**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT**

**Finance**

Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government when the Scottish Public Finance Manual was first issued.

**John Swinney:** The Scottish Public Finance Manual was first published on the Scottish Government website at the beginning of 2002. Post-devolution financial guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers had previously been published in the form of individual Finance Guidance Notes.

Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the UK Government regarding the contents of the Scottish Public Finance Manual.

**John Swinney:** The Scottish Government has never had any formal discussions with the UK Government on the contents of the Scottish Public Finance Manual. Guidance issued by the UK Government has no application with regards devolved matters, unless expressly adopted by the Scottish Ministers. However, in the preparation of guidance published in the manual due consideration is given to relevant guidance issued by the UK Government.

Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government how the Scottish Public Finance Manual defines best value.

**John Swinney:** Best Value is defined in the Scottish Public Finance Manual as continuous improvement in performance whilst maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost, having regard to economy, efficiency, effectiveness, equal opportunities and sustainable development.

Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government on what occasions the Scottish Public Finance Manual has been applied to potential community land buyouts.

**John Swinney:** Details of individual community land buyouts are not held centrally. However, the Scottish Public Finance Manual is applicable to all bodies subject to audit by the Auditor General and any other body sponsored by the Scottish Government and they would be obliged to comply with relevant requirements in respect of potential community land buyouts.

Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to review the Scottish Public Finance Manual and, if so, when.

**John Swinney:** The Scottish Public Finance Manual is reviewed and updated as necessary on a regular basis. Substantive amendments are announced in Finance Guidance Notes published on the Scottish Government website.

**Governance and Communities**

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government (a) how many and (b) which of its staff are involved in supporting the work of the Expert Working Group on Welfare.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Five Scottish Government officials working on policy and analysis related to welfare will have part-time roles in supporting aspects of the work of the Expert Working Group on Welfare.
Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to tell recipients of UK welfare benefits whether criteria and payments will be maintained at the same levels in an independent Scotland.

(S4W-12134)

Nicola Sturgeon: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-12103 on 17 January 2013. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament’s website, the search facility for which can be found at: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether the Expert Working Group on Welfare will consider pensions.

(S4W-12135)

Nicola Sturgeon: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-12103 on 17 January 2013. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament’s website, the search facility for which can be found at: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether, in light of the impact on its anti-poverty strategy, it considers that the welfare system is in need of reform and, if so, what principles would underpin its approach in an independent Scotland.

(S4W-12136)

Nicola Sturgeon: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-12103 on 17 January 2013. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament’s website, the search facility for which can be found at: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government (a) when and (b) where the Expert Working Group on Welfare will first meet and how often it will meet thereafter.

(S4W-12137)

Nicola Sturgeon: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-12103 on 17 January 2013. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament’s website, the search facility for which can be found at: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how much has been budgeted for the work of the Expert Working Group on Welfare.

(S4W-12138)

Nicola Sturgeon: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-12103 on 17 January 2013. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament’s website, the search facility for which can be found at: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how many people were on the shortlist for the Expert Working Group on Welfare and how many were (a) women, (b) registered disabled and (c) benefit claimants.

(S4W-12139)

Nicola Sturgeon: Four members were selected from an initial shortlist, compiled by officials, of seven candidates with expertise in public sector delivery, social policy, accountancy and economics. All originally shortlisted candidates were male and information on disability and income was not sought. Following the addition of one further member, the group now has five members, one of whom is a woman.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government which members of the Expert Working Group on Welfare have experience of designing or administering a welfare system.

(S4W-12140)
Nicola Sturgeon: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-12103 on 17 January 2013. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament’s website, the search facility for which can be found at: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether the remit of the Expert Working Group on Welfare will consider establishing a minimum income level for (a) unemployed, (b) disabled and (c) low-paid people.

Nicola Sturgeon: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-12103 on 17 January 2013. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament’s website, the search facility for which can be found at: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx.

Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government how much each local authority has received for sales of common good land or assets in each year since 1999.

John Swinney: This information is not held centrally.

Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it has issued guidance to local authorities in relation to the sale of common good land or assets and, if so, when.

John Swinney: In 2005, the then Scottish Executive published an advisory note to local authorities “Local Government in Scotland Act 2003: Asset Management under Best Value”. This note provides advice on how local authorities manage all assets in their care, including common good land and assets. It includes advice on the redeployment or disposal of assets.

This advisory note should be read alongside statutory duties which apply to local authorities over the sale of common good land or assets. This includes a general requirement when selling an asset to consider whether the transaction achieves the best consideration that can reasonably be obtained, in terms of section 74 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and regulations made under that section, restrictions in the circumstances in which a local authority can dispose of a common good asset (section 75 of the 1973 Act refers) and a broader statutory duty upon local authorities to secure Best Value in terms of Part 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government how sales of common good land or assets by local authorities are monitored to ensure that best value is achieved.

John Swinney: Responsibility for securing Best Value lies first and foremost with local authorities themselves. They are under a statutory duty to secure Best Value through Part 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. They also are subject to a duty, when disposing of an asset, to consider whether the transaction achieves the best consideration that can reasonably be obtained, in terms of section 74 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and regulations made under that section.

Local authorities are subject to audit for how they secure Best Value. As part of this, they need to be able to demonstrate if asked by an auditor that they have fulfilled their duties in disposing of any common good assets.

Transport Scotland

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what recent progress has been made in developing a dryport in Central Scotland to allow sustainable urban distribution of goods and the shift of goods from road to rail and water.

(S4W-12145)

(S4W-12153)

(S4W-12154)

(S4W-12155)

(S4W-11929)
Keith Brown: The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership and the Transport Research Institute were the Scottish partners in an EU funded initiative to study the role that dryports can play in maximising the capacity and efficiency of sea ports, whilst also shifting traffic from road and onto rail or inland waterways. This three year project is now concluded and a report was published in June 2012. A link to the dryport webpage is http://www.dryport.org/.

The development of a dryport in Central Scotland would be driven by the commercial sector. We are unaware of any intention by the logistics sector to build a dryport at the current time.