

# **EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 8 March 2005

Session 2

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## EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

### 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2005, Session 2

#### CONVENER

\*Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP)

#### DEPUTY CONVENER

\*Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab)

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

\*Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind)

Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP)

\*Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con)

\*Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab)

Gordon Jackson (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)

Mr Alasdair Morrison (Western Isles) (Lab)

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD)

#### COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab)

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP)

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD)

\*attended

#### THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Paul Chitnis (Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund)

Ms Bernadette Malone (Perth and Kinross Council)

Chief Constable John Vine (Tayside Police)

#### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Alasdair Rankin

#### ASSISTANT CLERKS

Nick Hawthorne

David Simpson

#### LOCATION

Committee Room 4



## Scottish Parliament

### European and External Relations Committee

*Tuesday 8 March 2005*

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 14:00*]

### G8 and Council of the European Union Presidencies Inquiry

**The Convener (Mr John Swinney):** Good afternoon. I open the European and External Relations Committee's fourth meeting of 2005. We have apologies from Iain Smith and Margaret Ewing, who are currently attending a meeting of the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body in Donegal. We also have apologies from Alasdair Morrison and Gordon Jackson, who have other commitments. Dennis Canavan hopes to join us in due course.

The first item on the agenda is to continue taking evidence for our inquiry into Scotland's contribution to the G8 summit and the United Kingdom's presidency of the Council of the European Union. We will hear from three witnesses today, the first of whom is John Vine, the chief constable of Tayside police. It is a pleasure to welcome the chief constable to the committee. I invite him to make an opening statement, after which I will open the discussion to questions from members.

**Chief Constable John Vine (Tayside Police):** Thank you. I am delighted to have been invited to give evidence to the committee today.

In policing terms, the G8 summit of world leaders is the biggest event in the UK and, possibly, the world. It presents a tremendous challenge for a range of people in Scotland, including Tayside police and the Scottish police service as a whole. Previous G8 summits have attracted worldwide attention and for a week in July, Scotland—Tayside in particular—will have the eyes of the world on it. There has been much speculation in the press about what that will mean for policing.

From the start—bear it in mind that we have been planning the policing of the event for a year, since last February—we have set out to achieve five strategic aims. The first of those is to provide a safe and secure G8 summit for the world leaders, who present a target not only for terrorists, but for others. The second is to minimise disruption to local communities, because we must acknowledge that ordinary people in the area will be carrying on their lives as normal. The third is to

facilitate lawful protest. There are many people who legitimately might want to make their voices heard and, because we live in a democratic society and given the style of policing that we usually employ in the United Kingdom, it is a strategic aim of mine to facilitate lawful protest. The fourth strategic aim is to provide normal policing services to the rest of Tayside and, I suppose, the rest of Scotland; we have to manage normal business as usual. The final aim is to have contingency plans prepared for a range of scenarios that might play out depending on the circumstances in which we find ourselves in July. Those are five strategic aims of the policing operation.

We have been keen to ensure that we take the community with us as far as possible and that we keep it informed, which is something that I learned from a visit to the Sea Island summit last year. We have made tremendous efforts to do that and have worked closely with Perth and Kinross Council. I have circulated a list of some of the meetings that we have conducted in and around Auchterader. To date, we have had 39 meetings of one sort or another with people in the community, and I emphasise that Tayside police will make every effort to maintain normal life for the residents of the community and to meet their needs.

Security is a primary aim of any law enforcement agency. The leaders of the eight most economically developed countries in the world are meeting and all of them are, in their own ways, targets for a variety of action, so their safety is a significant duty, for which I take personal responsibility. The policing operation will be intelligence led. The Scottish police service and its partners are well prepared; we have gathered information from throughout the world and are developing a detailed intelligence profile that informs our operational plan. That work will continue in the four months that are left before the summit begins.

We must ensure that a variety of options are available to us so that we can respond quickly to changing domestic or international events. The climate of policing at events such as this has changed significantly since the events of 9/11. International events have a bearing on the policing of an event such as this in Scotland. Protest will be inevitable at such a high-profile event and Tayside police supports the right to peaceful protest. We are in discussions with a number of people about their plans. We have constantly said that we would like to continue that dialogue with protest groups to ensure that, as far as possible, we can marry the needs of those groups with the aims of security for the summit while ensuring that there is no unnecessary inconvenience to local people. Although the threat to the summit from terrorists or from violent protest is not currently

assessed as being high, that could change. We would not be discharging our duty to the public, to peaceful protesters or to delegates if we were not prepared for every eventuality.

Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, the operation will be policed by uniformed officers, who will provide the business-as-usual service that the people of Scotland expect. Should the demands change, we will be ready to respond with more robust tactics, but we will revert as quickly as possible to what people know and expect from the Scottish police service.

**The Convener:** Thank you, chief constable. As you will appreciate, the committee's inquiry is primarily about the political approach to the G8 summit and to the UK presidency of the European Union, and about any economic and commercial benefits for Scotland. Given the nature of the issues that we confront in relation to the G8 summit in particular, it would have been strange if we had not heard from you some of the background information to the summit. Will you clarify your responsibilities? If, for example, it is possible that demonstrations might take place a week before the G8 summit in other parts of Scotland, would such demonstrations come under operation sorbus, for which you are responsible, or are they a component matter for Lothian and Borders police or Strathclyde police and so on?

**Chief Constable Vine:** We have retained the traditions of the service in that whatever happens in a force area is the responsibility of the chief constable of that area. For example, if there was a demonstration in Edinburgh before the event, the policing of that demonstration would be the responsibility of the chief constable of Lothian and Borders police. I am responsible for what happens in Tayside, at the Gleneagles summit. However, because we have been planning this for a year, I have been responsible for requesting the support of police officers from other parts of the UK. They will be deployed to various forces on request by the Scottish police information and co-ordinating centre, which has dealt with, for example, the aftermath of the tsunami disaster and with the fuel dispute in Scotland. The co-ordinating centre is chaired by the president of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland. It has a co-ordination function, not a command function—it will, in effect, move resources around Scotland to be under the command of the chief constable of an area, to deal with protests that need extra resources or with any other eventuality. My primary responsibility for the 48 hours in July is for everything that happens in Tayside, particularly in and around Gleneagles.

**The Convener:** So there is operational command by individual chief constables in the other police areas of Scotland, and there is

therefore—I assume—a shared information base, and co-ordination among chief constables about what is happening where and whether any shift of resources is required from, for example, Lothian and Borders to Strathclyde or to Tayside.

**Chief Constable Vine:** That is correct. We are putting back into place a well tried and tested methodology for the summit: the Scottish police information and co-ordinating centre—SPICC—which is chaired by the current president of ACPOS. On this occasion, it will happen seven days into Peter Wilson's presidency of ACPOS. He is the chief constable in Fife and he will assume that responsibility, which is not a command responsibility; it is simply a co-ordination responsibility.

**The Convener:** Thank you. I have a couple of questions. First, on intelligence-led policing in relation to the possibility of protest, what is your expectation of the quality of information that you will have at your disposal to be able to predict situations that you are likely to be dealing with? Are you likely to know in advance of G8 that you will be dealing with a demonstration that involves Church of Scotland elders, for example, or groups from abroad perhaps?

**Chief Constable Vine:** Yes. We have a variety of ways of gathering that information. Much of it is not terribly difficult to find out from open-source information on the internet, for example. The internet is now a common tool that is used by groups that want to organise protests.

However, we are speaking principally to responsible organisations such as G8 Alternatives and the make poverty history campaigners about the well flagged-up protest in Edinburgh on 2 July. As has been my experience elsewhere, we have found that those people want their event to go off successfully; proper co-ordination with the police service usually helps to achieve their aim. We have an emerging picture of levels of protest, but it changes all the time and I have no doubt that it will change in the four months between now and the summit. Through a variety of means, we will try to gain as accurate a picture as we can.

Overlaying the intelligence, we have to impose our management judgment. We use intelligence as a tool to steer our thinking, but at the end of the day, we use professional judgment to make decisions about the numbers of police officers that we might need at any place at a particular time.

**The Convener:** Have you developed any thinking on whether there will be a designated protest area or centre for the Gleneagles summit? Notwithstanding the Edinburgh demonstration on 2 July, has an area been designated so that anybody who wishes to protest will be told that

that is where they can go and it will be policed appropriately?

**Chief Constable Vine:** We have said from the start that if groups bring proposals to us about what is commonly known as a convergence centre, we will speak to those groups about policing of that area and the facilities that they might require. However, that is a responsibility of the groups; it is not a primary responsibility of the police.

We have said all along that should proposals emerge, groups have to seek permission from local authorities for licences and the like. Should those proposals be made through local authorities, we will speak to groups about arrangements that they wish to put in place. Organisation of such things is not the responsibility of the police; we have enough on our plate dealing with the security consequences of the event.

**The Convener:** Has any such proposal been made?

**Chief Constable Vine:** Not to my knowledge. I know that the Perth division in Tayside has had some discussions with one or two groups. Those organisers have to find venues with the support of landlords or landowners and then make application to the local authority. We have had tentative proposals, but as far as I am aware at the moment, no firm proposals have been made by any group.

**The Convener:** How would the police judge anything outwith the sphere of organised facilities with the permission of landowners or landlords and the consent of the local authority?

**Chief Constable Vine:** That would depend on where the event was being held and what the organisers of any particular event were proposing. Obviously, we would discuss that group's intentions. At the moment, that is all a bit hypothetical, because the situation has not arisen. However, we have made it very clear that, if there are proposals on the table, we will discuss them with groups; indeed, we have an obligation to do so. As I said, the safety and welfare of protesters is very much one of our strategic aims.

14:15

**The Convener:** You said that one of your priorities is to minimise disruption and maximise free movement for individuals who live or work in the locality.

**Chief Constable Vine:** That is correct.

**The Convener:** What arrangements will be in place for people who live or work in a locality that you deem to be in proximity to Gleneagles Hotel to

come and go? Will they require a pass or something else?

**Chief Constable Vine:** I intend to provide as much freedom and normality as possible. For example, there has been a great deal of speculation about closing the A9; however, we have no such plans. There has also been speculation about issuing identification cards; again, we have no such plans. However, we have agreed with some local residents, whose houses might be very close to the venue, plans for access passes that will facilitate their movement across whatever cordons we have in place. I stress that those passes are purely voluntary; we sat down with local residents groups and discussed their concerns. My information is that, without exception, everyone is very happy with the arrangements that we have discussed with them. However, they will affect only a very small minority of residents. I should also point out that they are not identity cards.

**Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab):** You are probably aware that, last week, we took evidence from non-governmental organisations. They had a slightly different perspective on the matter; in fact, they said that not just organisations but members of the public who wanted to demonstrate peacefully or to make their point at the event had received very off-putting and negative messages. You said that protests would be inevitable and that you have been having discussions with several groups. What groups have you been having discussions with and at what level have they taken place? What do you think of the claim of quite legitimate organisations such as WWF and Oxfam that a very negative message has come across?

**Chief Constable Vine:** There has been a lot of speculation in the press. For example, people might have received an off-putting impression from speculation about our contingency planning. However, we have not issued anything other than messages that have attempted to keep the whole matter in context. In fact, I have gone on record—through letters in the national press and so on—to deny some of the more lurid headlines that have suggested that the world will come to an end on 6 July and to put a more level-headed message into the public domain.

In response to your questions, we have had discussions with, for example, Gill Hubbard, who is the lead voice of G8 Alternatives, and her organisation at local level in Perth. I know that Lothian and Borders police have been speaking to the make poverty history campaign about its demonstration in Edinburgh on 2 July.

It is difficult to discover who is in charge of some groups. I am afraid that many of the groups are described in loose terms and it is not easy to find a

spokesperson for them. In that respect, we have to wait for the groups to approach us. That said, from the start, we have sent out letters and correspondence welcoming dialogue with such groups. After all, it is in all of our interests. If protests are being planned or are thought appropriate, it is in my interests to know about them. Obviously, it will mean that I can deploy resources to where they will be most needed, and that I can ensure—as far as it is possible to do so—that local people's daily lives are not affected. It is also in the interests of groups that want to engage in lawful protest for us to know their plans. That will enable their events to go off with greater success than would otherwise be the case.

I hope that what I have said is helpful. It is difficult for me to be specific about all the groups that might feel that way. That said, I think that we did not put out any of the negative messages.

**Irene Oldfather:** Just to be clear, I assume that groups like WWF Scotland, Oxfam in Scotland, Friends of the Earth Scotland and Save the Children are the sort of legitimate groups with which you would want dialogue.

**Chief Constable Vine:** Yes.

**Irene Oldfather:** Those groups feel that that has not quite happened as yet.

**Chief Constable Vine:** I cannot think of the basis for their feeling that way. I can only refer to some of the press speculation about our contingency planning. Perhaps a negative message came across in the speculation about the sort of policing that such groups might face. The information did not come from us. That said, it is inevitable that that sort of speculation will occur anywhere an event of the size and scale of G8 is planned. From visiting the United States of America last year, I can say that the same sort of issues occurred four months from the G8 summit last year in America.

**Irene Oldfather:** I move on to policing of the event itself. I believe that police leave has been cancelled across Scotland. Has that been done as a precautionary measure? You said that you would be using resources from across the United Kingdom.

**Chief Constable Vine:** That is correct.

**Irene Oldfather:** Do you intend to pull in resources from forces across Scotland? Is that why all leave has been cancelled or is that simply part of your contingency planning?

**Chief Constable Vine:** No. Leave has been cancelled to give us the depth of resilience that we need to police an event of this size. It will ensure that we can police the event and, of course, ensure at the same time that normal policing carries on across Scotland.

We also have to look at the juxtaposition of the event with the other events that will occur over the summer, such as the open golf championship at St Andrews. The day after the summit finishes in Perthshire, we move all our resources over to Kinross for T in the Park, which is the second-largest pop concert in Britain. The island games will also occur in the north of the country around that time—indeed, a range of major events are taking place this summer. If we are to manage all of them successfully, pull off the summit to the benefit of the country and maintain normal policing, we need to have that resilience. That is why leave has been cancelled.

We have made a workforce agreement with the Scottish Police Federation and have extended the agreement to support staff. In the modern police service, it is not just police officers who help us to police; a high proportion of support staff is also required. In many cases, they have volunteered to cancel their leave to assist with the operation. As much as it is possible to do so, we are asking that leave not be taken voluntarily. As a backstop—within police regulations—we have cancelled leave.

**Irene Oldfather:** In terms of your planning, what proportion of police personnel will you draw from outside Tayside?

**Chief Constable Vine:** In terms of our planning, several thousand police officers will be drawn from across the Scottish forces and from forces in England and Wales. Some of the police officers we will draw down will be specialists. We will need mounted officers and we will need advanced drivers, for their resilience in terms of motorcades, convoys and the like, search-trained officers to search venues and authorised firearms officers to provide us with any necessary firearms cover. Not all those specialisms can be found either in my force or in other local forces in Scotland.

Given that the Metropolitan police has primacy across the UK for diplomatic protection, it is inevitable that it is a partner in the policing operation. It has responsibility for the protection of foreign heads of state on British soil.

**Irene Oldfather:** In terms of the non-specialist police on the ground, do you have any plans to co-ordinate training, and at what level will it take place?

**Chief Constable Vine:** We have plans to train a couple of thousand officers in public order techniques. We do not have a lot of inner city disorder in Scotland, and we have not had for a number of years a major industrial dispute in which police were deployed, so we have plans to bring some of our officers up to speed and to train them in public order policing. That is a necessary precaution and contingency plan that I have to put



in place to ensure that a range of options are available to me at any time, either before or during the summit. That training will begin in the next few weeks. We are working on providing an opportunity for the media and other people to view some of that training, with the aim—to answer a previous question—of demystifying it and keeping it open and straightforward.

**Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con):** I do not want to go into detail, because at the end of the day that is your responsibility, and you will carry the can or accept the praise.

**Chief Constable Vine:** Thank you for those comforting words.

**The Convener:** You can always rely on receiving a warm welcome from Mr Gallie.

**Phil Gallie:** It was meant to be a warm welcome, because I have been reassured by several points, particularly on the advice that you have sought and the level of co-operation.

One of my concerns is the depth of probing that you will receive from the press whenever something slightly extraordinary is seen to arise. There have been stories in the press about water cannon and other issues. Could it be a policy of yours now to say, “No comment—that’s operational” when asked about detailed policing?

**Chief Constable Vine:** Yes—that could be a response, although I do not know whether it would be a terribly helpful response all the time. We are trying to be selective about responding to some press comments, to ensure that we do not exacerbate or fuel speculation that is not based on fact. However, I have a responsibility to dispel pure rumour and speculation where I can, and to bring us back to facts.

Many parallels have been drawn with the G8 summit in Genoa four years ago. I am not saying that all G8 summits have been trouble free since then, but since Genoa they have been less problematic. Sometimes, it frustrates me a little to see pictures of Genoa splashed across the newspapers when there have been four other summits since Genoa. They may not have gone off without a hitch, but they have been less problematic. Sometimes it is useful—and, I hope, comforting—to hear the chief police officer who is primarily responsible and who will “carry the can” to bring us back down to earth.

As I said, the world is not going to end on 6 July. The summit will be challenging. None of us has a crystal ball that we can look into to see exactly what will happen. The press and others realise that, as far as possible, we are all in the same boat. We do not know what will happen, but we are all making our plans. It is about trying to ensure—primarily from my point of view, as well

as from the point of view of my role as chief constable of Tayside—that the people of Auchterarder and south Perthshire are not alarmed by what is happening, and that they have me as a reassuring voice somewhere in the background.

**Phil Gallie:** You seem to have that well covered locally, because you have a policeman on the ground who is virtually holding surgeries. Has he been approached by many local residents?

**Chief Constable Vine:** Yes. That has been a good tactic. He is primarily a bobby on a bike, which is a comforting community-policing image. He is a very experienced officer, a good community officer and he could talk for Scotland, which has been a great comfort to local people. We are trying to beef up that part of the operation, because we are getting to the stage at which we need to supplement it. However, there have been plenty of opportunities for people to approach that officer; he holds twice-weekly surgeries on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Auchterarder police station, so anyone who wants to speak to him can do so. Much effort has been put into community meetings—I circulated through the clerks a list of the 39 community meetings that we have held in and around Auchterarder since June.

14:30

**Phil Gallie:** During the summit, will your attention be directed towards the areas around Gleneagles, while another command authority in Gleneagles itself deals with the more national aspects of security?

**Chief Constable Vine:** No. I will be responsible for security for the whole event. At the venue, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will be the lead Government agency, so what happens to diplomats and heads of state in the centre of the summit will be the responsibility of the FCO. However, security in Tayside is my responsibility and we are co-ordinating with all the other agencies that are involved.

**Phil Gallie:** Finally, I have a question that I do not think requires you to go into operational detail. On some matters, will you have the co-operation of the military, albeit in the background?

**Chief Constable Vine:** We always have some co-operation with the military. In my previous force, I was the gold commander for the party conferences at the Winter Gardens in 1997 and 1999 and we had help on such occasions from specialist military assets, given the possibility of a terrorist attack. The same sort of military help will be available for the Gleneagles event; it will be not mainstream military help but specialist military help, which is usually to do with matters such as electronics and surveillance.

**Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab):** If the event goes well, the chief constable should get a knighthood.

**Chief Constable Vine:** I cannot possibly comment.

**Mr Home Robertson:** You can think about that in due course.

I am sure that all members of the Parliament will welcome your comments about coupling the objective of a secure conference with consideration for the liberty of citizens to express their opinions. A difficult balancing act is required, but that is what you are trying to achieve.

You mentioned the availability of police assets from other parts of the UK, in particular the Metropolitan police. Some of us have long memories and remember the miners' strike—*[Interruption.]* I hope that that is not my phone.

**Phil Gallie:** Sorry, it is mine.

**The Convener:** Mr Gallie will certainly not get a knighthood.

**Mr Home Robertson:** Can Chief Constable Vine confirm that all police officers who are deployed in Tayside during the operation will be under his control?

**Chief Constable Vine:** Yes. They will be under my command.

**Mr Home Robertson:** I asked the question with feeling, because during the miners' strike police officers from one part of the country would arrive all psyched up in another part of the country, where they would come face to face with people who were involved in disputes in other parts of the country, who were also all psyched up, which was a recipe for all sorts of trouble. It is very important that there should be local control and you confirm that that will be the case.

**Chief Constable Vine:** Yes. I remember the miners' strike. I policed a pit in west Yorkshire. My father was a miner—I suppose that that is not entirely relevant. I entirely accept the sentiments behind your question and I confirm that police officers will be under my command.

**Mr Home Robertson:** That is helpful.

There have always been and always will be opportunists. Communications in central Scotland are wide open to opportunistic attempts to block roads and railways. Do you have the powers, the resources and the equipment to keep the roads and railways open if people try to play silly buggers on bridges, for example?

**Chief Constable Vine:** Yes, we think that we have the powers, the resources and the equipment that we need. Obviously, nearer the

time we will have to make a judgment on whether we need further powers, for example under prevention of terrorism legislation, but there is a route to the Home Secretary for that to happen. I think that we have the equipment, the resources and the powers that we need but, as I said, the situation could change very quickly and I must be in a position to respond very quickly to changes in circumstances.

**Mr Home Robertson:** I am sure that you will have support from members of the Parliament, and from the citizens of Tayside, in ensuring that communications keep functioning throughout.

**Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind):** From your previous answer to Mr Gallie, can I take it that there will be no routine, regular military presence at the summit and that the military will be called in only as part of a contingency plan, if you believe that you require military back-up?

**Chief Constable Vine:** Yes. I hope that I will not be in the position of calling in any military, other than the specialists who are involved in planning our operation. I have no plans to call in any regular military assets.

**Dennis Canavan:** There is general agreement that a balance ought to be struck between ensuring that there are adequate standards of security for the people attending the conference and ensuring that people have the right to peaceful protest. I do not think that I am alone in receiving complaints in the past about lack of balance. You mentioned the miners' strike. I remember instances during the strike of bus loads of miners who were doing nothing apart from sitting peacefully in a bus being arrested en masse on the pretext that they were taking part in conduct likely to lead to a breach of the peace—not that they were committing a breach of the peace per se. Those people were being bussed to peaceful demonstrations. If they refused to get out of the bus, they were arrested en masse and charged. Can you assure us that you will try to avoid such confrontations, based on the use of spurious, ill-defined offences? Breach of the peace is a rather catch-all offence, and that applies even more to conduct likely to lead to a breach of the peace. It would be wise for us to try to avoid the use of such so-called common-law offences.

**Chief Constable Vine:** As much as possible, I want to avoid the use of what you call spurious legislation. We will operate within the law and expect the protesters to do so, too. Striking a balance between the rights of the protesters, the rights of people who stay nearby and maintaining security is tricky, but I must take responsibility for that balancing act. The right of protest is dear to my heart. As a senior police officer, I will not countenance any sharp practice by officers under my command who are policing the event. I want to

ensure that if there are lawful protesters, they feel that they have had their day. Hopefully, once the event is over, they can be dispersed peacefully elsewhere and the world leaders can continue to exercise their legitimate right to have their summit at Gleneagles.

**The Convener:** I thank the chief constable for appearing before the committee and addressing issues that have been the subject of debate in Parliament and of wider interest. I am sure that his comments will help to address some of the points that have been made.

For the next part of the evidence-taking session, we are joined by Bernadette Malone, who is the chief executive of Perth and Kinross Council. It is a pleasure to welcome you to the committee today. After you have addressed the committee, I will open the floor to questions. Members have received copies of your written submission.

**Ms Bernadette Malone (Perth and Kinross Council):** Thank you for inviting me to give evidence to the committee this afternoon. You have our written submission, and I will highlight three issues in my opening statement.

First, Perth and Kinross Council's G8 events programme will be launched on Thursday at the official launch of the G8 tartan at the Famous Grouse Experience in Crieff. I have brought copies of the leaflet that details some of the events and I will highlight a couple of them. We have eight or nine events planned for the next few months, including a tourism seminar, which is an important opportunity for local businesses to network and to get advice about how they can maximise opportunities for their businesses. The seminar will be attended by the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport but also, interestingly, by the president of Savannah Tourism. As you will recall, last year's G8 summit was held at Sea Island in Savannah, and the information that we have received is that positive opportunities arose for the area because of the G8 summit. One statistic is that articles were read by more than 187 million readers throughout the world. We are keen to learn lessons from that experience, hence our invitation to the president of Savannah Tourism to attend.

We will also run a climate change conference. I was interested to hear Irene Oldfather's questions to the chief constable, because our climate change conference aims to debate a major issue that is one of the themes of the summit. We have worked hard with the Scottish Executive to ensure the maximum possible attendance by NGOs. WWF and Friends of the Earth will lead workshops and we have invited speakers who are leading experts in their fields. We also have a range of other events, including visits from consuls of the various G8 countries.

The second point that I want to highlight is that Perth and Kinross Council is keen to ensure that the summit is an opportunity for the local community to participate in the key themes of Africa and climate change. We have organised a range of activities, which are primarily targeted at children and young people. Members will notice from the leaflet that we will create a book of thoughts. We will collect children's letters to world leaders and convert them into a book. Children are also designing banners for a better world, which will be on display in Auchterarder during the summit.

Interestingly, we are co-ordinating a speechmaking competition on climate change. Nine other Scottish councils are involved and the grand final will be held in Perth just before the summit. We are also in discussions with BBC Scotland about having a question time, with children as the audience and leading figures from the world of politics and other areas as the panel.

Thirdly, we have commissioned a publication and a CD-ROM to detail what we have to offer in Perthshire and to showcase the quality of life there. We have had assurances from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that every accredited delegate and media person will receive copies of that publication.

I hope that I have conveyed to you that Perth and Kinross Council is positive about the opportunities that are afforded to the area by the G8 summit being held in Perthshire. We are positive about the opportunities. We recognise that the summit presents challenges, but we are committed to working in partnership with everybody concerned to make sure that we deal with those challenges adequately.

14:45

**The Convener:** Thank you for your comments. The committee has just completed an inquiry into the promotion of Scotland overseas. It wrestled with the vexed question of Scotland's image abroad and the great debate about whether we should use tartan, so I am glad that tartan is to the fore of such a contemporary event and its preparations.

From reading local newspapers, I have local knowledge about Perth and Kinross Council's work and about its preparations. What practical steps have been taken with other agencies to generate the maximum benefit from the G8 summit not only by bringing X thousand people into the area or other areas of Scotland to stay for a couple of days but by pursuing that to guarantee a long-term economic opportunity for the area? How have that programme and approach been

developed with the Scottish Executive and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office?

**Ms Malone:** As you may be aware, the council determined from the start that one of its priorities was to maximise the opportunities from having the summit in Perthshire to promote our area. We have done that effectively in the planning stages with the local tourist board, which has undertaken excellent work to support us in developing our publicity material and to examine opportunities for us to work with local businesses. We have tried hard to have a continuing dialogue with local businesses to ensure that their expectations are realistic in the sense of maximising opportunities to sell their products and to bid for contracts that may be connected with the G8 summit. Locally, we have worked with the business community and the area tourist board and we are receiving positive feedback about our work.

We have worked with the Scottish Executive so, for example, we are co-operating with VisitScotland on a programme of visits to our area by travel journalists before the summit, to allow them to see what Perthshire and Scotland have to offer. That is a unique opportunity to showcase the quality of life and the experience that Perth and Kinross has to offer.

At national Government level, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been very supportive of the work that we are doing. It has assisted us to provide speakers at conferences. The events that we have planned provide an opportunity to show that we in Perth and Kinross and in Scotland are debating the issues and that we have a unique product to sell. We are connecting those aspects to show the world's media, leaders and Governments that the issues matter to us and that we have excellent products, an excellent quality of life and an environment that they may wish to return to see after the summit.

**The Convener:** Can you quantify that economic opportunity in the short and long terms?

**Ms Malone:** The information from Sea Island is that it generated about \$818 million from the G8 summit. We also have figures from Alberta in Canada, where the summit was held some years before. Although we in Perth and Kinross understand clearly that of course the summit is important for the Government, we want to use the opportunity to ensure that people want to come to Perth and Kinross after the summit. It is difficult to determine the economic impact at this stage, but we are trying to learn from the experience of other areas.

**The Convener:** You mentioned that young people were producing banners for display in Auchterarder. Another point that we are considering, for which you do not have direct

responsibility, is the extent to which the Scottish Executive's policy approaches to international development and other issues can influence the G8 summit agenda. Has the display of those banners in Gleneagles hotel been discussed, to take the ideas and concerns of young people in Scotland right into the forum of the discussion? After that, the banners could be displayed in Auchterarder, Perth and other places.

**Ms Malone:** As regards the activities in which young people are involved, we have been in discussions with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office about how issues emerging from the community participation events can be shared with participants at the conference. The banners are definitely one such example. The climate change conference is also important. On the evening before the conference, we will have a special event with children, and we are encouraging parents and teachers to come along and discuss climate change issues. Hopefully that event will feed into the conference. We cannot guarantee that that will happen, but we are alive to that issue. We think that it is important that local residents, including children, have the opportunity to debate the issues that the summit is debating and to feed in any information arising from that.

**Irene Oldfather:** I commend Ms Malone and the council for involving young people in the programme. I am most impressed by the events and the community activities, and by what she is saying. Is there any opportunity to roll the programme out to young people throughout Scotland, to encourage wider involvement by piggybacking on the good ideas that you have here? It occurs to me that the council will be a member of YouthLink Scotland, which takes in all 32 local authorities and is a huge public sector body. Are there any opportunities there? Funnily enough, I spoke to the chairman of YouthLink last week, in advance of the debate in the Parliament, about whether there might be ways in which we could engage young people in our local communities on some of these very real issues. Young people are interested, but they need a vehicle to express that interest.

**Ms Malone:** That is an important point. Considerable interest has been generated among children and young people about the themes of Africa and climate change. Each of our secondary schools is involved in some project or other associated with the summit. If the model is working and if interest exists, we should seek to roll the programme out through YouthLink and other bodies. It is not just what happens in the run-up to the summit that is important, but what happens thereafter. Those issues will remain important to children and to communities. It is interesting that nine other councils, covering a significant area of Scotland, are involved in the

climate change speechmaking competition and they have participated with a huge degree of enthusiasm. I do not know who will win the competition but, in the end, that is not important. What is important is that young people have had the opportunity to debate those issues and to develop skills through the process. We will take on board the suggestion about rolling the programme out.

**Irene Oldfather:** That is interesting. How did you select the nine councils?

**Ms Malone:** Officers at Perth and Kinross Council invited them to take part and they opted in.

**Phil Gallie:** You seem to have everything under control. As I said to Chief Constable Vine, what will be will be. We will see how things have gone later on, but I suspect that it will roll out over a number of years. As you said, we are looking not just to the short term but to the longer term. You referred to VisitScotland, but you did not refer to Scottish Enterprise or to the local chambers of commerce. What pressures on council services and peripheral services such as health do you anticipate? What consideration has been given to those issues and what partnerships have been established?

**Ms Malone:** I will deal with the first part of your question first. I have been a member from the outset of the Scottish planning group, on which various organisations such as the Scottish Chambers of Commerce and Scottish Enterprise are represented. Right from the start, we have been aware of the roles and responsibilities of each of the organisations involved, and we have worked closely in respect of that. We have worked closely with the local chamber of commerce, which has been supportive of our work and has participated in our meetings with the local business community. We are confident of Scottish Enterprise sponsorship of some of the activities that we have planned.

On the operational planning arrangements on which we are working closely with Tayside police, and any possible disruption to council services, we have mapped out the range of council services that are delivered locally that might be subject to disruption. That will depend on the security arrangements that Tayside police put in place. Without going into detail, I will tell the committee about the two actions that are planned. First, we will try to reschedule any planned activities where we can. Secondly, we will ensure that we have appropriate contingency plans in place for any unplanned activities. We are working closely with Tayside police on that. We will not know the extent of any particular situation that we might have to deal with, but we have contingency plans in place.

**Phil Gallie:** I could imagine some quite heavy pressures on, for example, social work departments, under some circumstances. Have you got support from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and from other local authorities?

**Ms Malone:** As part of the planning arrangements, we have identified key staff who need to be available throughout the summit. We are in discussions at the moment with other local authorities about mutual aid arrangements. We have such arrangements in place anyway, but we are looking to broaden them out.

**Phil Gallie:** Perhaps this is controversial given the involvement of Greenpeace and other similar organisations, but there is a degree of unrest in Tayside at the moment about wind farming. The generation that Tayside has built on water power is an example to the rest of the world and, once again, Tayside is at the heart of renewables thinking. Do you intend to exploit the benefits of hydro power as you have seen it in Tayside? Given the climate change issue, how will you get over the problems of resistance to wind farms?

**The Convener:** As I listened to that question, Mr Gallie, I wondered when we were going to get near a subject of relevance for the chief executive to address, but you just about got there in your last remark. It was a struggle.

**Ms Malone:** One of the reasons why we opted to have a seminar on climate change was because it is so important for us in Perth and Kinross. It is important in many areas, but I will highlight three relevant points. First, flooding has become more of a problem in recent years and the council has spent over £20 million on flood defence schemes and continues to invest in such schemes.

Secondly, renewable energy in the form of wind farms is an important area for us, as Phil Gallie correctly identified. We are dealing with several applications, we have produced guidance and we have been working closely with communities the length and breadth of Perth and Kinross on developing the guidance for dealing with wind farm applications. Phil Gallie is quite correct that it is a controversial issue, but it is one that the council is dealing with in a manner that ensures that everybody's views are listened to and that the proper planning considerations are adhered to.

Thirdly, biomass is an issue that we would like to debate at our conference. We are in the process of building six new schools in Perth and Kinross and we are serious about considering the opportunities for wood fuel as part of the development of those schools. For many reasons, it is absolutely appropriate that we are holding a conference on climate change and that we are enabling people to express their views about the climate change issues that affect them.

**Phil Gallie:** Thanks for that answer—I am delighted that you got the point of my question, but I am sad that the convener seemed to miss its importance.

**The Convener:** If the convener had missed the important point, you would not have got to ask your question.

**Mr Home Robertson:** I congratulate Ms Malone on what seems like a very positive and constructive approach to a genuine opportunity for Perth and Kinross and the rest of Scotland. The potential for good from the G8 summit is colossal, although one would not think it if one reads the great Scottish press just now.

Perth could be the place where people begin to find answers to the problems of Africa. Perth could be the place where we begin to address global warming and all the rest of it. We are living in a media environment where good news does not exist. I was interested to hear about the efforts that you are making to go over the heads of the press and engage directly with local communities and with young people in schools in particular. This is an exciting opportunity to do that. What kind of response have you been getting from primary and secondary schools in Perth and Kinross? Do you think that the theme could be developed, as a way of getting out of the atmosphere of doom and gloom in which all of us in politics in Scotland have to live?

15:00

**Ms Malone:** We have been getting a tremendous response—not unexpectedly, because the issues that we are discussing are important to children and young people. This year there has been a lot on the television about climate change, disasters and so on, so the summit is a very current issue. We are also trying to encourage parents to get involved in the activities with their children. However, we recognise that the media are important players in the G8 summit and the issues that it raises. That is why we are trying to reach the media—not just during the summit. We are trying to ensure that we have contact with the media throughout the world in advance of the summit, because there are positive messages that we can get across not just about our area—you will forgive me for saying that Perthshire is very important to me—but about the serious issues that the children and young people are debating and discussing.

**Mr Home Robertson:** I hope that you get on better with the media in the rest of the globe than you are likely to get on with the Scottish media—perhaps I have just become embittered over the years.

**The Convener:** I want to pursue a couple of points that you make in your submission. You mention that yesterday the council met Tom McCabe, the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform, to discuss the financial consequences of the G8 summit, an issue that has been raised today. Regardless of what happens at the summit, it will have a consequential impact on the council, which will have to provide a range of services, points of infrastructure and so on for it. What stage has the dialogue about the cost of those services reached? Does Perth and Kinross Council have to pick up the tab for them, or will it be picked up either by the Executive or by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office?

**Ms Malone:** Clearly, there are costs associated with the council's involvement in the G8 summit. In our submission to the committee, we indicated that we have allocated about £140,000 to some of the activities that are described in the leaflet. However, we have been successful in securing sponsorship and funding from the Scottish Executive and private sector companies. You are correct to say that there will be a cost associated with any changes to council services. At the moment, we cannot quantify that cost, because much of it will depend on the security arrangements that are put in place and the changes to council services that we need to make as a result. We have established a dialogue with civil servants and yesterday we made the point to the minister. We have been advised that there will be further discussions in the next few months about the costs for the council.

**The Convener:** I understand that it is difficult to quantify the costs at this stage. If the council wants to go for it on the events programme, good luck to it—if the programme costs it money, that is its responsibility. However, the hosting of a summit of this magnitude in Perthshire must bring additional costs in council services. For example, instructing Tayside Contracts to put down barriers costs money. From your discussions with Mr McCabe, do you feel that he accepts in principle that the council will have to be compensated to some extent, or is that issue not yet agreed in principle?

**Ms Malone:** The minister recognised that there will be costs for the council and that we need to resolve how those will be met.

**The Convener:** I think that I understand clearly what you are saying.

My second question is the same as one that I put to Chief Constable Vine. In your submission—and I think that you confirmed this to Irene Oldfather—you say:

“The Council has ... met with representatives of a number of groups wishing to demonstrate during the Summit”

and that if the council receives a formal proposal, "it will work with any protest group to ensure a safe, sensible demonstration takes place."

I asked the chief constable whether there had been any further developments, and he answered my question. Do you wish to add anything to what he said?

**Ms Malone:** No. Like the chief constable, I and officers of Perth and Kinross Council met various representatives of G8 Alternatives and some of the constituent bodies of that group. We advised them of the process that must be followed in seeking approval for any demonstration, march or assembly. We also told them that if they have a proposal, officers can meet them to advise on the particular arrangements that need to be made. We made it clear that we cannot make the arrangements for them—we have given them that consistent message since last year. To date, we have received no proposal from G8 Alternatives or any other group for a convergence centre, or indeed for a demonstration, march or rally. However, our position remains the same: if we receive a proposal, officers will devote time to working with the organisations to put in place the necessary arrangements and approvals.

**The Convener:** How much notice is the council likely to need if it is to make those arrangements?

**Ms Malone:** It depends on what is asked for. Only seven days' notice is required for a march or a demonstration, but if an organisation wanted to set up something more significant, such as a camp site, we would need to be working on the proposal now to ensure that the infrastructure would be in place.

**The Convener:** That is helpful. If members have no further comments, I thank the witness for attending the meeting. We appreciate the input from Perth and Kinross Council.

15:06

*Meeting suspended.*

15:14

*On resuming—*

**The Convener:** We continue taking evidence on the G8 summit and the UK presidency of the Council of the EU. I welcome Paul Chitnis, the chief executive of the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund. We have received the submission that SCIAF provided to help the committee with its inquiry. I invite Mr Chitnis to make opening remarks before committee members ask questions.

**Paul Chitnis (Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund):** Thank you for giving me the

opportunity to speak to the committee. I am sorry that our submission was late; I gather that the committee took evidence from colleagues in the non-governmental organisation sector at its most recent meeting, but I was otherwise engaged in Ethiopia on that day.

I am not sure to what extent SCIAF's contribution goes further than that of other organisations. The important point for SCIAF is that the G8 summit represents a unique opportunity, alongside the UK presidency of the European Union, the meeting on the United Nations millennium development goals and the World Trade Organisation meeting in Hong Kong in December, to make a significant change to poverty in the world. We do not regard 2005 as the end of the process—it is part of the process—but during this year Scotland's contribution should be to regard the G8 as more than just a commercial opportunity to promote the country. The summit provides an opportunity for Scotland to demonstrate that it is an outward-looking nation that is concerned with the world and internationalism at a crucial time in history.

That is the gist of SCIAF's submission. I am happy to take questions.

**The Convener:** We are all clear about the agenda that various organisations are putting forward and the issues that they want the G8 summit to address. Their agenda corresponds closely to the agenda that the Prime Minister has set out, which has been pursued at G8 and other summits during the past few years. This year, a confluence of events is generating optimism about the opportunity to accelerate the process of addressing many development issues. How can that message reach the G8 summit? What steps will SCIAF take to try to ensure that the message reaches the people who participate in the summit and attracts the media attention that will surround the event?

**Paul Chitnis:** SCIAF is a member of the make poverty history coalition and the trade justice movement. As a Scottish organisation, we have an important part to play in both key coalitions, so SCIAF contributes by having a voice at the highest levels of the coalitions.

SCIAF will get the message across to the G8 summit, first, through the literature and information that the coalitions have published, some of which I am sure members have seen. Secondly, this is an important time of the year for SCIAF, because during Lent there is a tradition in the Catholic community of focusing on international issues, so SCIAF is getting the message across through the Catholic community. Last week, we brought a visitor from Zambia to the Parliament and he addressed a well-attended meeting. That is another way of trying to explain issues, which in

that case were to do with international debt. I visited Ethiopia 10 days ago with Cardinal O'Brien and such visits represent another way of trying to raise the profile of such issues.

I know that the committee is also considering the UK presidency of the European Union. SCIAF is a member of a European network of Catholic development organisations—some of the biggest development organisations are Catholic ones—and I am currently the president of *Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité*, or CIDSE. It is fair to say that CIDSE has been particularly influential in lobbying the EU on many issues, in particular on trade, subsidies and the common agricultural policy, which is such an important factor in our demands this year.

**Irene Oldfather:** I will follow through on that because it is one of my areas of interest. Would you like to say a little more? In your submission, you say:

"We urge the Executive and Parliament to press key UK and European ministers to address urgently the subsidies provided through the CAP."

One of my areas of interest is tobacco, and at our meeting two weeks ago we heard a little about cereals. On which particular subsidies have you been trying to get action?

**Paul Chitnis:** The line that SCIAF and CIDSE have taken is to say to the European Union that it is iniquitous that, under the common agricultural policy, cows in the EU get more subsidy than does half of the world's population. Half of the world's population lives on less than \$2 per day, whereas a cow in the EU receives a subsidy of \$2. There is a glaring injustice in that, and we think that the UK Government should take a lead on it. The Scottish Executive has a duty to take every opportunity to push the issue as far as it can at both the UK level and the EU level.

I cannot comment on tobacco subsidies; I am afraid that I do not know much about them. We contributed to a study of cotton subsidies in parts of west Africa and I will happily send you details of that if you want them.

**Irene Oldfather:** That would be quite helpful. You are right; this is an opportunity to get to grips with some issues that we have allowed to go on for too long. We keep on saying that we will reform the sugar subsidy and the tobacco subsidy and will address the mountains of beef and so on. We do a little bit each year, but we do not get to where we need to be. I hope that the UK presidency will be an opportunity to address those matters. The committee would greatly welcome any information that you have on the detail.

**Dennis Canavan:** Would Paul Chitnis care to comment on the relative performance so far of members of the G8 and on their contributions to

assisting the poorest people in the poorest countries in the world?

**Paul Chitnis:** I will start with the UK Government, which has increased its aid budget during the past few years and has set a timetable by which it will achieve, after 35 years, the 0.7 per cent aid target. The make poverty history coalition, of which SCIAF is a member, says that that target needs to be a lot firmer. It should be a binding commitment not just on the UK Government but on other G8 countries as well.

On debt, the UK Government is leading the international community on the cancellation of debts. Gordon Brown is advocating—and I suspect that the commission for Africa's report will advocate—the 100 per cent cancellation of unpayable debts for the poorest countries in Africa. However, there are differences on trade. The UK Government is quite committed to promoting free trade, but the make poverty history coalition is more sceptical about whether free trade is the answer. We believe that countries should be able to determine the pace at which they develop and to adopt measures to improve their trade.

Beyond the UK, the picture is mixed. I refer to a conversation that I had with the Prime Minister of Ethiopia when I was there a few days ago. He said that he believed that, in the United Kingdom, we are pushing at an open door to some extent, but that there would be considerably greater resistance in the United States and one or two other countries that are members of the G8. I understand that the United States' aid budget is just 0.18 per cent of gross national product. We would all want the United States to do a great deal more.

**Dennis Canavan:** If the worst came to the worst and Gordon Brown failed to persuade the United States to come on board regarding his plan, is it feasible or would it be helpful for a G5 or G6 to go ahead with it, even if that did not have the unanimous support of the G8?

**Paul Chitnis:** You are talking about the international finance facility—the proposal to raise an extra \$50 billion. Gordon Brown believes that it can work without the US, but I am not so sure. The United States has the ability to contribute a significant sum to the IFF. Without it, I am not sure that we will raise the resources that we need to meet the millennium development goals, which is the purpose of the IFF.

**Dennis Canavan:** In your written submission, you say:

"The Executive should use the Summit to help show case the work of Scottish civil society organisations working in Africa."



Will you say in more detail what you would like the Scottish Executive to do in that respect?

**Paul Chitnis:** One way in which the Executive could help would be to support the organisations directly. There have been conversations about the Executive setting aside moneys to support organisations that are based in Scotland. As I indicate later in the submission, members of the Scottish media and, dare I say it, members of the Scottish Parliament are not always aware of all the work that is being done internationally by the voluntary sector in Scotland. The Executive has a role to play in promoting that work.

**The Convener:** I will pursue Mr Canavan's line of questioning. You have set out the areas in which you would like the Executive to work more closely with aid organisations in Scotland. What is the nature of that dialogue? Is progress being made?

A sum of money has been allocated in the Scottish Executive budget to international development issues, and the committee has been cheered by that allocation of resources. What dialogue has there been about how the money can be spent and how the Executive can work in co-operation with a number of NGOs in Scotland that are actively involved in the delivery of international assistance in different countries? Will the Executive reinforce and add value to the work that you are doing, or will it do something completely different? Are you involved in a dialogue with the Executive?

**Paul Chitnis:** We are. I have had conversations with Patricia Ferguson, the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, and one or two officials. The short answer to your question is that we do not know, because there has not yet been an official announcement on the nature of the funding, although I gather that one is to be made shortly. The sum of £3 million was mooted, and we look forward to seeing the plans for spending it.

**The Convener:** Given that the minister will appear before us next Tuesday, we might get the announcement then—heaven forbid. We will expect that announcement, now that you have said that it is coming.

**Paul Chitnis:** One of the comments that we made was that the focus should be quite broad. There was a suggestion that the focus would be on Africa and China. Our submission is that south-east Asia should under no circumstances be ignored. That point was made before 26 December 2004, when the tsunami hit, and I hope that the tsunami has reinforced the point that south Asia is one of the poorest parts of the world, so we cannot ignore what happens there. It is difficult to comment without having seen the details of the proposal.

15:30

**The Convener:** Has much dialogue taken place? Has it involved occasional conversations or regular consultation?

**Paul Chitnis:** We have not been consulted regularly.

**Phil Gallie:** On debt relief and aid, Christian aid organisations suggest that far fewer controls should be applied to relief. Should that apply across the board or should we recognise that, in the past, some Governments in the poorest countries have benefited from aid, whereas the people on the ground have not?

**Paul Chitnis:** That is clearly true. No one feels that more strongly than the people who live in the countries that have suffered. Sometimes, we lose sight of that—it is as though our view on corruption and mismanagement is more important than theirs. I have never been to a country where people have not said that mismanagement has taken place or that moneys have been wasted.

You ask about conditionality. SCIAF's position is that debt cancellation should involve conditionality, but that it should not be imposed from above—it should come from below. In other words, once debt has been cancelled, the spending priorities should be determined by people through civil society organisations. That is the best way in which to determine priorities. When we ask people on the ground how they want money to be spent, they want it to be invested in health, education and jobs and to be focused on the most disadvantaged groups. In general, women are the most disadvantaged group.

**Phil Gallie:** I sympathise with the objective that you suggest, but how can it be achieved in reality? Governments accept debt relief and aid. Without fairly strong conditions, how can we ensure that people can spend the money as they wish to?

**Paul Chitnis:** In theory, the process used by the international financial institutions—poverty reduction strategy papers—provides a way to engage civil society. In theory, civil society, faith groups, non-governmental organisations and trade unions should contribute to the process. I accept that it might not work as well as it should, but the structure exists and we need to reinforce it. Donor Governments of rich countries need to reinforce the structure and ensure that it is adhered to. I am sure that it can work. Examples of its use exist. In Zambia, civil society has contributed significantly to the process of allocating funds. An organisation there has monitored spending on a basket of basic needs and that paradigm has been adopted in other countries and, I think, by the World Bank. That can happen, but I accept that the process is difficult.

**Phil Gallie:** Point 5 of your submission is on the common agricultural policy. I acknowledge all the policy's frailties and, in many respects, unfairnesses. You have homed in on the cattle subsidies. Given the plight of our dairy farmers, if those subsidies were removed, we would virtually eliminate every dairy farmer in the UK. How would removing subsidy benefit those overseas?

**Paul Chitnis:** The intention is in no way to damage dairy farmers in Europe. However, when I travel overseas and talk to people in the communities in which SCIAF works, I find it increasingly difficult to look into their eyes and see their suffering, knowing about the structures that cause it. There is no doubt that the common agricultural policy is contributing significantly to the dumping of cheap produce on foreign markets, making it difficult for poor countries to export their produce to European countries.

**Phil Gallie:** I go along with that in some respects. Irene Oldfather made a couple of good points. I was talking specifically about your comment on the subsidy to the cattle industry in this country. I cannot see how removing the subsidy will benefit people in poorer countries, although I can see ways in which other aspects of the CAP might affect them.

**Paul Chitnis:** What I am trying to illustrate in our submission is that there is a gross structural inequity in a system that says that a cow in the European Union should benefit from a subsidy of \$2 while half the world's population lives on less than that. The comparison is a fair one to draw and people should be more aware of it.

**Mr Home Robertson:** I want to raise a different issue altogether, which perhaps goes back to what we were discussing with the chief constable. You have been talking about the agenda that the NGOs want to promote, which strikes a chord with members of the committee and the Parliament, and with the Executive, the UK Government and the rest of the EU. There is a lot of positive energy around that could achieve some good at the G8 summit but, as we all know, there are also destructive forces around who would like to get in among that positive energy and create mayhem. Are you concerned about that? Are SCIAF and other organisations in the main stream prepared to work with the police and others to identify people who may try to cause trouble at the summit and to help to deal with them?

**Paul Chitnis:** I am resisting the temptation to say that it may be some of the countries in the G8 that will be causing trouble, in the sense that they—

**Mr Home Robertson:** I might well agree with you.

**Paul Chitnis:** Some of the G8 countries might not be willing to go along with the demands being made by the make poverty history campaign and by SCIAF. Does your question focus on the disruptive elements on the streets?

**Mr Home Robertson:** Yes.

**Paul Chitnis:** Naturally, one is worried that peaceful protests of the kind that SCIAF and other organisations will participate in will be hijacked by a small group of people. I am concerned, but we have to get the matter into proportion. We should not assume that everyone who turns up on 2 July will be bent on ruining Edinburgh. I was in Birmingham for the G7 summit at the end of the 1990s and I was in London for the trade justice lobby a few years ago. Those were extremely peaceful protests, but they were also very powerful, precisely because they were peaceful. People at those protests came from all walks of life. I slightly regret the tone that has been set by some in the media about the possibility of disruption. That is not to suggest that the issue should be ignored—I am sure that it is not being ignored, but we need to get it into proportion.

**Mr Home Robertson:** I agree entirely. Let us call a spade a spade: the big problem is the United States. However, political headway is being made in Britain and in the European Union, thanks to the efforts of organisations such as yours and of people of good will in political parties everywhere. There is nothing that the neocons in the United States would like more than to see chaos on the streets of Perth. That would suit their agenda, which is why we should be concerned about what should be positive energy being misinterpreted and hijacked by people who are simply looking for mayhem.

**Paul Chitnis:** From my experience of previous summits, I am afraid that there is likely to be an element of disruption. It is sad that people feel the need to cause disruption, but I hope that the right message will get through loud and clear to the mass of people who will protest peacefully and that the event will not be dominated by a small number of people.

**The Convener:** Could the NGOs and organisations such as SCIAF do more to try to avoid that situation by encouraging people of good will from a wide variety of perspectives to express their point of view? Could the NGOs facilitate some of the protest arrangements? Notwithstanding what has been said about the make poverty history demonstration on 2 July, we have heard from the chief constable and the chief executive of Perth and Kinross Council that there has been no firm proposal yet for a convergence centre for protest in the Perthshire area. The chief executive left us with the impression that, if that were to happen, it would have to happen pretty

quickly to allow the council to respond effectively. Is there any dialogue about that or is it the view of the NGOs that it will be the make poverty history demonstration on 2 July that will register public opinion?

**Paul Chitnis:** Yes, that is our view. Our efforts as a coalition are going into organising the 2 July demonstration and making it the key event. We are doing enormous work behind the scenes to ensure that the event is well organised. SCIAF is hosting the co-ordination of the make poverty history coalition in Scotland, so we have a role to play in that. I would be happy to hear suggestions from anyone about ways in which we could improve the co-ordination.

On your point about encouraging people to make their views heard, I believe that all of us, including MSPs, have a role to play in ensuring that as many people as possible come out peacefully on 2 July to join the rally.

**The Convener:** What you said helps to clarify issues, in that the NGOs and a cross-section of organisations take the view that 2 July is the key event and anything else that happens in Perthshire will not really be supported enthusiastically by the NGOs. That allows appropriate decisions to be made by people about what event they should support. By and large, people will want to take their families to the 2 July event to allow them to express their opinions about the issues.

**Paul Chitnis:** I will certainly be taking my children and many others will do the same—please God, the event will be peaceable.

**The Convener:** Thank you, Paul, for your attendance and submission, on which the committee will reflect in due course.

## Sift

15:43

**The Convener:** Item 2 on the agenda is the sift of documents from the European Union. I ask members to turn to the section in the paper on documents of special importance. The first item is the Commission work programme, which has been circulated to members. It was the subject of some discussion during our visit to Brussels last week, which we will say more about in due course. The proposals for the Commission's work programme will have a fairly wide impact and it is proposed to notify a range of parliamentary committees about them. As members have no points to make on the subject, we will move on.

Next is the communication from the Commission on the social agenda, which has a number of implications for subject committees. Do members agree that we should pass that communication on?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** The third item is the white paper on exchanges of information on conviction and the effect of such convictions in the European Union. That has clear implications for the work of the Justice 1 Committee, to which we will pass the paper.

The final item is a communication from the Commission on climate change. That will have relevance not only for us and our inquiry, but for the Environment and Rural Development Committee, which will pay close attention to those matters as part of its climate change inquiry.

**Phil Gallie:** Are the documents massive or are they readable? I am sure that there is a lot of good information in them about aspects of the Kyoto protocol. I would like a copy if the documents are not unmanageable.

**The Convener:** I am sure that the documents are worth reading. I would be surprised to find a document on European matters that was not worth reading.

**Phil Gallie:** I would be delighted to find one that was worth reading.

**The Convener:** The clerks will make copies of the documents available to members. Do members have further comments on the sift paper?

**Phil Gallie:** Given previous matters in which the committee has taken an interest, I would be interested to see document 2046—COM(2005) 47—on air travel for disabled passengers. I would like to know how the proposed regulation would affect our low-fare airlines.

**The Convener:** The document can be made available to you.

## Convener's Report

15:46

**The Convener:** Item 3 is the convener's report. There are just a couple of points. First, the committee's trip to Brussels last week focused on budgets and financial perspectives in the European Union; the debates and discussions concentrated on how to resolve such matters. In particular, there was concern that a great deal of the impact of the budget agreement might fall on structural funding, which would be of significance in Scotland. There was also a focus on turning the Lisbon agenda into a set of practical measures that member states can pursue, which was reflected in our discussions about the Commission's work programme. Those issues will be important in the committee's future work.

We also had a discussion with Commissioner Wallström and her officials, in which it was made pretty clear to us that the Commission is interested in having a direct dialogue with institutions such as the Scottish Parliament and is keen to develop the appropriate mechanisms to allow us to pursue issues. The approach is in line with some of what the committee heard in November during the conference of the regions with legislative power, when there was comment in the media about the possibility of direct dialogue between the Commission and the Scottish Parliament, as opposed to the normal channels of dialogue through the member state Parliament. That approach is welcome and the discussions with Commissioner Wallström and her officials were a useful part of our visit.

**Phil Gallie:** Will you clarify that such dialogue would be possible under the current arrangements and that we would not have to sign up to the proposed constitution for that to happen?

**The Convener:** That is a fair interpretation of the situation. The discussion was not about statutes or constitutional provisions; it was about common sense and good dialogue, which the Commission is anxious to encourage. We can take a good deal of heart from the discussion.

**Irene Oldfather:** The visit was useful and I hope that it will help us to shape our future work programme. I put on the record my group's thanks to Liz Holt, John Edward and the clerks for all the work that they put into what was a very useful programme.

**The Convener:** I reiterate the committee's appreciation of the efforts that went into making the programme a success.

The second item in my report is a letter from the Deputy First Minister on regional aid post-2006.

Members have a copy of the letter and the attached briefing note. The Executive has copied the note to the Enterprise and Culture Committee, which is undertaking an inquiry into EU state aids and will visit Brussels in mid-April to pursue the issues. The committee intends to report to the Parliament on the matter by early May.

**Irene Oldfather:** I was going to mention the Enterprise and Culture Committee's inquiry. It would be helpful if we could keep abreast of developments in that inquiry, even if we just do so informally.

The information that has been provided to the committee indicates that there is a proposal to provide

"a completely new instrument, the Lesser Amounts of State Aid (LASA) test",

which I understand has been put forward by the competition directorate-general. I do not think that we came across the matter in our deliberations in Brussels. It is obvious that there are close links between the state aid agenda and the entire financial perspective and, given that the committee agreed to keep a close watching brief on developments in that regard, it would be useful if the clerks could produce a briefing on how the agenda is changing, so that we can keep up to date on the matter.

**The Convener:** Dialogue between committees was discussed at the Conveners Group, which took the view that, if issues cross over committees' remits, informal dialogue offers the most effective approach. The committee will be briefed on the issues in due course.

The committee will meet again on Tuesday 15 March at 2 pm, when the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport will be with us.

*Meeting closed at 15:51.*



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