Swinney, on transport, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)

Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tymkewycz, Stefan (Lothians) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: On motion S3M-233, in the name of Tom McCabe—sorry, I am keen to get to the recess too. The division was on motion S3M-243, in the name of John Swinney, on transport, as amended. The result of the division is: For 81, Against 47, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament notes that the Edinburgh Trams project and EARL were approved by the Parliament after detailed scrutiny; further notes the report of the Auditor General for Scotland on these projects and, in light thereof, (a) calls on the Scottish Government to proceed with the Edinburgh Trams project within the budget limit set by the previous administration, noting that it is the responsibility of Transport Initiatives Edinburgh and the City of Edinburgh Council to meet the balance of the funding costs and (b) further calls on the Scottish Government to continue to progress the EARL project by resolving the governance issues identified by the Auditor General before any binding financial commitment is made and to report back to the Parliament in September on the outcome of its discussions with the relevant parties.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-233, in the name of Tom McCabe, on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, on the members' allowances scheme, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament—

(a) amends with immediate effect the Resolution of the Parliament of 21 June 2001 agreeing to motion S1M-2034 by substituting "is employed by a member or members" for "remains employed by a single member" in paragraph 1.(7)(a) of Part B of the Members' Allowances Scheme referred to in that Resolution; and

(b) confers functions upon the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body to pay allowances in each financial year in accordance with the amended Members' Allowances Scheme.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to ask a single question on motions S3M-249 and S3M-254, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the establishment of a committee and on committee membership and substitution on committees. If any member objects to a single question being put, please say so now.

There being no objections, the next question is, that motions S3M-249 and S3M-254, in the name

of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the establishment of a committee and on committee membership and substitution on committees, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) to establish a committee of the Parliament as follows:

Name of Committee: Scottish Parliamentary Pensions Scheme Committee;

Remit: To inquire into and report with recommendations for a Committee Bill on a replacement for the Scottish Parliamentary Pensions Scheme rules;

Duration: Until the Parliament has completed its consideration of the committee's report;

Convenership: The Convener will be a member of the Scottish National Party and the Deputy Convener will be a member of the Labour Party;

Membership: Alasdair Morgan, Peter Peacock, David McLetchie and Hugh O'Donnell; and

(b) as an alternative to Rule 6.3.2 of Standing Orders, that this committee shall have four members.

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) that Helen Eadie be appointed as a member and that John Park and Dr Richard Simpson be appointed to replace George Foulkes and Elaine Smith as members of the Subordinate Legislation Committee; and

(b) the following nominated committee substitutes, as permitted under Rule 6.3A—

Labour Party

Audit Committee	James Kelly
Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee	Irene Oldfather
Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee	George Foulkes
Equal Opportunities Committee	Claire Baker
European and External Relations Committee	Karen Gillon
Finance Committee	Peter Peacock
Health and Sport Committee	Helen Eadie
Justice Committee	Mary Mulligan
Local Government and Communities Committee	Rhoda Grant
Public Petitions Committee	Marilyn Livingstone
Rural Affairs and Environment Committee	David Stewart
Standards and Public Appointments Committee	David Whitton
Subordinate Legislation Committee	Richard Baker
Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee	Malcolm Chisholm.

Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party

Audit Committee	Derek Brownlee
Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee	Alex Johnstone
Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee	Ted Brocklebank
Equal Opportunities Committee	Mary Scanlon
European and External Relations Committee	Jackson Carlaw
Finance Committee	Murdo Fraser
Health and Sport Committee	Jamie McGrigor
Justice Committee	John Lamont
Local Government and Communities Committee	Margaret Mitchell
Procedures Committee	Elizabeth Smith
Public Petitions Committee	John Scott
Rural Affairs and Environment Committee	Nanette Milne
Subordinate Legislation Committee	Bill Aitken
Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee	Gavin Brown.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion—no, it is not; that is it. [*Laughter.*]

Points of Order

17:08

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. The point is in light of the decision that was taken on motion S3M-243. As you are aware, the former First Minister Donald Dewar wrote to my colleague Bruce Crawford on 4 October 1999 in the following terms:

“As part of”

the

“perfectly normal constitutional arrangements, except in certain circumstances, the Scottish Executive is not necessarily bound by resolutions or motions passed by the Scottish Parliament.”

There has been an extensive debate on the Edinburgh trams and Edinburgh airport rail link projects, to which the Government has listened carefully. Mindful of the extent to which those projects are committed and of the level of public expenditure that has already been committed to the trams project, I confirm to Parliament that the Government will accept and implement the provisions in the resolution that has been agreed by Parliament in relation to the Edinburgh trams project. We welcome the fact that Parliament has agreed to a commitment that the project must be delivered

“within the budget limit set by the previous administration, noting that it is the responsibility of Transport Initiatives Edinburgh and the City of Edinburgh Council to meet the balance of the funding costs”.

I also put on record that the Government will pursue the terms of the resolution in relation to the Edinburgh airport rail link. I will return to Parliament with further work on that in the autumn.

I make it clear on behalf of the Government that not in all circumstances will we be able to take the—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Order, please. This is an important point.

John Swinney: I make it clear to the Parliament, on behalf of the whole Government, that it will not be on every occasion that we are in a position to accept the views of Parliament, for a variety of particular reasons. However, on this occasion, we believe that it is appropriate to accede to the will of Parliament. The Government will respect the terms of the motion that has just been passed.

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Although I welcome that assurance from the cabinet secretary, I seek your guidance on whether what has happened will be normal

practice. We have had a ministerial statement followed by a debate during which the Executive was asked to put on record its intentions should the vote go the way in which it has gone. The Executive did not take the opportunity to do that. Is it correct to deal with such matters in a point of order at the end of the day, rather than—
[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Cathy Jamieson: An important precedent has been set here. In reporting properly to Parliament, the Executive ought at least to offer an opportunity for people to know in advance what is going to happen, and an opportunity for further debate. Therefore—
[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Cathy Jamieson: Thank you, Presiding Officer. I hope that you will reflect on this matter and will seek to avoid such situations in future.

The Presiding Officer: Members will be aware that I am obliged to take a point of order, no matter what its content is. I will reflect on what Cathy Jamieson has said.

John Swinney: Further to that point of order, Presiding Officer. During the ministerial statement, Labour members took exception to the fact that the Government has arranged a media briefing for 5.15 on this issue. I put on record that I felt that it was courteous to tell Parliament before I told the media.

The Presiding Officer: I note that point and again I say to members that if a member stands up to make a point of order, I am obliged to take that point of order before determining whether it is a valid point of order.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): On a point of order Presiding Officer. I would be grateful if you could come back to the chamber at some stage to say what you understand the purpose of the summing-up at the end of a debate to be. Would it not be sensible for a member to say, when summing up, what they intend to do if they lose the vote?

The Presiding Officer: The content of members' contributions is nothing to do with the person sitting in this chair.

David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. If Mr Swinney and his colleagues are going to have a media briefing, perhaps they will take with them a full copy of the letter from the late Donald Dewar to Bruce Crawford. Further on in the letter, it says:

"If the Scottish Parliament wishes to impose a duty or function upon the Scottish Ministers, then the way to do that is by enacting legislation to that effect."

I thought that we had done that with the Edinburgh rail and tram bills in the previous session of Parliament. The Scottish National Party should consider that. We have just had a debate that has been a waste of time. Parliament had already decided what action should be taken.

The Presiding Officer: I take your point, and I am sure that the cabinet secretary will be grateful for a full copy of that letter.

Tartan Day Celebrations

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S3M-59, in the name of Andrew Welsh, on tartan day celebrations. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament compliments the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Executive, Angus Council and other Scottish local authorities for their work in developing the concept of Tartan Day, which marks an annual celebration of the historical enactment of the Arbroath Declaration made on 6 April 1320 and seeks to renew the close historical, cultural, trading and other links between Scotland and the rest of the world, with particular attention being paid to countries where the Scottish diaspora is greatest and encourages the development of individual and international friendship and goodwill through Tartan Day celebrations.

17:14

Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP): I wish to compliment the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Executive, Angus Council and other Scottish local authorities for their work in developing the concept of tartan day, which is based on the annual celebration of the historical enactment of the Arbroath declaration made on 6 April 1320.

Tartan day, which is now truly a global celebration of Scottish influence and heritage, was originally conceived in Canada in 1991. United States Senator Trent Lott, who championed the idea of a day to celebrate the contribution made to the development of the US by emigrant Scots, also established tartan day as a public holiday in the US. In 1998, Senate resolution 155 was passed unanimously. In 2005, a similar motion passed through Congress, recognising that 6 April had a special significance for all Americans, especially those of Scottish descent, because the declaration of Arbroath—the Scottish declaration of nationhood, which was signed on 6 April 1320—inspired the American declaration of independence with its message of freedom.

Since then, the celebrations have grown, particularly in America, where they now include events in New York, Washington and Chicago. Many Scottish musicians, dancers, artists and businesses showcase at events in those cities; they also showcase at events in Australia and New Zealand, which have established their own tartan day festivals.

Arbroath abbey is the birthplace of the declaration of Arbroath, which inspired the first tartan day festivals in Canada, the United States and Australia. That encouraged Angus Council, in

2004, to establish the first tartan day celebration in Scotland, with a week-long programme of local events. That first tartan day programme tapped into a spirit of Scottishness throughout communities and political parties and highlighted the willingness of groups and organisations at local, national and international levels to work together to promote Scotland through a tartan day—indeed, a tartan week—festival. Thus, the vision for a celebration of tartan day throughout the country and beyond our borders was born—a national tartan day for Scotland that celebrates the heritage of the country's past and its unique contribution to the world, whether through culture, science or the economy.

Tartan day 2007 saw 36 events take place in Angus, across five of our main burghs and organised in each community, for each community. Around 6 April this year, five local authorities—Angus, Dundee, East Lothian, Stirling and Perth and Kinross—put on events. Over 2007 and 2008, there are plans to roll out Scotland's tartan day nationally and to encourage a buy-in from 14 local authorities, as well as the private sector. I hope that all MSPs will encourage their local authorities to join in and contribute to making tartan day a community celebration throughout the country.

Looking to the future, a business plan was produced that outlined financial indicators showing the evolution of the project from 2007 to 2020. Angus Council calls it its 20:20 vision. The business plan shows the economic impact that is possible if we work together. Angus Council has already produced positive tourism, economic and other benefits through activities such as the international golf challenge and products such as a Chinese-Scottish tartan, which has been very successful. Those initiatives show the potential for tartan day to achieve significantly higher levels of impact.

Figures just released by VisitScotland show an 11 per cent increase in visitors to Angus and Dundee during April 2007, in comparison with the same period in 2006. Tartan day was one of the top three reasons given by visitors for their visit. Next year is the 10th anniversary of the signing of Senate resolution 155, which made tartan day a national holiday in the USA, and plans are progressing for a number of key events throughout the participating local authority areas.

Tartan day activities are an evolutionary process that involves collaboration by local authorities, the private sector and national agencies and from which all parts of Scotland can benefit. I look forward to the Scottish Executive continuing to be part of that process.

Tartan day is a vehicle through which modern Scotland's kinship, history, culture, skills and

quality products can be shared and celebrated by people at home and throughout the world. Having seen that ideal successfully put into action by the Scottish Executive and various agencies, organisations and local authorities working together in the United States, I know that there is massive potential and opportunity for the development of tartan day activities and celebrations. Because tartan day seeks to encourage the development of individual and international friendship and goodwill—that is what tartan day activities are all about—it is a celebration of all things Scottish that can be enjoyed nationally and throughout the world. I hope that we can all co-operate in boosting that process, ensuring the improvement of tartan day and expanding the celebrations and the benefits of friendship and co-operation that they can bring.

17:21

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands)

(Con): As a member of the cross-party group in the Parliament on tartan day, it is a pleasure for me to make a short speech in the debate.

In my time as an MSP, I have twice had the honour of representing the Parliament at the tartan day celebrations in New York—in 2002 and 2004. Our delegation had opportunities not only to join Americans of Scottish descent in celebrating the contribution that they and their ancestors made to the foundation and development of the United States of America but to meet politicians and officials at different levels of government in the United States and Canada and explore issues of common concern and interest. Those included discussion of the relationships between the different tiers of government in a federal system, or a semi-federal system such as we now have, and the opportunity to see how New York city had set about tackling crime and antisocial behaviour in its neighbourhoods to great effect and to learn lessons for Scotland from that. It also gave us the opportunity to assist in the promotion of Scottish business in the United States and Canada and, in particular, to assist our universities, many of which enthusiastically promote Scotland as a place of study for students from those countries.

That is the international dimension. Andrew Welsh has set out some of the historical background to the development of the tartan day concept in Canada and the United States, but his motion draws our attention to the importance of celebrating 6 April—tartan day—in Scotland and using it as an anniversary around which we can both promote our country at home with a programme of events that have domestic and international appeal and help to foster business links and cultural and social relationships. I

commend Angus Council for its imagination in that respect.

Although the political control of Angus Council has changed—for the better in some respects, I hope—it is to be hoped that the successor administration will build on its predecessor's work on tartan day, which has been recognised in the Parliament and by other local authorities. In my experience as a member who has supported the initiative since its outset, it has been conducted on a genuinely all-party, non-partisan, inclusive basis to high professional standards that reflect well on our country.

I look forward to the development of the tartan day concept in the years ahead and the expansion of the programme across Scotland. I hope that the City of Edinburgh Council will take it up—it shall have my full support, as shall others that promote the anniversary and celebrations.

17:24

Bashir Ahmad (Glasgow) (SNP): This is the first time that I have stood up to address the Parliament. It is appropriate that I address the topic of tartan day, because, even in its present form, it is about what it means to be Scottish.

I speak as someone who was born in India in 1940—in other words, on another continent and in another time, before partition and independence for India and Pakistan. Huge distance and many years separate that time from this debate. Today I speak as a member of a Parliament that did not exist in 1940, in a country of which I suspect I had not heard when I was growing up. I speak as a Scot who lives in and has the honour of representing the great city of Glasgow in which, until recently, I was a city councillor.

When we talk about tartan day and being Scottish, we talk about much more than most people think. We talk about people like me, new Scots who have moved here from south of the border, and a huge number of people worldwide who feel Scottish and identify with Scotland. As Andrew Welsh's motion makes clear, that makes tartan day important to every one of us, no matter our politics. Consequently, it is also important to ensure that tartan day represents the reality of Scotland to the world.

The opportunity that tartan day gives Scotland should not be focused merely across the Atlantic. We should turn east, not just west, and ensure that tartan day, or something like it, is used to project the reality of modern Scotland to Pakistan, China and all the places from which many have come to this nation and to which many still go. We have been immensely enriched by that exchange, which must continue and grow. Tartan day, as a global event, will make that happen.

Tartan day must reflect people's many experiences of Scotland. It is not about heather and haggis, or even software and silicon chips; it is about the reality for all the people I represent, be they first, second or third-generation members of the Asian community in Glasgow, refugees to whom my city provides shelter and the opportunity for a fresh start or the old and poor who are marginalised in sub-standard housing. Tartan day should allow us not just to tell the world what makes us special but to enlist the world in making Scotland a better place.

In this, my maiden speech, I pay tribute not only to those who previously represented Glasgow on the regional list but to those who worked with me and for me to ensure that it was the SNP that sent the first Scots Asian to Scotland's Parliament. To quote the famous Winnie Ewing—the great lady whose words opened this Parliament in 1999—I have come here not to settle down but to settle up. I have come here to ensure that all those who live in Scotland play a full part in creating a better Scotland, which can project itself to the world not just on tartan day but every day of the year.

17:29

John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): I congratulate Bashir Ahmad on his maiden speech, particularly as he used it to promote the language and culture of his adopted country.

I support what Andrew Welsh's motion has to say about the concept of tartan day. We have a proud and great heritage to portray to the rest of the world. Why do we not do it more often and make it a great showcase?

Over many centuries, we have provided other countries with entrepreneurs, explorers, scientists, inventors and financiers who have made major contributions to the founding and development of many of the major countries of the world—I am thinking about Mackenzie and Fraser in Canada and Livingstone and other great explorers who spent time and energy exploring and developing countries. Further, we must not forget the great financier Andrew Carnegie, who made his fortune in the USA and Canada. He opened up those countries and changed their complexions by driving railways through to the west coast.

The tartan day celebrations in New York have attracted a wide audience. They have had international appeal and have attracted a certain type of tourist to Scotland. The Scottish Parliament must be complimented on its decision to send regular delegations to the festivities to promote Scotland's interests on the streets of the USA.

Tartan day has become a flagship for Scotland's history and culture, but the concept has been too

restricted. It has involved only tourism, music, dance and those sorts of things, but there is an interested audience for all the other things that we have to offer. All that we have to do is present them to that audience. We have to extend the celebrations to include our proud heritage of invention and shipbuilding—the biggest liners in the world, the Queen Mary and the Queen Elizabeth, were riveted together on the Clyde. There are many other great achievements, including the products of Scotland's engineering skills. We should not restrict ourselves to tourism and tartan. We should have far bigger ambitions. We are proud of our established heritage, our culture and our music, but let us broaden the stage and let the world know of our achievements and invite them to join us in promoting our proud nation.

The concept that has been promoted is that each council area should have a tartan day. However, we should broaden that out and have a central focus. Perhaps we could have something like the Royal National Mòd, which will be held in Inverness next year. I am sure that having a Scotland-wide tartan day celebration on such a basis would be acceptable. All the councils could participate and compete with one another on how well they promote Scotland.

Andrew Welsh's suggestion has a lot going for it. A couple of weeks ago, I met people from a school in the Highlands who play shinty, which is one of the popular games up there. They met up with a selection of teams from Northern Ireland and played a mixture of shinty and hurley at the University of Edinburgh's Peffermill sports field. Everyone had a great time—Scotland won, by the way—and they celebrated the event with a bit of music and so on at the Irish consulate. A great time was had by all. Little things like that promote Scotland to the world.

I am pleased to support the concept that Andrew Welsh brings to the Parliament.

17:35

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab): I congratulate Andrew Welsh on securing this evening's debate. I know that the subject is dear to his heart, and it is a pleasure to support the motion. I have been asked to give apologies from members of the European and External Relations Committee who are meeting Westminster's International Development Committee and therefore cannot be in the chamber for a debate that many of them would like to observe and participate in.

Like David McLetchie and others in the chamber, I have attended tartan day. In fact, I possibly hold one or two records in connection

with it. I might not go into those just now—or maybe I will, because there are no journalists in the gallery. On one occasion, I was called queen of the junkets because of my attendance at tartan day, but I will not go into that.

I have attended tartan day in America on four occasions, twice as Deputy Presiding Officer and twice as a minister in the Scottish Executive. When I first attended tartan day, in 2000, it was a small event that took place only in Washington. Over the years, it has grown to become very much part of the annual cycle of large events in New York, Washington and Chicago. Its appeal has begun to spread throughout the world.

Why do we celebrate tartan day in that way? The original idea came from Canada, but it was particularly galvanised by the efforts of Trent Lott and the former United States Senate chaplain Lloyd John Ogilvie. Interestingly, they were responsible for another resolution that the Senate passed—I do not think that they had to go to Congress for it—because when they arrived, resplendent in their kilts, to move the tartan day motion, they were almost debarred from doing so, because at that time the Senate's standing orders indicated that gentlemen had to wear trousers. They, of course, were wearing their kilts, and they almost caused an international incident.

Tartan day has grown. I remember being interviewed in 2000 by an American radio station. During the discussion, the interviewer mentioned that they estimated that there were 5 million Americans with Scots ancestry. The same radio station interviewed me the following year and put it to me that at least 20 million Americans have Scots ancestry. I do not know whether the emergence of tartan day had anything to do with the massive increase or whether there was an underestimation in the first place.

As Andrew Welsh rightly said, the reason why we have such a close affinity with America—and therefore tartan day—goes back to the declaration of Arbroath and the American declaration of independence. A lot of the language of the latter declaration comes from the declaration of Arbroath. That is probably not a surprise to us when we consider that at least 13 of the signatories were first or second-generation Scots who went to America to escape privation and other issues in Scotland.

Some of the proudest moments in my life are associated with tartan day. I was part of the celebration when 10,000 pipers marched down Fifth Avenue in New York, and I attended the opening of VisitScotland's Scottish village in Grand Central station, where I and the then provost of Stirling, Colin O'Brien, led the Wallace sword into the station. The police held back crowds of people who had gathered to see the

sword. Apparently, they thought that it had been swung around by Mel Gibson, but we soon cleared up that misunderstanding. There was genuine feeling about that artefact from Scotland and its age and history. We sometimes underestimate that.

I congratulate Bashir Ahmad on his speech. Glasgow's relationship with America is interesting, because Glasgow is largely responsible for the relationship, particularly with Chicago. There were a lot of Scots in Chicago more than a century ago when a fire devastated the entire city. The people of Glasgow had a whip-round and sent the city what was at the time a considerable sum of money. That relationship has been maintained over the years.

I congratulate Angus Council on its work. I very much enjoyed taking part in the council's celebrations a year or so ago. I was also impressed by the council's comprehensive approach to developing tartan day. When I first attended tartan day there was an air of cynicism in Scotland about the event. Some ladies and gentlemen of the press, and perhaps even some of our colleagues, shared that cynicism. However, over the years, the cynicism has reduced—if not disappeared altogether—and the time is right for Scotland to recognise tartan day. I am glad that Angus Council is spreading its tentacles and sharing its good work.

David McLetchie was right to mention Angus Council's non-partisan approach to tartan day, which is echoed in Andrew Welsh's methods. I congratulate Andrew Welsh on that.

Many agencies are involved and many people work hard all year to make tartan day a success. I offer a special tribute to the volunteers in America and Scotland who are part of that international, almost global, effort. I hope that that effort will increase and that in a few years' time we will debate the issue again and hear from Andrew Welsh about the success of other local authorities in Scotland. I am sure that all members will encourage their local authorities to take part.

17:41

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): I thank my colleague Andrew Welsh for lodging the motion. He made a passionate speech on an issue that he strongly supports in his Angus constituency and in the United States, as everyone knows. He was part of Parliament's delegation to the 2006 celebrations and I have heard from many quarters that his speech at the University of Wisconsin's centre for Celtic studies was excellent and well received.

Parliament has rightly supported tartan week since its earliest years, because—apart from

anything else—the US remains an important overseas market for us. The US is important for trade, investment and tourism and the country sends more overseas students to our universities than does any country except China. We also have a range of cultural links with the US, from the modern-day actors who are big stars stateside, like Alan Cumming, to the earliest Scots who left this land to settle in the new world, for whatever reason. John Farquhar Munro talked about the Scots who left our shores, from the explorers and pioneers to the people who had no choice but to leave. Such cultural links are not necessarily to do with the performing arts but are about identity and show us exactly who we are.

Members talked about the contribution of Scots to the American declaration of independence, which was signed by descendants of Scots and inspired by the ambitions that were set out in the declaration of Arbroath. Students of the Scottish enlightenment tell us that the US electoral college, which elects US presidents, was devised by David Hume, whose grave is only a few hundred yards from this chamber. John Paul Jones, the founder of the US navy, was also a Scot. I could mention many others.

People in Scotland have had a long and mostly harmonious relationship with people in America. We should foster and enhance that relationship. Tartan week offers an opportunity to put Scotland on the map in the US and in Canada. This Government will make the most of that opportunity and any others that we find. The First Minister has made it clear in Parliament that his Government will be the most outward-looking one that Scotland has had. Tartan week offers us an opportunity to make progress in that regard.

As Patricia Ferguson said, tartan week has had a chequered history and has not always attracted positive comments. We have come to a natural hiatus; Grand Central station will not be available in 2008, so we have an opportunity to sit back and think about what we want to do with tartan week in the future. For good reasons, the focus of the previous Administration's activities was, predominantly, New York. Perhaps that was the best approach while the event was being built, but perhaps we should now look at other areas that are equally important to us. Boston and California spring to mind, and Canada, where the origins of tartan day lie—we have heard about that—offers big opportunities to increase our profile. Doing so could pay high dividends.

Keith Brown (Ochil) (SNP): I want to reinforce a point that was made earlier. Icons are extremely important to someone who has travelled to New York with the Wallace sword and looked after it for 10 days and 10 sleepless nights. The minister mentioned Canada and California. Is there a

possible link with Alexander Graham Bell, who is another Scottish icon? I think that there are two Alexander Graham Bell visitor centres in Canada and one in the United States. Is Alexander Graham Bell a possible theme to consider for next year's tartan week?

Linda Fabiani: We are open to ideas about tartan week because we want to include Parliament in the process. I urge members please to get in touch with me if they have ideas.

I was particularly interested in Bashir Ahmad's maiden speech—well done to him. As he said, tartan day is an example that shows what it means to be Scottish. All strands of society and people throughout our nation should be involved in it because it can be seen as representing our Scotland, our own tartan land, in which cultures are interwoven to make a fine pattern.

Andrew Welsh and other members talked about celebrating tartan day throughout Scotland, but perhaps we should also look outward. The Government is working with several Scottish organisations that are organising events to celebrate the 60th anniversary of India's independence and the founding of Pakistan. That is interesting. Those events will celebrate links between Scotland and India and Pakistan. For those who are interested in that work, we will soon publish details of it on the Government's website.

Last year, more events than ever in New York showcased Scottish literature, theatre, music, history and design, but we want to work to make its celebrations better. It is a grand triumph, for example, that the National Theatre of Scotland will tour America with "Black Watch" and "The Wolves in the Walls". John Farquhar Munro said that we should move beyond the performing arts. I am interested in that idea. I love the idea of an event that is centred on shinty and shipbuilding. That could work well.

An independent evaluation of tartan week is being finalised. The report will go into the mix in order to help us to make the right decisions.

Andrew Welsh's motion recognises the work of Parliament, the Government and Angus Council in establishing tartan day. I want that successful work to continue. It is much more likely that a united Scotland approach to the United States will be more successful than a disjointed approach. I commend Angus Council for its work in establishing its own tartan day events, of which there are many—indeed, I was amazed by the number of them. I also commend it for its vision for 2020, which is an inspiration to other local authorities. I applaud its long view through to the 700th anniversary of the declaration of Arbroath.

We should recognise the Scottish diaspora's hugely important contribution to establishing tartan

day—people who have left our shores have been mentioned. In the many countries in which tartan day is commemorated—Australia and New Zealand are another two such countries—Scots and people of Scottish descent have voluntarily used 6 April to celebrate their ancestry and this country's contribution to their new homelands. Without them, this country would be culturally and spiritually poorer.

It is often said that our people are our greatest asset, but it could also be said that our overseas people are potentially our greatest asset. We must engage more with them and provide them with a reason to continue their efforts.

The debate has been useful and constructive, and again, I thank Andrew Welsh for securing it. I want our approach to tartan week in 2008 and beyond it to be useful and constructive, so I am working towards that.

Meeting closed at 17:49.

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