

Tuesday 07 May 2019

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Economy

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government when it will publish its response to the goose policy review that it received from SNH in March 2018.

Holding answer issued: 06 May 2019

(S5W-22583)

Roseanna Cunningham: A holding answer was provided.

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it has completed its feasibility assessment into its proposed publicly-owned energy company and, if not, by what date it will do so.

(S5W-22759)

Paul Wheelhouse: I refer the member to the answer to question S5W-22156 on 27 March 2019. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>. The independent's consultants work is ongoing and we expect to discuss their draft report with our local authority partners before the report is finalised over coming weeks.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government whether the IT system for administering the Basic Payments Scheme is functioning to the required standard, and whether a loan scheme will be required to deliver payments for 2019-20.

(S5W-22762)

Fergus Ewing: The Scottish Government's CAP IT system is functioning effectively and dealing with many thousands of Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 applications and payments each year, demonstrating stability in our processes. The Single Application Form (SAF) application window for 2019 opened on 15 March as planned and the system is performing to a high level of availability for customers. Last year, we saw a 10% increase in the number of customers using the system to submit online applications.

We are on track to deliver 2018 scheme year payments across CAP schemes in line with the payment schedule published in December, including meeting the regulatory target to make Pillar 1 payments by the end of June 2019, as we did last year.

We have used loan schemes over the last few years to guarantee certainty to farmers and crofters over when they will receive their payments. For scheme year 2019 we will keep the situation under review, especially in consideration of the uncertainty caused by EU Exit process.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what progress is being made with its programme to provide retraining opportunities for workers in the north east exiting the oil and gas sector, including (a) what the uptake has been and (b) how much it is costing to deliver.

(S5W-22764)

Paul Wheelhouse: Since its inception, the Transition Training Fund (TTF) has supported more than 4,000 people affected by the global downturn in oil and gas, against an initial target to support a total of at least 3,000 over a period of three years for which funding was made available. It has achieved this through the provision of tailored support to individuals in terms of training courses and grants, and through procured courses to help people improve their skills and find new jobs.

This innovative fund was demand-led, and has surpassed TTF's initial targets, with high levels of satisfaction recorded among those benefitting from the Fund.

The Fund is currently expected to spend a total of £11,347,000, however SDS are still dealing with a number of live applications in the Fund and this projected total may yet change in line with any variance from projected activity levels.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of reports in the *Daily Express* on 17 April 2019 that 2,000 post offices throughout the UK are expected to close in 2019, what information it has regarding which branches in Scotland are (a) due to close and (b) under a threat of closure, and what action it can take to prevent these closures, including what discussions it plans with the UK Government.

Holding answer issued: 07 May 2019

(S5W-22765)

Jamie Hepburn: A holding answer was provided.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how much revenue raised by the business rates incentivisation scheme was retained by each local authority in the (a) 2017-18 and (b) 2018-19 financial years.

(S5W-22775)

Kate Forbes: Following validation of Local Authorities' final audited 2017-18 non-domestic rates income returns the amounts eligible to be retained by individual local authorities under the Business Rates Incentivisation Scheme for 2017-18, will be confirmed shortly and published in a Local Government Finance Circular.

The amounts eligible for retention for 2018-19 will be published following validation of the 2018-19 audited non-domestic rates income returns which are due later in 2019.

Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what progress each sector is making in meeting the target set out in its document, *Conserve and Save: The Energy Efficiency Action Plan for Scotland*, for a 12% reduction in final energy consumption by 2020.

(S5W-22824)

Paul Wheelhouse: This information is in the public domain and can be found at: <https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/0054/00547120.xlsx> in the 'Energy consump by sector' tab.

The most recent data broken down by sector (2016) shows that industrial and commercial consumption (of electricity and heat) has decreased the most of all sectors, 22.7% lower than the 2005-07 baseline. Domestic consumption has dropped by 20.1% and energy consumption in transport has dropped by 2.7%. Overall, in 2016, total final energy consumption was 15.0% lower than the baseline.

Education, Communities and Justice

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S5W-20098 by John Swinney on 4 December 2018, in light of the cabinet secretary's comment that he had "paused the publication of the revised presumption of mainstreaming guidance and research into the experiences of children receiving additional support for learning...to enable further reflection...of the report *Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved: A report on the experiences of autistic children missing school*", for what reason the recently published, *Guidance on the presumption to provide education in a mainstream setting*, does not make reference to that report.

Holding answer issued: 06 May 2019

(S5W-22580)

John Swinney: A holding answer was provided.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what additional equipment and financial support or reimbursement is needed for midwives transitioning from acute to community settings under the implementation of the Best Start plan.

Holding answer issued: 06 May 2019

(S5W-22587)

Jeane Freeman: A holding answer was provided.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether the Scottish Prison Service uses mobile detection technology that allows officers to pinpoint mobile phone signals to specific cells.

(S5W-22756)

Ash Denham: I have asked Colin McConnell, Chief Executive of the Scottish Prison Service (SPS), to respond. His response is as follows:

SPS has the capability to deploy mobile detection technology across all prisons to identify the illicit use of personal communication devices.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it is considering making changes to charity law and, if so, what proposals are being considered.

(S5W-22790)

Aileen Campbell: The Scottish Government recently consulted on potential improvements to the statutory charity regulation framework, in light of proposals put forward by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) that focus on increasing transparency, accountability and public trust. Responses to the consultation are currently being analysed and have been published on the Scottish Government's website where the respondents' permission was granted; this analysis will inform our next steps in due course.

OSCR is a non-ministerial office and part of the Scottish Administration; it is independent of the Scottish Government and reports directly to the Scottish Parliament every year.

Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the statement in the Fraser of Allander Institute blog, *Budget 2019-20: what next?*, that "Local government was...a key tension within the budget. In the context of budget negotiations, such discussions tend to centre upon the level of funding provided to councils and whether or not the settlement is fair."

(S5W-22819)

Kate Forbes: The Scottish Government routinely engages with political parties across the Scottish Parliament as part of the Scottish Budget agreement process.

The 2019-20 Scottish Budget protects and invests in Scotland's public services, offering stability in the face of the chaos and confusion of the UK imposed Brexit.

Local Government funding represents a significant proportion of the Scottish Budget. In 2019-20, Scottish Ministers are providing councils with a real terms funding increase of £310 million or 2.9 per cent. The real terms increase in funding alongside the package of local tax reform measures, that will provide the most significant empowerment of local authorities since devolution, are evidence that the Scottish Government will continue to treat local government fairly.

Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government which local authorities have offered an energy efficiency discount in each year since 2016.

(S5W-22821)

Kate Forbes: This information is not held centrally. Although the Scottish Government tables an annual report to Parliament on the operation of the energy efficiency discount schemes as required by section 66 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, the obligation to establish these schemes rests with individual local authorities, as set out in Section 65 of the same Act.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government how many bus shelters in each local authority are liable for non-domestic rates, also broken down by how much was raised from these in 2018-19.

(S5W-22830)

Kate Forbes: The following table shows the number of entries of bus shelters on the valuation roll and the amount of non-domestic rates income raised in 2018-19 broken down by local authority. Where multiple bus shelters have the same rateable occupier, such as a council, they may be entered as a composite entry.

Local Authority	Number of Bus Shelter Entries	Total NDR Income (£s)
Aberdeen City	2	22156
Aberdeenshire	1	22562
Angus	1	14880
Argyll & Bute	1	15960
Clackmannanshire	1	8736

Dumfries & Galloway	3	25776
Dundee City	1	40176
East Ayrshire	1	17760
East Dunbartonshire	1	10320
East Lothian	1	14256
East Renfrewshire	1	12480
Edinburgh City	1	56798
Eilean Siar	1	6240
Falkirk	2	31161
Fife	1	59708
Glasgow City	2	40562
Highlands	10	30432
Inverclyde	1	12480
Midlothian	1	14688
Moray	1	12840
North Ayrshire	1	18480
North Lanarkshire	5	25032
Orkney Islands	1	2520
Perth & Kinross	2	20112
Renfrewshire	1	11040
Scottish Borders	1	16992
Shetland Islands	2	14040
South Ayrshire	1	12240
South Lanarkshire	3	113723
Stirling	1	14880
West Dunbartonshire	1	12960
West Lothian	1	32434

This data is taken from the Valuation Roll, and Local Authority Billing information, as at June 2018.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government under what circumstances it considers that a bus shelter can constitute part of a business's premises, and what its position is on whether such shelters should continue to be liable for non-domestic rates.

(S5W-22831)

Kate Forbes: Non-domestic rates are levied on all 'Land and Heritages' and the valuation of those lands and heritages is a matter for Scottish assessors who are wholly independent of central and local government. Scottish Assessors follow applicable statute and case law in making their decisions on non-domestic property valuations. The Scottish Government has no locus to intervene in that process. Bus shelters are rateable and are therefore liable for

non-domestic rates. Where multiple bus shelters have the same rateable occupier, such as a council, they may be entered as a composite entry.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on encouraging local authorities to ring-fence funding received from bus shelters that are liable for non-domestic rates toward building new shelters that will not be eligible for such charges.

(S5W-22845)

Kate Forbes: Non-domestic rates are levied on all 'Land and Heritages' and the valuation of those lands and heritages is a matter for Scottish assessors who are wholly independent of central and local government. Bus shelters are rateable and are therefore liable for non-domestic rates.

Non-domestic rates are administered and collected by local authorities who retain all of the non-domestic rates revenue they raise. Councils are democratically elected independent bodies, that are accountable to their local electorate and it is for councils to determine how they prioritise their resources, including the income generated through non-domestic rates in their area. Under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, each local Council has wide-ranging powers to create bespoke rates reliefs to address their own local circumstances.

Health and Social Care

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what assistance it has provided to NHS Dumfries and Galloway to help recruit GPs across the region.

(S5W-22535)

Jeane Freeman: The Scottish Government is in regular contact with Dumfries and Galloway Health & Social Care Partnership (DGHSCP) as part of their active engagement with the Scottish Government's Improving GP Sustainability Working Group. As part of this work officials, including professional advisers undertook a series of GP practice visits in the Dumfries and Galloway area in February 2019 to offer further support.

They are currently exploring opportunities to help improve recruitment and retention through working with the Scottish Government funded Scottish Rural Medical Collaborative (SRMC). They are also working on improving GP wellbeing due to the tragic incident of a GP who took their own life in Lockerbie last year.

Our strategy to recruit and retain GPs underpins our commitment to recruit 800 additional practicing GPs by 2027, and is backed but our commitment to

invest an additional £250 million in direct support of general practice by the end of this parliament.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how much has been spent on (a) drugs and (b) other treatments for blood cancer in each year since 2015.

(S5W-22634)

Jeane Freeman: This information is not collected or held centrally to the level of detail requested. It is for NHS Boards to determine spend on drugs and other blood cancer treatment services from their unified budget in accordance with the needs of their resident population and based on clinical decisions. This will vary from Board to Board and Region to Region.

Treatment, particularly for cancer, can be complex and often involves the use of a combination of medicines. Many of the drugs can be used for treatment of other cancer and non-cancer conditions, which makes it difficult to calculate the cost of drugs for specific treatments such as blood cancer.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the evidence given by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to the Public Petitions Committee on 24 January 2019 regarding petition PE1690 (*Official Report*, c. 30), what further information it can provide regarding the training module for GPs that is being developed by NHS Education for Scotland, and whether it will take account of the views and experiences of people with lived experience of the condition.

(S5W-22691)

Jeane Freeman: The NES Practice Based Small Group Learning (PBSGL) membership (including GPs, GP nurses, and pharmacists in Scotland) has selected ME as a module for NES to develop and produce in 2020, aligned to the production of the new NICE guideline also due in 2020. It is appropriate to produce this module informed by the NICE guideline to ensure the training module reflects current research findings.

PBSGL modules are designed to meet the learning needs of primary care clinicians. The first step in developing the educational content of the module will be for a small number of primary care clinicians to take part in an online focus group to identify the clinical challenges and learning needs of Scottish primary care. In addition to this, there is often a resource page in the module for use by PBSGL members, which usually contain a range of website sources, including information from charities, third sector organisations and other information clinicians may find useful.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what criteria it will use to select an impartial chair of the committee that will review mental health and incapacity legislation.

(S5W-22721)

Clare Haughey: The Scottish Government is clear that we need to ensure we appoint the right person for what will be a complex and important review. As there will be an emphasis on engaging widely, the review will have to get to the heart of differing opinions so that the real issues can be fleshed out and then considered on an evidence-led basis. The Chair therefore will provide strong leadership and will have demonstrated that they are an effective strategist and a good networker. We are also looking for someone who can give a clear sense of direction and who is able to communicate clearly to a wide and varied audience. The Chair will have senior level experience, knowledge and understanding of legislation and/or human rights.

A short-life working group will support the review and will be drawn from areas of interest. We expect to have representatives from legal, psychiatry, social work, nursing and service management backgrounds as well as those with lived experience. It will be for the Chair to determine how they take forward this review but the views of people with lived experience of compulsory care and treatment, their families and representatives must be central to the work of the review.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will consider commissioning an independent review of whether the funding that is awarded by the Chief Scientist Office and the Scottish Funding Council for mental and physical health research is allocated on an equitable basis between both fields to help ensure that the highest quality work is carried out.

(S5W-22808)

Jeane Freeman: This answer responds to S5W-22808, S5W-22809, S5W-22810, S5W-22811 and S5W-22812 on 7 May 2019. The Scottish Government Chief Scientist Office (CSO) does not target funding towards any particular condition through its research grant schemes but supports research funding opportunities across a very broad health remit that neither advantages or disadvantages funding towards any particular health area. This allows consideration of research applications to address the widest range of NHS, health and care challenges rather than to focus funding in certain areas and consequently deprioritise others. Applications submitted to CSO are funded following independent expert assessment of the quality of the research projects proposed with funding recommendations made by an independent expert committee.

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) does not provide funding specifically for physical or mental health research. It is for Universities to decide whether they undertake such research using SFC grants.

All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it considers that mental health research should be treated with the same status as that for physical health and, if so, how it will ensure that the funding allocated by the Chief Scientist Office and the Scottish Funding Council for such research reflects this.

(S5W-22809)

Jeane Freeman: I refer the member to the answer to S5W-22808 on 7 May 2019. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the concerns that have been raised by the mental health charity, Miricyl, that a relatively small share of funding is allocated to mental health research compared with that for physical health.

(S5W-22810)

Jeane Freeman: I refer the member to the answer to S5W-22808 on 7 May 2019. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on increasing the funding that is awarded by the Chief Scientist Office and the Scottish Funding Council for mental health research.

(S5W-22811)

Jeane Freeman: I refer the member to the answer to S5W-22808 on 7 May 2019. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reported concerns that funding for cardiovascular research does not adequately reflect the impact that cardiovascular disease has on the population and the economy.

(S5W-22812)

Jeane Freeman: I refer the member to the answer to S5W-22808 on 7 May 2019. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made in exploring options for the provision of free bedside entertainment for hospital patients.

(S5W-22847)

Jeane Freeman: The Scottish Government expects all NHS boards to assess and adopt a patient-centred approach on the expiration of the contracts, with consideration given to both value for money and, importantly, the patient experience.

We are currently working with NHS Directors of Estates to establish feasibility of free bedside entertainment across NHSScotland. For example, NHS Lothian have now implemented free patient Wi-Fi services, including access to video streaming, in two of their acute sites. It is expected that other NHS Boards consider provision of free patient Wi-Fi and other suitable alternatives to the current Hospedia services when assessing patient entertainment services.

Organisational Development and Operations

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government by what date the tendering process for the R100 programme will be complete; when the successful contractors will start work on the project, and how much of the £600 million allocated to the programme has been spent.

(S5W-22761)

Paul Wheelhouse: The procurement process for R100 is now well underway and I can confirm that we have three highly credible bidders currently engaged in dialogue and we remain on track to award contracts before the end of this year. The procurement process is, however, complex and tightly bound by law and procurement rules. I will of course advise the Scottish Parliament first when we are in a position to award the contract

A sum of £28.2 million has been allocated in the 2019-20 budget to extend high quality, digital connectivity across Scotland. Due to the nature of the

contractual terms likely to be deployed, much of the £600 million expenditure associated with delivery of our R100 commitment will not be seen until 2020 and beyond, with payments made on achievement of agreed milestones and payment in arrears of the achievement of milestones. This has also been the case under Scotland's £400 million Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband programme.

Transport Scotland

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what most recent assessment it has made of the impact of Abellio ScotRail's performance on the economy, and when it will next carry out another one.

(S5W-22666)

Michael Matheson: The ScotRail Franchise plays a key role towards the economic wellbeing of the Scottish economy. A report which was published in 2016 for Transport Scotland (The Oxera report) estimated that the rail sector's contribution to Scotland's economy included:

- contributes up to £670 million in gross value added per year
- employs around 12,800 people
- makes an estimated tax contribution of £292 million per year
- total user benefits of up to £1 billion per year

A follow up assessment on the impact of the rail network on the Scottish economy has not yet been scheduled.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government for what reasons data relating to the operation of Pentland Ferries services is not available for inclusion in the annual Scottish Transport Statistics.

(S5W-22723)

Paul Wheelhouse: Pentland Ferries are a wholly private, commercial unlimited company, and as such it is their decision to take on what data is made publically available. However, I am aware that Transport Scotland officials have previously requested such information from Pentland Ferries without success.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how many meetings (a) ministers and (b) officials have had with representatives from Pentland Ferries regarding the application of the road equivalent tariff on ferry services between Gill's Bay and St Margaret's Hope.

(S5W-22724)

Paul Wheelhouse: Between June 2016 and June 2018 there were a total of sixteen meetings between Ministers and/or Transport Scotland officials and Pentland Ferries regarding the potential introduction of reduced ferry fares to Orkney. Ministers participated in four of these meetings, with support from officials.

In addition, there have been a number of related telephone discussions which took place over the same period between Pentland Ferries and Transport Scotland officials.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with (a) Caledonian MacBrayne and (b) Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd regarding the mechanical failure of the MV Isle of Lewis at Castlebay ferry terminal, Barra, in April 2019, and what impact this incident has had on (a) sailings, (b) passengers, (c) staff and (d) businesses.

(S5W-22751)

Paul Wheelhouse: Transport Scotland officials held ongoing discussions with CalMac Ferries Ltd. throughout the period of disruption, when MV Isle of Lewis experienced mechanical breakdown at Castlebay Ferry Terminal 14 April to 18 April 2019, due to a problem encountered with the vessel's bow thrusters. These discussions included the reason for the mechanical failure, the progress of repairs, resilience measures to ensure lifeline connectivity throughout the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service (CHFS) network was maintained, and details of any cancelled, amended or additional sailings.

Discussions between officials and Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) were not required, as discussions regarding technical issues with vessels fall within the remit of the vessel owners, CMAL, and the operator, CalMac.

The disruption impacted on;

(a) All sailings (1 return sailing each day) of MV Isle of Lewis were cancelled (Castlebay - Oban - Castlebay) on Sunday 14th April until Tuesday 16th April.

On Wednesday the 17th of April, the sailing from Castlebay departed late at 1345 arriving in Oban at 1830; departing Oban at 1900 and arriving in Castlebay at 2345. Normal scheduled service resumed on Thursday 18 April.

(b) Passengers were re-routed on the Mallaig-Lochboisdale service, which provided additional sailings to maintain lifeline connectivity. Additional sailings on the Sound of Barra were also made available to passengers. For Castlebay to Oban over the period 14 April to 17 April inclusive, there were 31 vehicles booked. For Oban to Castlebay there were 72 vehicles booked for the same period. Foot passengers are not required to book, therefore numbers affected are not available.

(c) There was minimal impact on MV Isle of Lewis crew members as they remained on board for the duration of the disruption. The MV Isle of Lewis crew changeover took place on Wednesday 15 April as planned, although slightly later than scheduled at 1830 instead of 1330.

An additional crew was brought in on call back to operate the additional sailings operated on the Sound of Barra route to maintain lifeline connectivity.

(d) CalMac undertook frequent communications with local businesses and hauliers. Commercial traffic was able to travel on the Mallaig-Lochboisdale route and across the Sound of Barra. CalMac informed the local community as soon as the vessel was repaired. On Wednesday 17 April, MV Isle of Lewis sailed to Oban and returned outside of the normal timetable to reduce the effects on businesses as much as possible.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what action it takes to encourage local authorities to install new bus shelters.

(S5W-22832)

Michael Matheson: Provision of bus stops and shelters is the responsibility of local authorities. The Scottish Government has ongoing engagement with local authorities and other stakeholders about how to improve bus provision in partnership. The Transport (Scotland) Bill provides local authorities with a framework of new tools to address bus provision in their area.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Green Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will make a statement on the (a) composition and (b) remit of its recently-established ferry industry advisory board.

(S5W-22842)

Paul Wheelhouse: The decision to change the name of the group from the 'Expert Ferry Group' to the 'Ferry Industry Advisory Group' was taken in order to better reflect the remit and role of the group.

There is no change to the remit or function of the Group, as such, and after consideration it has been decided, for the time being, to continue with the current membership. However, it is Ministers intention to proactively engage the Group in providing advice on a number of key ferries issues of importance to Scottish Ministers and stakeholders.

The Transport Scotland website will be updated in due course and the membership, terms of reference and minutes of meetings will be published.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to encourage the use of smart ticketing across public transport, and what progress is being made with this.

(S5W-22900)

Michael Matheson: Transport Scotland, on behalf of the Scottish Government, is undertaking a portfolio of projects to enhance Scotland's smart services and deliver on the vision that 'all journeys on Scotland's public transport network can be made using some form of smart ticketing or payment'.

There has been significant progress on smart ticketing - rail, subway, tram and 99% of bus operators are now smart enabled. Annually over half a billion journeys are made on Scotland's public transport network, and over a third of these journeys are now made using smart ticketing or payment technology. Current projects include work to expand the successful Dundee ABC smart integrated bus to bus ticketing scheme to include North East Fife; working with transport operators, public bodies and local authorities to enhance smartcard interoperability across all modes; and delivery of a £1.1m Smart Pay Grant Fund to support bus operators with improving their equipment to accept contactless payment.

Marketing projects undertaken in partnership with transport operators, local authorities, Young Scot and Regional Transport Partnerships also aim to promote smart ticketing services to the public, such as the joint Stagecoach, ScotRail and Transport Scotland 'Fife in the Fast Lane' campaign last winter to mark the reopening of the Forth Road Bridge as a public transport corridor, as well as supporting ScotRail and Young Scot with their own recent smartcard marketing activity.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what recent meetings it has had with (a) SPT and (b) the ScotRail Alliance regarding the use of smart ticketing.

(S5W-22901)

Michael Matheson: The Scottish Government's National Transport Agency, Transport Scotland, has regular meetings with SPT and Abellio ScotRail regarding the use of smart ticketing.

Transport Scotland officials are working with SPT and Abellio ScotRail to deliver smartcard interoperability between bus, rail and subway, with weekly technical meetings in place to oversee this. In addition more strategic meetings have been held with SPT (February 2019) to ascertain areas of potential collaboration to improve smart ticketing services, and the last meeting with Abellio ScotRail was held this month to discuss ScotRail's smart ticketing Programme.

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on introducing official road signage to warn road users of the presence of red squirrels.

(S5W-22935)

Michael Matheson: The Scottish Government has approved official road signs warning road users of the presence of red squirrels for a number of locations across Scotland in the past and will approve similar applications at other locations that are considered appropriate.

Consideration will also be given to incorporating these signs into a future amendment of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions, removing the need for authorisation.