

# **RURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 2 May 2000  
(*Afternoon*)

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2000.

Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to the Copyright Unit,  
Her Majesty's Stationery Office, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ  
Fax 01603 723000, which is administering the copyright on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate  
Body.

Produced and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by The  
Stationery Office Ltd.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office is independent of and separate from the company now  
trading as The Stationery Office Ltd, which is responsible for printing and publishing  
Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body publications.

---

# CONTENTS

Tuesday 2 May 2000

	Col.
ISLAY CREAMERY .....	649
NATIONAL PARKS (SCOTLAND) BILL: STAGE 1 .....	658
PETITIONS .....	682

---

## RURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

11<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2000, Session 1

### CONVENER

\*Alex Johnstone (North-East Scotland) (Con)

### DEPUTY CONVENER

Alasdair Morgan (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Alex Fergusson (South of Scotland) (Con)

\*Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

\*Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP)

Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)

\*Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP)

\*Mr John Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)

\*Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab)

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

\*Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)

\*attended

### THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS ALSO ATTENDED:

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP)

Euan Robson (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)

John Scott (Ayr) (Con)

### WITNESSES

Frank Bracewell (Association of Scottish Community Councils)

Murdoch Cameron (Association of Scottish Community Councils)

Ross Finnie (Minister for Rural Affairs)

Councillor Ian Miller (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)

Mr Douglas Murray (Association of Scottish Community Councils)

Mrs Sheena Slimon (Laggan Community Association)

Tim Stone (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)

### CLERK TEAM LEADER

Richard Davies

### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Richard Walsh

### ASSISTANT CLERK

Tracey Hawe

### LOCATION

The Hub



## Scottish Parliament

### Rural Affairs Committee

*Tuesday 2 May 2000*

*(Afternoon)*

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 14:04*]

**The Convener (Alex Johnstone):** Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to these unusual surroundings. I have received apologies from Alasdair Morgan and Alex Fergusson.

**Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** Lewis Macdonald and Cathy Peattie are at another committee meeting, which is considering legislation this afternoon. They send their apologies.

**The Convener:** I welcome as our guest for the first time Mr John Scott, who is interested in item 1 on our agenda. Ross Finnie, the Minister for Rural Affairs, is interested in item 2; given that interest, we decided that it would be appropriate for me to propose that we deal with that item before item 1, so that the minister can go about his business. We can then take as much time as is necessary to discuss issues relating to the National Parks (Scotland) Bill. Does the committee agree to discuss item 2 before item 1?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

### Islay Creamery

**The Convener:** We have received a letter from Alison J Hay, the leader of Argyll and Bute Council, which states:

"At a meeting of the Council on 30 March 2000, the closure of Islay Creamery was discussed and the following motion was passed:

'The Council expresses its extreme concern at the closure of the Creamery on the island of Islay and calls on the Scottish Executive to fully examine the situation and to give every possible assistance to those affected. The Council also requests the Rural Affairs Committee to visit the island, as a matter of urgency, to assess the impact the closure will have on the local economy and the sustainability of the island.'

I should be obliged if you would give urgent consideration to this and contact me with a view to arranging a visit as soon as possible."

I thought it appropriate to include this matter on the agenda.

At this point, I invite comments on the letter from members of the committee. Would the Minister for Rural Affairs like to begin by telling us what has happened so far?

### **The Minister for Rural Affairs (Ross Finnie):**

Thank you, convener and members of the committee. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to join you in the discussion of this very sad event. There is no one on the committee who does not share the concern of Argyll and Bute Council about the difficulties that this closure announcement has caused. We understand that on a small island the closure has implications not just for those employed directly by the creamery and the seven dairy farms that are affected, but for the community as a whole.

It is worth pausing to reflect on the history of this case. It has been recognised in Islay for a long time that without the creamery there is no market for the island's milk, as the high cost of transportation makes trading with the mainland not viable. That is why the Scottish Executive and its predecessor, the Scottish Office, backed the two plans to revive the creamery, one in 1996 and one towards the tail end of 1999 and into 2000.

When the creamery closed in 1996, the island farmers were to be congratulated on taking the bold step of forming their own company and raising considerable amounts of cash to run the creamery themselves. Highlands and Islands Enterprise was able to provide a development grant of £200,000, with preference shares in the company. The new company was also awarded a processing grant of £180,000 by the Scottish Office. A further £65,000 was made available for the appointment of a marketing manager, and £11,000 was provided from the Highlands and Islands agricultural marketing scheme. With the investment by the farmers themselves, that public funding of £456,000 allowed to the creamery to reopen.

As the committee is probably aware, the initial success and fairly healthy cheese sales were not sustained, and those circumstances, coupled with the general fall in the value of milk products, resulted in the company's financial difficulties early last year. As the committee will further be aware, production was temporarily suspended in November 1999. However, there was no immediate consequence for the community because Scottish Milk stepped in with financial assistance to transport the milk off the island at no additional cost.

At that time, several things happened. There were concerns that it was not enough just to raise finance and that a business plan had to be put together. A rescue package worth £335,000 was formulated by Argyll and the Islands Enterprise with a combination of grants and loans from the local enterprise company, the Scottish Executive and HIE; furthermore, the banks and Scottish Milk took a position, and an additional £75,000 was invested by the farmers.

Central to the business plan that underpinned the rescue package was the need, recognised by the marketing people who had examined the situation, for the creamery to make an additional high-value product. As a result, at the start of the year, the creamery began to make a mature cheese in addition to its traditional Islay Dunlop. Unfortunately, margins on the traditional cheese sales did not improve and, perhaps worse, the plan to introduce a mature cheese simply did not work out. The company continued to make unsustainable losses and, as we know, on 21 March the farmers, in their capacity as directors of the company, unanimously took the painful decision to cease cheese production and to close the creamery.

Our first question was whether the plan could be revived; however, the business plan had failed to deliver and our understanding was that no one with any experience in the industry could see any viable future for the creamery. As a result, and given the costs of transportation and the fact that the market for local milk had closed, it was clear that dairy farming on the island was unlikely to survive.

Faced with that fairly catastrophic situation, the Executive wasted no time in trying to find a way to give assistance. We immediately examined how to take Islay out of the southern isles milk quota ring fence and a consultation paper, which we are required to issue, was published on 24 March, seeking views on that proposal. Now that the consultation has been completed, it is clear that most interested parties favour the island's removal from the ring fence, and we will proceed with that. The advantage is that the farmers' milk quota can be sold on the open quota market, which will realise more cash than in the restricted ring-fenced market. The Islay farmers currently hold about 3 million litres of milk quota, which is worth about £600,000 on the open quota market. Although milk quota is relatively cheap at the moment, its value could well rise as the quota progresses—that is a fairly normal cyclical pattern.

Furthermore, we have been in touch with Argyll and the Islands Enterprise, which has been active in taking steps to assist the local community. It set up a local response team to assist people who lose their jobs because of the closure. It offered advice on benefits, employment, training and business opportunities, and it planned a programme of further assistance for the whole island. In conjunction with the Executive, AIE has also made experts from the Scottish Agricultural College available to people who might wish to diversify within agriculture, but who clearly require some assistance to do so.

As I said at the outset, I share everyone's disappointment that the company had to close and

am well aware of the serious consequences of the closure. However, we invested considerable sums of money in the venture. I must stress that the business plan proved impossible to deliver and, in the absence of a viable alternative, the directors and shareholders had no other option but to close the creamery.

14:15

**The Convener:** Thank you very much, minister. I am sure that you are well aware that the matter raises two issues. The first is the current circumstances on the island, which you have addressed in great detail. The second issue that springs to mind is the longer-term lessons that can be learned. Do you feel that the Islay experience offers any lessons that could be beneficial to any circumstances that might face the Campbeltown, Rothesay and Arran creameries?

**Ross Finnie:** I am nervous about running those three creameries together. I am well aware—as is the committee—that the immediate financial pressure on those creameries comes from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency's requirements for the disposal of whey. However, I would draw a distinction. One of the more vexing elements of the Islay creamery situation was the fact that, when the business plan was put together, there was real concern about the long-term market for the quality, flavour and type of cheese that was produced. A McLelland & Son, which became a shareholder in the venture, expressed grave reservations about whether there would be a serious market for that cheese. However, I understand that the market for the Campbeltown, Bute and Arran cheeses is far more securely based.

I should mention in parenthesis that I was with the chairman of Safeway Stores, which has accepted Campbeltown cheese on to its main listing and promoted it as a mainline product. One of the cruel aspects of this situation is that, although the business plan makes clear the importance of this kind of venture to an island community, the product must finally have a market.

Although the dairy herd is important to the island, it is substantially smaller than the beef or sheep herds. It is perhaps a little early to talk about learning lessons, but we might want to examine aspects such as marketing and the business prospects for a product.

**Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** This is clearly a very important matter, which is why the minister is attending today's meeting. Although I do not have too many background details on this issue, it is clear that many wider issues and pressures are affecting the

dairy sector. To what extent is the closure of the creamery a result of such wider pressures as opposed to pressures that are unique to islands?

**Ross Finnie:** To answer that question, I have to return to my earlier comments. Reservations that were expressed when the business plan was drawn up pointed to a specific pressure on the medium to long-term viability of the product. Such viability was questioned by the report, which is why cheese experts suggested to the creamery that a more mature cheddar might better sustain itself in the market. However, if the difficulty lies in the fact that the product is not being well received in the market, the situation is not at all helped by a general reduction in price, which means that less income is being taken whatever volume is being produced. Furthermore, I rather suspect that island creameries are faced with fairly fixed overheads, which only exacerbates the situation.

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** I spoke to some of the people from Islay. One of their requests was to be able to buy or obtain a quota for beef farming in order to replace the dairy herds. That would do something for the farmers on the island. Is that matter any further forward?

**Ross Finnie:** There is an unfortunate complication with that. As part of the Agenda 2000 reforms, the United Kingdom as a whole was required to reduce the amount of available suckler cow premium quota. That has happened in two stages. The surplus quota that existed at the end of last year was in effect frozen, so we start from the position of having none available.

We are also required to make further reductions. We have done some work on that—it means a reduction by perhaps up to 4 per cent this year on existing farms. As a result, no national reserve is available for distribution. Farmers who leave dairying can apply for an allocation of free suckler cow premium quota. However, given the ranking of that system, people leaving dairying do not have any priority—the regulations do not provide for that. Moreover, as I have just made clear, there is no real access to that surplus quota. The farmers concerned would be required to purchase quota on the open market.

As you will be aware, discussions are in progress with Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Argyll and the Islands Enterprise, although I do not want to go too deeply into the matter, as it takes us into the dreaded area of state aids. The discussions are about whether there is any way in which farmers could be given assistance—although I dread to use that word, which could fall foul of a state aid—or whether there is any mechanism to help them. At the point at which they might wish to transfer to beef production, the overarching complication of how the suckler cow premium quota rules have been rewritten

unfortunately makes things quite difficult. They would still be able to go into the market on an open issue, but that might be more difficult, given their financial circumstances.

**Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** I refer to the letter from Alison Hay, leader of Argyll and Bute Council, to the convener. Have you seen a copy, minister?

**Ross Finnie:** No.

**Mr Rumbles:** She asks us to do two things. First, the council

“requests the Rural Affairs Committee to visit the island”.

More important, she states that the council motion passed on 30 March

“calls on the Scottish Executive to fully examine the situation and to give every possible assistance to those affected.”

Does the minister feel that every possible and available assistance has been given to the people affected?

**Ross Finnie:** I can certainly assure you that officials have been to the island and that we are in touch with all those involved at every level, including Argyll and the Islands Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. We are therefore well aware of the situation.

As I said in answer to Rhoda Grant's question, we have explored whether there are any ways in which to give assistance in relation to the suckler cow premium. Similarly, we spent quite a bit of time examining carefully whether, at the outset, there was a basis on which the original business plan could be resurrected.

We have been careful to ensure that, as well as the assistance offered by Argyll and the Islands Enterprise, those engaged in the cheese industry have also had access to help from the Scottish Agricultural College. As for the things within our gift, I am perfectly satisfied that we have tried in every way possible to assist the people directly affected by the closure.

**John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** I note your comments about the quota being allowed to be disbursed elsewhere—in other words, the removal of the ring fence from Islay. Have you plans to do that in other sectors, such as the sheep sector, given that some of the people involved are suffering liability? I am referring to the HIE ring fence for sheep quotas.

**Ross Finnie:** Ring-fencing was, by and large, brought in at the behest of the particular—*[Interruption.]*

**John Scott:** Oh hell—I apologise, that was my mobile.

**Ross Finnie:** He is going to ask me a more

difficult question now. [*Laughter.*]

As you are aware, John, the quotas were brought in largely at the behest of specific groups or areas. The previous practice of the Scottish Office—and I see no reason for the Scottish Executive to change this—was to be sensitive to the opinion of local groups. Shetland wishes to have its beef quota removed; Orkney does not. Those were two separate ring fences; we listened to the requests from the farming communities in those areas and, having taken soundings and opinion from them, we acted accordingly.

The Scottish Executive rural affairs department has no closed or rigid view about the matter. We intend, I think correctly, to respond to the wishes of the whole community. Communities have to inform themselves about whether, at a given time and place, and given the value of quota, their internal arrangements are affected or whether they are in a better position—and they have to decide what the long-term consequence will be. You will know better than I do that other factors have to be considered.

**Richard Lochhead:** I am intrigued about the response from the rural affairs department if there is to be such a closure. Clearly, the department is very busy now, given the state of the various sectors of rural Scotland. A closure such as the one on Islay has a disproportionate impact on the local economy and community. Does the department have a fast-response strategy for such closures? Does it send a delegation to speak to the local community?

**Ross Finnie:** I do not know about a delegation, but we had officers on the island early on, as soon as we heard about the difficulties—I think within a day of the closure. When the creamery's action was suspended, officers were on the island within a day of the prospect of the actual decision to cease production.

Our immediate action was to consider whether there was any way in which to resurrect the business plan. We were influenced by the views of the experts in cheese production about the unfortunate combination of factors, particularly the lack of market penetration.

We were also in touch via our local area office. The officers and offices out there are in touch; the closure did not come as a surprise. We knew that there were difficulties and we were trying to assist. We must remember that this was a private enterprise. There is a point at which its owners run it and a point at which we see what assistance the Government can provide.

**Richard Lochhead:** I note the suggestion in the letter from the leader of Argyll and Bute Council that the Rural Affairs Committee should visit Islay. Do you have any plans to make a visit?

**Ross Finnie:** Yes, I have. I do not intend to go immediately—that is, either today or tomorrow. Now that I have had to accept—regrettably and reluctantly—that there cannot be a prospect of revising the business plan to keep the creamery viable, I want to allow the people in the Argyll and the Islands Enterprise team and my officers to take stock of the exact extent of the problems. Rather than just going there to be sympathetic, I would like to be in a position to know what positive action might have to be taken.

People want to know our position following our examination of the alternatives—lifting the ring fence or the possibility of providing assistance in relation to the suckler cow premium quota—and what prospects there are for people moving into various areas. It would be helpful for me to assess that before deciding whether there is any way in which the Executive can give positive assistance.

14:30

**The Convener:** As there are no further comments, we will now deal with the requests in the letter. The one on which we can act immediately is the request from the council for the Rural Affairs Committee to visit the island as a matter of urgency, to assess the impact that the closure will have on the local economy and the sustainability of the island. Members may want to visit Islay as a committee. If not, do members feel that it would be appropriate for a delegation of committee members to go to the island?

**Mr Rumbles:** Could not the convener act on behalf of the committee and go to Islay for us?

**The Convener:** I would be pleased to do that. Does anybody else want to visit the island?

**Rhoda Grant:** I would be interested in going. It is important that more than one committee member goes, as much for the signal that we want to give to the people on Islay as for any other reason. I will understand if the whole committee does not want to go; it is quite a distance for everyone to travel. Nevertheless, a few of us should try to go.

**The Convener:** Would anybody else be interested?

**Mr John Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD):** I support what Rhoda said. If only the convener went, that would imply that there was not much concern among members of the committee. We know that that is not the case, but that is what would be implied. A sizeable representation of the committee should be sent.

**The Convener:** Would you be able to go, John?

**Mr Munro:** Yes.

**The Convener:** It would also be appropriate to



inform and try to involve the local member, as is usual.

**Richard Lochhead:** Would we be able to build that trip into our investigation into employment patterns in rural communities?

**The Convener:** Yes. We could learn significant lessons from the visit in relation to that investigation.

**Richard Lochhead:** We should certainly send a delegation from the committee.

**The Convener:** Does the committee think that the members who have volunteered are the appropriate ones to send?

**Mr Rumbles:** We should send an SNP member as well. Would Richard Lochhead like to go?

**Richard Lochhead:** I have no objection to going along, if it is felt that we should send a cross-party delegation.

**The Convener:** That group will have to work together to find a suitable date. The suggested dates that fit into our programme are Friday 2 June and Monday 5 June. I will not ask members to comment on those dates at this point; we will contact you individually about them.

As there are no further comments on the letter from Argyll and Bute Council about the Islay creamery, I thank the minister and his support team for coming along and I adjourn this meeting for a few moments, to change the seating arrangements and to bring in a mixed group of witnesses.

14:32

*Meeting adjourned.*

14:34

*On resuming—*

## **National Parks (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1**

**The Convener:** I apologise to our witnesses for the slight delay at the start of today's meeting. We occasionally find ourselves dealing with incidents that creep up on us.

I welcome Councillor Ian Miller, who is the spokesman on planning matters for the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and Tim Stone, who is the head of policy development on national parks for COSLA. I also welcome Mr Frank Bracewell, from Drymen community council, and Murdoch Cameron, from Balloch and Haldane community council. They are here to deal with issues that relate specifically to the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs area. From the Cairngorms area, we welcome Mrs Sheena Slimon, from Laggan community association, who is here to represent the Cairngorms Partnership community councils group. Finally, we welcome Mr Douglas Murray, who comes from Inveresk community council and is the secretary of the Association of Scottish Community Councils.

Each of our representative groups will have the opportunity to say a few words before answering questions. We will address each group in turn, but, if you feel strongly that you would like to comment on somebody else's answer, you can do so if you give me an indication. I invite Councillor Miller to say a few words on behalf of COSLA, after which we will ask questions.

**Councillor Ian Miller (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities):** Thank you, convener. You have our written response to your letter of last month. In that paper, our comments were prefaced by the statement that COSLA had no formal position at that point. Those comments were endorsed unanimously by the meeting of COSLA leaders on 28 April. COSLA broadly welcomes the various amendments that have been made to the bill, and is happy that you have taken on board some of our comments. We feel that that has improved the bill.

The paper that we submitted focuses on the points on which you asked for more detailed consideration. We gave evidence to the Transport and the Environment Committee, which dealt more with the nitty-gritty of the bill. We have tried to take a more overarching view of the position in our presentation to the Rural Affairs Committee. I shall briefly run through the points that we make in our submission.

As far as COSLA is concerned, part of the deal is that the Government picks up the costs for the national park authority. We are anxious to ensure that no additional burdens are placed on local government. Although we welcome the flexibility that allows councils to nominate people who are not councillors for membership of the national park authority, we would be surprised if councils did anything other than nominate their own members for that body.

We welcome the increased emphasis on the involvement of community councils and local interest groups, but we feel strongly that it does not go far enough. We need to write the local people's position into the bill. We have proposed an additional subparagraph to paragraph 5(2) of schedule 1, which would read: "At least 20 per cent of the total Park authority membership from persons who are directly involved in local community matters in the Park area." In effect, four members of the park authority committee should be drawn from that group.

We are concerned that, at present, paragraph 5 subparagraph (2)(b) of schedule 1 gives undue weight to narrow special interest groups. The national park is already required to set up consultation bodies that involve such categories. That is sufficient input for those groups, and that additional subparagraph should be deleted. There is a further issue about direct elections for local members. There are many ways in which to consult communities without the need for direct elections to the posts. We are quite relaxed about those posts being nominations by the minister.

We want an additional section to provide that councillor members of the national park authorities shall hold office only from the time of appointment to the time that they cease to be a member of the nominating council. That is a practical point; there needs to be some correlation between elections to councils and membership of the park authorities. The suggested section would be a practical way to ensure that any council elections that were held midway through the term of the park authority could be dealt with effectively.

Another point is planning responsibility, which we have not dealt with directly in our response. We are happy that that has not yet been specified in the bill. Each area has its own different conditions and solutions.

Thank you for allowing us to make our presentation.

**The Convener:** Thank you. We will move to questions.

**Mr Rumbles:** I am keen to explore the idea of having 20 per cent local representation on all the national park authorities. The Executive's response to the consultation makes it clear that

that was the biggest issue: of the 190 respondents who mentioned it, 122 favoured direct local representation on the boards—either through election or nomination from community councils.

You said that you were quite relaxed about not having direct elections to the board, but you also mentioned the importance of co-ordinating with local authority elections. I was not quite clear whether you thought that it would be a good idea to have local elections for the board. Am I on the right track?

**Councillor Miller:** I was dealing with those as two separate issues. The point about having 20 per cent representation from local people is that 50 per cent local council representation is already built in; that takes care of the need for local representation.

**Tim Stone (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities):** The issue of councillors ceasing to be members of the national park authority if they cease to be councillors is separate from that of local representation. We want simply to ensure that those people who were nominated by councils continue to have the confidence of the council. Every three years, technically, councillors cease to be councillors on election day. The purpose of our amendment would be to confirm that all councillors would cease to be members of the national park authority on election day. After election day, if those councillors were re-elected, it would be up to the new council to decide whether to re-nominate them for the national park authority. The new council would be able to nominate councillors in whom it had confidence, rather than those in whom the previous administration had confidence.

14:45

**Mr Rumbles:** Local representation is important, and 20 per cent seems to be a common theme. Later on, we will talk about Mrs Sheena Slimon's submission, which also mentions 20 per cent representation from the local community.

Let us take an example from Aberdeenshire, where I live. Councillors from Fraserburgh and Peterhead might be appointed to the Cairngorms authority; that would not be appropriate, yet it would be allowed under the proposed legislation. What do you think about that?

**Tim Stone:** It is appropriate to allow for that possibility.

**Mr Rumbles:** Why?

**Tim Stone:** If the council felt that the individual from Fraserburgh had particular expertise that would be valuable to the park—perhaps they were convener of the council's transport committee and transport was an important aspect of the national park plan—we would not want that councillor to be

excluded. Having said that, we anticipate that, by and large, councils will choose local members or those from the immediately surrounding area to serve on the authority—where those councillors have the relevant expertise.

**Mr Rumbles:** However, there is no guarantee of that.

**Tim Stone:** That is correct, but we think that it is appropriate that there is no guarantee. Do you want me to elaborate on the 20 per cent issue?

**Mr Rumbles:** Yes; please do.

**Tim Stone:** We do not think that there is any need to directly elect the 20 per cent of the members of the park authorities who would be community representatives. We do not see a need for direct appointment by the council of the councillor representatives, although we welcome the reassurance that the council will nominate and the minister will appoint, unless there is an outstandingly good reason not to do so.

We have difficulty with the direct election of local representatives because we are not sure how that could be done effectively without a strong community council basis in the national park area. Furthermore, if we introduce elected representatives on a community basis what is their representation? Would they represent the whole national park area or a part of it? That would introduce conflicts and ambiguities into the role of a representative on the national park authority.

**Mr Rumbles:** You propose only four local representatives from the 20 members of the park authority. The other 16 places would be for specialist areas and the four would represent direct local interest, because of the importance of connecting local people with the national parks. In many areas of the Highlands and Islands, many councillors have been elected unopposed for years, because the local community does not have the opportunity to alter the democratic deficit. Does COSLA recognise that there is a need to redress that democratic deficit through the direct involvement of the local community in the management of the park authorities?

**Tim Stone:** We do not see it that way. The fact that there may be areas of Scotland where, at the moment, there are councillors who are not elected because there is democratic deficit can be dealt with by local communities at council elections.

We anticipate that a significant number of the 50 per cent of councillors will be local representatives. We also anticipate that, even if the councillors are not local representatives, a mechanism will ensure that the local councillors who are from the national park area, the community councils and other local interest groups will be able to influence the national park authority.

**Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP):**

You mention that there will be 20 per cent from the community but you are still talking about having 50 per cent from the council. Could you clarify the percentages?

**Tim Stone:** On a basis of 20 members, there would be 10 councillors nominated from the councils in the park area and 10 people directly appointed by the minister, of whom four would be activists from within the community.

**Irene McGugan:** So you are taking the 20 per cent from the ministerial accumulation?

**Tim Stone:** Yes.

**Dr Murray:** My point was similar. I notice that you are not including councillors among the people who are directly involved in local community matters. Might not that approach unbalance the situation? The board will be dominated by local councillors and local activists, along with representatives of local landowners or recreational interests. There will not be a lot of space left for people appointed by the minister who have a national perspective. The park would be dominated by the local authorities.

**Tim Stone:** It would be dominated by local interests, not local authority interests. We think that that would be appropriate. In the scenario that we are talking about, some of the 10 local councillors could be from outwith the immediate park area. There would be a minimum of four community-based representatives and a maximum of six national representatives.

**Dr Murray:** But among those six would be people who represent environmental or recreational interests.

**Tim Stone:** We do not see it quite that way. We suggest that the section in the bill as introduced, which referred to the special interest groups, should be dropped. We do not think that it would be appropriate for narrow interest groups to be on the national park authority. It would be better to have people who look at the national park as a whole. Narrow specialist interests can be brought in through advisory groups and consultative processes. There should be a national input, but a local focus.

**Dr Murray:** Do you believe that an organisation half of whose members are local councillors would represent the national interest?

**Tim Stone:** Yes, given what the national park is expected to do. The national park has to balance the national interest with the local interest. We think that, through the mechanisms of the consultative process and the approval of the minister, the input of a leavening of national experts along with councillors—who will not necessarily all represent the national park area—

will create that balance. There is a strong imperative in the bill to ensure that, if there is a conflict to do with the primary purpose of the national park, which is to serve the environmental and cultural interests, priority is given to—

**Dr Murray:** Others, such as the local enterprise companies, have argued that the LECs should be represented on the authority. By the time that everybody has got their oar in, the authority could be rather cramped.

**Councillor Miller:** The important point is that there is a balance to be struck. COSLA has had a debate about having a representation from local authorities of 50 per cent plus one. We are broadly agreed that that will not be the case, although one authority is strongly in favour of it. We have reached an agreement that our present proposal is the most balanced way to move forward. Incidentally, I am sure that the councillors who are appointed to the national park authority would be able to take the broader view and not consider only their local interest.

**Richard Lochhead:** I want to get this clear. You are saying that the councillors would not necessarily represent wards in the national park?

**Tim Stone:** They would not necessarily do so.

**Richard Lochhead:** You seem determined that the local council nominees would be elected members, but there is a chance that they might not be. For instance, you might nominate non-councillors. How could the local authorities best choose people to nominate? How would they do that, in a practical sense?

**Tim Stone:** We anticipate that the local authorities would nominate councillors for the foreseeable future. It is right that the bill enables the choosing of non-councillors, but we think that, at least until the situation settles down and we can see how things are operating, the nominees are likely to be councillors. The councillors who will be nominated will be identified by considering the local interest and the overlap of activities between the national park and the council.

**Richard Lochhead:** How would the non-councillors be selected?

**Tim Stone:** As I said, we do not anticipate that happening soon. It will happen after the councils have worked with advisory groups and identified people in the community who would be useful members of the national park authority.

**Richard Lochhead:** Let us pretend for a moment that two of the 10 nominees were to be non-councillors. How would they be identified? How would you ensure that they were representative of the area? Would you just tap someone on the shoulder and anoint them?

**Tim Stone:** The process would build up over time. The council would identify people who were active in the area and represented interests that the council wanted to be represented on the authority.

**Richard Lochhead:** I will rephrase the question. Do you think that it is possible for local authorities to nominate in a transparent manner non-councillors who are representative of the areas?

**Councillor Miller:** There is a precedent for the process. Many local authorities, my own included, appoint non-councillors to committees such as education committees. Such people are selected because of their interest and good works in the relevant area. The same thing would apply to national parks. It is a case of horses for courses: we have to pick the people that are best suited for the job. Councils are capable of doing that.

**Rhoda Grant:** If the wording of the bill were not changed, would you consider initially selecting people from the community rather than councils for the first national park authority?

**Tim Stone:** The soundings that we took from councillors suggest that, in the first instance, councils are likely to appoint councillors to the national park authority. We expect that the minister or ministers will ensure that there is local community representation. In other words, the council will say that councillors are the local community representatives. In the people that we will put forward, we will seek a balance between local people and people that we decide are appropriate for the park.

15:00

**Rhoda Grant:** Would not community council members have the same local ties as councillors?

**Tim Stone:** A national park body will have certain functions. Depending on the secondary legislation, it may or may not take over certain functions that councils have at the moment. Councils will be interested in their relationships with national park bodies. Until those bodies are up and running and relationships have been established, councils will be keen to ensure that councillors are involved, to ensure that there is a good interchange of understanding between the council and the national park body. If the community representative on the national park body is not also on the council, gaps could emerge in the relationship between the two. Remember that the council will still be responsible for education, social work and loads of other functions in the park area, so it is important that the relationship is good. There must be a clear understanding of what are park body functions and what are council functions.

**Councillor Miller:** Each national park authority will be different, and it is important that they should be allowed to evolve their own processes. As I said, I would be surprised if councils that were offered 50 per cent representation did not take that up. For them not to do so would be too much to hope for.

**The Convener:** What are COSLA's views on a certain number of members being directly elected to the national park authority?

**Councillor Miller:** We oppose direct elections, as is clear from our submission.

**The Convener:** Are you prepared to comment any further?

**Tim Stone:** Are you talking about non-councillor representatives?

**The Convener:** Yes.

**Tim Stone:** We say that we are opposed, but this issue did not come up one way or the other during our consultation process. In their responses, councils noted that the minister was proposing to appoint directly the other half of the authority, and they were happy with that.

**The Convener:** A moment ago, the idea of using community councils to help to determine the nature of representation was mentioned. Do you see a significant role for community councils in the appointment of representatives to the national park authority?

**Tim Stone:** Do you mean directly?

**The Convener:** Will the community councils have some influence when you are appointing non-councillors?

**Tim Stone:** Councillors?

**The Convener:** Non-councillors.

**Tim Stone:** The bill indicates that the minister is required to consult with community councils on the appointment of members. We think that it is entirely appropriate that community councils, where there are community councils operating, should be consulted. I do not know what "consult" means in the bill. It might mean that the community council is asked to put forward names for the minister to consider through the normal procedures.

Our view is that at least 20 per cent of the representatives should be people who are active in the community, but we have avoided using the term community council, because there are not always community councils operating. To get that 20 per cent, we would certainly expect the minister to consult people who are active in the community on who would be appropriate. However, we have not gone on to the next step and said that there

should be direct nomination.

**Mr Rumbles:** Direct elections were the biggest single issue during the Executive's consultation exercise. Of those who responded, 20 per cent said that they wanted direct elections, and a further 44.2 per cent said that they were concerned at the lack of local representation on the boards. Correct me if I am wrong, but from your evidence today, it seems that there is no guarantee, with the wording of the legislation as it is at the moment, of having 20 per cent representation even through having local councillors on the board.

As you have said, there is nothing to prevent councillors appointing people who do not live and work in the local community. I represent West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine, and responses to the consultation exercise there, as well as representations that I have received, show that, especially in the Cairngorms, there is a real concern that we must anchor local representation into the board. I think that 20 per cent is a perfectly reasonable figure.

Had you given a commitment that you would ensure that 20 per cent of local councillors would live or work in the local community, I would have been more convinced, but there is no such guarantee. There is no guarantee that local connection will be anchored into the bill. Am I right in my summary of what you have said?

**Tim Stone:** You are right to say that, as the bill is currently drafted, there is no guarantee that the 50 per cent who are council nominees will come from the local area. In theory, they could all come from outwith the local area, but I would be astounded if that turned out to be the case. It would, of course, be up to the individual council, but I would expect that most of the people who were put forward would be either from the area or from the immediately surrounding area.

**Mr Rumbles:** But there is no guarantee of that.

**Tim Stone:** There is no guarantee in the bill, and we do not think that it would be appropriate to constrain the council nominations.

**Mr Rumbles:** So you would not want a guarantee?

**Tim Stone:** No, those decisions should be left to the judgment of the councils.

**Rhoda Grant:** In much of your evidence, you have talked about the Executive's having to consult the local community and involve community councils when making appointments. However, you do not seem to think that councils should do that. You expect the Executive to behave in one way but councils to behave in another, without involving the local communities.

**Tim Stone:** No, I would not say that. Councils are expected to consult their communities regularly. Councils are engaged in community planning processes, decentralisation processes and all sorts of processes that involve consultation with the community. The way in which an individual council decides on which councillors it appoints to the national park bodies should be left to the council, but councils are, in any event, expected to consult fully with their communities. It would be a strange council that did not take account of local views. At the moment, there is no proposed national park that will be entirely within the boundary of one council. It is not only the people who live in the national park area but those who live outside it who may have an interest in the park.

**Councillor Miller:** I know that there is no guarantee, but there is some assurance in the amendments to the bill that have been put forward already. For example, there is the assurance that that the minister should ensure that people with particular experience and knowledge are appointed. On community involvement, there is the assurance that people who live, work and carry on business in the park, together with community councils, are explicitly required to be included. So there are assurances, although I would be the first to accept that they are not guarantees.

**Mr Munro:** I have listened to your presentation and I remain to be convinced that the methodology of selecting the members of the representative board will be acceptable in the communities that the national parks will cover. There are large numbers of interested bodies within the boundaries of national parks, and I am sure that they will be anxious that their representation is substantial and significant.

I was distressed to hear you suggest that members who are elected to national park authorities from local authorities need not live in the area of the national park, and possibly would be nominated to serve on the authority simply because they have a particular interest or expertise. I suggest that such interest and expertise is already represented within the boundaries of national parks, and therefore the nominations to the national park authority should be directed towards those individuals and groups rather than to people who are living, and a body that is operating, outwith the boundary of the national park.

**Councillor Miller:** I am not sure if we want to see a residential requirement in the bill. As I said earlier, there are safeguards. We are looking for people who have particular experience and knowledge of the issues. The fact that someone does not represent an area within a national park

area should not be an impediment. You raised the issue of special interest groups. I think that we have already dealt with them. We are concerned that some, although not all, special interest groups have a narrow view of the issues that they are dealing with. We would like to feel that the national park body would take a broader view of all the issues.

**Tim Stone:** May I elaborate on that? National park areas will cover the constituencies of elected members of local authorities. If those elected members are not on the national park body, they will be deeply interested in what the council representatives on the national park body do. I fully expect councils to make arrangements to ensure that members who are on the national park body liaise with members who are not.

As soon as you address any matters of policy formulation, whether that is the local plan if planning powers are transferred, or whatever, you are immediately into the issues of local consultation processes and the advisory groups that the national park authority can set up. The more that there are elected representatives who are not on the board, the more that there will be pressure to make sure that those advisory groups and consultative groups are effective and strong. There are many ways of ensuring that your voice is heard other than being on a national park body.

Different councils do their local plans differently. There are areas where the plans are approved by the full council or by the planning committee. Conceivably, only a small number of members for the area covered by the local plan will be on the approving body for the plan—or there may even be none—but they will have been fully consulted about the plan. There is more than one way to ensure that local representation is done properly.

**Mr Munro:** Yes, but do you agree that given the huge piece of legislation that is going to govern the national parks, for the harmony and success of the parks you have to have co-operation within the national park boundary? Unless that is secured at the outset, no matter how you try to represent members on the park authority, the national park scheme will not be as successful as we dearly hope it will be.

**Councillor Miller:** I fully endorse your comments. Everyone needs to be taken on board. It is a difficult balancing act. Unfortunately, you cannot involve everyone. The proposals that we are putting forward, which were endorsed by a full meeting of COSLA, try to strike a balance.

**The Convener:** I am keen to move on and include the community representatives who are here, but I see that members wish to ask questions, so we will take a couple of short questions, then we will bring in the next group of

witnesses.

**Irene McGugan:** You mentioned advisory groups being the mechanism for involving other interest groups and organisations. Would you expand on what you see as the role for the advisory group vis-à-vis the national park authority, and how many of those groups you think would be appropriate, given that the legislation now allows for more than one?

15:15

**Tim Stone:** The answer to the question of how many groups there should be is whatever the national park authority thinks is appropriate. I would expect authorities to respond to interest groups and pressure groups and to make judgments about whether advisory groups are appropriate. The legislation leaves the issue open-ended, and that is right.

The bill states that there should be a majority of national park authority members on sub-groups or advisory groups. So there are two methods of getting views across, and that is right. Those mechanisms should and would be used by a national park authority to make sure that it is picking up local representations.

**Irene McGugan:** You do not see any potential for the main body to be overwhelmed by all its sub-groups and advisory groups and the different memberships thereof?

**Tim Stone:** The main body is the one that determines what sub-groups it will set up.

**Irene McGugan:** Would you like to comment on the fairly non-specific outline of the advisory groups' remit? Should that have been tightened up, or is it okay to leave it fairly loose?

**Councillor Miller:** Our view is that those issues should be left for the bodies themselves to resolve. As I said earlier, there has to be an evolving process. Things have to be allowed to be tailored to the specific needs of national parks. It would be wrong to be too prescriptive at this stage and to specify what sub-groups and consultative bodies there should be. Each authority will be different and have different interests. For example, there are obvious differences between the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond. They are vastly different areas with different problems and different local issues. The park authorities have to be allowed to evolve their own solutions to problems.

**Tim Stone:** We are talking about primary legislation. The bill allows the minister to specify in secondary legislation any advisory groups that it is thought appropriate should be set up. Our view is that the primary legislation should be as enabling as possible.

**Dr Murray:** Subparagraph 5(3) of schedule 1 states:

"A local authority must not nominate a person for appointment as a nominated member unless the person appears to the authority to have knowledge or experience relevant to the functions of the National Park authority or the National Park."

Given that you have already stated that councils would consider appointing people who are not local members, what criteria would you use to ensure that they have the knowledge or relevant experience of the functions of the national park?

**Councillor Miller:** The criteria are fairly well specified in the bill. It would be incumbent on councils to ensure that the criteria are applied. An element of trust has to be placed in local authorities. Of course, the minister has the final say on this issue.

**Dr Murray:** What type of experience would it be appropriate for a local authority representative to have if they were not local?

**Councillor Miller:** That is an interesting question. We discussed that point. A broad spectrum should be applied. Someone may have a particular interest in transport, as Tim Stone said. That may not be a major issue in each national park, but it could be an issue in one national park. It is wrong to be too specific at this stage. As Tim Stone said, there will be more detail in the secondary legislation that sets up a national park. At the moment we should concentrate on the broader issues and leave the nitty-gritty to the secondary legislation.

**Tim Stone:** I suspect that knowledge and experience of how to involve the community in decisions effectively would be relevant to many national parks. That is not a functionally specific area, but some people are better at it than others. There are all sorts of areas that a member might be chosen to deal with.

**The Convener:** I am keen to move on to the community representatives who are here. As I said earlier, we have with us Frank Bracewell and Murdoch Cameron, who come from the area that will be covered by the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park. We also have Mrs Sheena Slimon and Douglas Murray, who come from the area that is likely to be covered by the Cairngorms national park. I propose to give one representative of each area the opportunity to say a few words. I ask Frank Bracewell to address us first.

**Frank Bracewell (Association of Scottish Community Councils):** I will circulate a handout to members. Thank you for inviting us here today. We did not know until Sunday that we were invited, so this is rather a scratch production. I did not know anything about the discourse that has

been taking place between Tim Stone, Ian Miller and the convener.

As I believed that the meeting was intended to provide the committee with an idea of what the community councils of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs area think, I have chosen to speak about the two subjects about which the association of community councils of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park area feels most strongly: membership of the park authority and planning powers. I realise that the committee is not dealing with planning powers, so forgive me for raising that issue, but I was trying to crystallise the main concerns of community councils. At least we were right in identifying membership as a major issue.

The association constituted itself at the end of 1998 and is composed of community councils located in and around the area proposed for the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park area. It is a free association—any community council can join. The councils that joined were those that attended consultation meetings to consider the proposals. There are currently 21 members. Three are from the Argyll and Bute Council area, five are from the West Dunbartonshire Council area and 20 are from the Stirling Council area.

The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs interim committee generously offered three places on the committee to community council representatives, one from each of the local authority areas. Murdoch Cameron, who is sitting on my right, is the representative of the West Dunbartonshire community councils, and I am the representative of the Stirling community councils. Murdoch comes from the Balloch community council and I come from the Drymen community council. Murdoch is the chairman of his community council. I used to be the chairman of mine, but I stepped down as I found being chairman and planning correspondent too onerous.

The association warmly supports the introduction of national parks, especially that proposed for our area. We are anxious that, after such a long wait, the designation should be as effective as possible and that Scotland's national park system should be an acceptable member of the international family of protected areas of exceptionally high value, taking full advantage of best practice. Two main areas of concern remain in the second draft of the bill: membership of the park authority and the planning function.

We welcome the proposed national commitment to sustainable conservation, but consider it essential that the national park should have full local support. To achieve that, we think it necessary that there should be a more direct and recognisable involvement with the local

community—the people who live in the area—than is likely to be provided by the presence on the authority of elected members of the local authorities.

After more than 40 years of national parks in England and Wales, the Government accepted the need for greater accountability and sensitivity to the legitimate needs of local communities. In the Environment Act 1995, it reduced the local authority representation on national park authorities from two thirds to 50 per cent plus one. In the place of those representatives, the act provides for a specific quota of representatives from parish councils which, by means of a complex formula, amounts to about 20 per cent of the membership. It is amazing that today everyone is quoting the figure of 20 per cent.

The new constitution took into account the fact that in the English and Welsh national parks, the state provides 75 per cent of the funding, whereas the local authorities are required by precept to provide the remaining 25 per cent. The association of community councils of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park area strongly supports the Executive's decision to provide 100 per cent of the funding for national parks, but suggests that that the different funding arrangement provides the opportunity for a more logical and effective division of membership.

The association proposes, first, that one third of members should be Scottish ministers' appointees, of the highest calibre, having interests and expertise in the full range of national park responsibilities and having the primary role of upholding the national interest in the parks. Although it is desirable that some of those members should live in the park area, that should not be a prerequisite. Secondly, the association proposes that one third of members should be from local authorities. Wherever possible, those members should be resident within the park area. Thirdly, the association proposes that one third of members should be local residents, elected perhaps by an electoral college of community councils.

A further consequence of such a change would be to open up the issue of leadership of the park authority. In England and Wales, the elected chairman of a national park authority has traditionally been a member from the dominant group of local authority representatives. The association is in favour of the chairman being appointed by Scottish ministers, but a widening of the membership to one third ministerial appointees, one third local authority representatives and one third community representatives would be likely to widen the available choice of chairman, which would be welcome.



The association believes that it is essential that national park authorities should be planning authorities, with joint responsibility for structure plans, but with full responsibility for local plans and development control, including the handling of applications. The greatest threat to the conservation of Scotland's environment comes from developments that are subject to planning control. In his "Highland Landscape" survey of 1961, W H Murray wrote:

"The ugliness that has grown up in so many of our towns arrived there insidiously, creeping in by degree through lack of overall direction, foresight or control. The same situation is arising in the Scottish Highlands. The outstanding natural beauty of the Highland scene, which is one of the nation's greatest assets, has been haphazardly expended and no account kept."

After 40 years of mixed responsibility, the Environment Act 1995 made the English and Welsh national parks the fully effective planning authorities. The association believes that section 9 of the bill should be amended to delete paragraphs (1)(b) and (1)(c), which would allow for a situation in which the park authority was not the planning authority.

I apologise for my brevity.

**The Convener:** Thank you. I now ask either Douglas Murray or Sheena Slimon to address us. We will take questions for both groups together.

**Mrs Sheena Slimon (Laggan Community Association):** Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I will begin by explaining how the community council group for the Cairngorms Partnership was elected. Each community council in the area was asked to nominate someone who they thought would be a suitable person to represent them, after which the community council forums were asked to vote on the nominations. We have five members from Badenoch and Strathspey, one from Donside, one from Glenlivet and Tomintoul, two from Deeside, one from the Angus glens and one from Perthshire. The community council group wants to make clear that we feel that local communities should have at least 20 per cent of the seats on the national park authority.

A national park in the Cairngorms has been discussed for many years. Scottish Natural Heritage recognises that a national park that excludes the local community from its management and government will not thrive. Community councillors work on a voluntary basis, are non-political and are not bound by any financial commitments or paymasters, as local authorities and other agencies may be. We will judge any issue or project according to whether it will be of benefit either to the community or to the environment.

We who live and work in the area are dependent

on the environment for our livelihood—in forestry, agriculture and tourism. In no way would we kill the golden goose. We are just as keen as the conservationists and environmentalists to keep our area special. We also want our communities to develop. Housing, jobs and transport are just as important to the community council as they are to local authority councillors.

15:30

The Cairngorms community council group is looking at support mechanisms for community councils to ensure that they can take a full and active part in the forthcoming consultations on the national park. For the past year, the community council group has worked on issues concerning the Cairngorms Partnership area. We have had no problems with looking at broad issues, which negates the view of Ms Boyack and of COSLA that our interests would be too local for a park authority.

The community at large is apprehensive—perhaps even doubtful—about a national park. Last year, we were given a blank sheet of paper to write up our ideal park. Community representation was one of the main demands. If the community view from the local consultation is ignored, it will be difficult to convince the communities of the worth of future consultations, which will surely be to the detriment of our national park.

National parks are a misnomer. They are not owned by the nation and they are not parks. They are places where people live and work. I see no reason why the national park authority cannot be made up of people who live and work in the area. In the Cairngorms area, we have national and international specialists in all spheres. It would be an insult to the communities not to be allowed to be represented on the park authority.

**Mr Rumbles:** The local authority witnesses have confirmed that there is no guarantee that, as the bill stands, the local community would be directly represented. The consultation exercise has shown us—and your evidence confirms—the importance of anchoring local support for the national parks. However, there is still the question of how best to guarantee at least 20 per cent representation of local communities. I would be interested to hear how you got your nominations for the Association of Scottish Community Councils and about the process that you went through.

If we were to go down the road of direct elections, what would the reaction of community council representatives be if the bill allowed community councils to organise the ballot for four representatives so that everybody on the electoral register in the area could vote? If community

councils ran the election, there would be a connection between the community and the election process. If we do not go down the road of direct elections, what would be the mechanism for getting four representatives of community councils on the board?

**Mrs Slimon:** Direct elections would not be a problem. We would have to ensure that there was a fair distribution of councillors around the area. That would have to be written in to the election process somehow.

**Frank Bracewell:** Elections run by Stirling Council do a good job in helping to democratise the community council level. Even at that level, we vote by postal voting. The lowest level of voting was around 60 per cent—an amazing turnout for a community council election. Stirling Council has shown that a properly organised postal vote brings back a higher level of representation.

I speak now from a personal point of view, because the association has not gone into the matter far enough to answer your question. The problem with conducting a community council election on a one-person-one-vote basis is that it gives strong weighting to those little centres of population that, in an area that is likely to be a national park, will stick out like a sore thumb. Generally, the population level in such areas is very low.

Although we have debated the issue of electing that section of the board—and we want 33 per cent rather than 20 per cent representation—we think that an election would not result in a fair distribution. We are more attracted by the idea of a nomination coming from the community councils, which are themselves democratically elected. They could vote among themselves to appoint a nominee for the park authority. That is how Murdoch Cameron and I were appointed to the Association of Scottish Community Councils. The interim committee asked the community councils to come up with three people from the three local authority areas. That procedure may be flawed—Murdoch and I got the jobs, after all—but it avoids disparities.

We do not know where the boundaries of the national park will be. If Callander is within the park boundary—and it will fight like mad to be inside it—well over a third of the population of the park area will be in that one community. A democratic election for a body of community councils is rather difficult. I am attracted by the idea of an electoral college, with the community councils being responsible for handling matters democratically. It is important that the process be democratic. We want that tier of representatives to have a real status. Some community councils have difficulty getting their quorum going, and some just die away through lack of support. Election is good;

representatives must be on the park authority because they have been elected. That would bring back a spirit to the situation that we should welcome.

**Mr Rumbles:** Are you saying that either option—direct election by postal ballot or an electoral college system of nomination—would be better than what is in the bill at the moment?

**Mrs Slimon:** Absolutely.

**Frank Bracewell:** I have to make a point about best practice. I am afraid that it has taken us a long time in Scotland—despite my accent I have been here for 39 years—to get round to national parks. Nevertheless, we are creating a unique solution that no other country has tried. We should be looking at what the rest of the world has been doing in the past 150 years to set up and run national parks.

Many aspects of national parks south of the border are comparable to Scotland's new endeavour. The Environment Act 1995 was brought about by pressure from people in the 11 national parks, who wanted a better say in the running of their areas. Before 1995, two thirds of the membership of every national park board were local authority people, but that was not satisfactory to the people who lived in the parks. The Government therefore brought in the new formula of 50 per cent plus one take away the number you first thought of and you end up with something that is more acceptable. If there are 26 people on the board, 20 per cent of them now come from parish councils, the English equivalent of community councils. Those people are nominated by the parish council; I do not think that they are elected. That is the sort of intermediate position that we would like.

**Dr Murray:** I was interested in what you said about how community councillors are elected in the Stirling Council area. Some areas are not as good as that. In some places, community councillors are pretty much self-nominated and elected unopposed because there is not a great deal of interest. The community councils in your area seem to be more relevant and of greater interest to local people.

Community councils are obviously important. I am sure that you agree that the bill as introduced is an improvement on the draft bill, as it makes specific reference to community councils. However, community councils are not the only representatives of local interests. What are your views on other local interests, such as recreational and cultural interest groups or landowners? Who should be responsible for ensuring that those voices are heard? Should it be the local authority or the ministers' appointees who cater for those interests?

**Mrs Slimon:** Local landowners and recreational users are all part of the community.

**Dr Murray:** But they would not be represented through the community council.

**Mrs Slimon:** Why not?

**Dr Murray:** Do you not regard yourselves as representatives of the residents?

**Mrs Slimon:** Are not the residents also landowners or recreational users?

**Dr Murray:** There could be specific, narrower interests such as those relating to recreation or cultural heritage.

**Mrs Slimon:** There are to be advisory groups.

**Dr Murray:** You envisage that such interests would be involved in advisory groups.

**Mrs Slimon:** I see no reason why they could not be involved in advisory groups. The community council is a broad church and has a variety of members. In many ways those interests could be represented by members of the community. I know that groups such as the Ramblers Association will want to have an input, but I am sure that they will want to have an official or unofficial advisory group anyway.

**Murdoch Cameron (Association of Scottish Community Councils):** Dr Murray's point was raised at various committees. No solution was reached but it was suggested that, in the long run, those interests could best serve the community by providing their expertise through advisory panels.

**John Scott:** Do I understand correctly that you are all proposing that the interests in national parks of landowners and farmers should be confined to advisory groups?

**Frank Bracewell:** I suggested that one third of members should be appointed by the Scottish ministers because expertise is required to address the various issues relating to national parks. The state will make a considerable investment into the running and organisation of national parks. That is why the position in this area was strengthened just five years ago south of the border. The Edwards panel report, "Fit for the Future", which was published in 1991, identified what had gone wrong or what had not been ideal in the 40 years of national parks. That panel found that Governments—it did not say which Governments—had made many political appointments and that park authorities were losing the technical edge that was needed to ensure that national parks were national parks on matters such as biodiversity, conservation, positive agriculture, forestry and so on.

As agriculture and forestry are the biggest land users in the area, I would expect that the third of

members that the Scottish ministers appointed would include people who are knowledgeable about and committed to local interests. I not think that the authority should be made up of people representing certain industries—that there must be a hotel owner, a caravan site owner, a forest owner and so on—as that is not a good reason for choosing people. The test should not be what the park can do for them, but what they can do for the park.

Some of the local authority representatives and the representatives from the other third would represent local interests. I favour the electoral college approach, in which people stand for membership of the national park authority. They may be people who do not have enough spare time to want to be a fully-fledged district council member but have enough time to contribute to something as interesting as the park authority.

At a conference in the Cairngorms, the vice-chairman of the Peak District National Park Authority, who was a farmer, complained that he spent three days a week on his duties as vice-chairman. Presumably, he has that post because of his abilities.

**Mrs Slimon:** One could turn the whole thing around. The national park authority could be like the Cairngorms Partnership is at the moment. Members of the various interest groups—I think that there are about 22—meet, and each member chairs another advisory committee.

**John Scott:** Does that work well?

**Mrs Slimon:** The Cairngorms Partnership seems to work very well. It has taken five or six years to get going but it runs well now. People accept it and it is well respected.

15:45

**John Scott:** Is there some reason for adopting a completely new model, as all of you seem to want to do?

**Mrs Slimon:** We have just responded to what is proposed. We were told initially that community councils would not be represented. Now we will be allowed to sit on an advisory group but not on the park authority. I think that in the Cairngorms it would cost least money and be least disruptive if the Cairngorms Partnership were given more powers and turned into a national park authority.

**Rhoda Grant:** If community councils were given an allocation of seats on national park authorities, how would you ensure that they were representative and spread throughout the area of the park? If you are not given an allocation of seats, have you considered making nominations to local authorities and the Executive to get representatives on to park authorities?

**Frank Bracewell:** The electoral college approach is my idea to ensure that there is a spread. We are talking about the possibility of including Argyll forest park—a vast area that was not in the SNH recommendations. Far fewer people live there than live around Aberfoyle, Callander and Drymen. We need to have a system such as an electoral college in which the seats are divided into three groups—that would not work if there were 20 members, so we would have to take the big decision to move to 21. We could then decide on the allocation of the community seats. I think it would be convenient to allocate places on the basis of local authority boundaries. People could then be elected or nominated by community councils. Membership should not be restricted to community councils. I hope that we will get people who want to do the job, but I think that they should be elected by the community council.

**Mrs Slimon:** In the Cairngorms area, our community council group is representative of the whole area. There is one member from Perthshire, one from Angus, one from Glenlivet, one from Donside, two from Deeside and five from Badenoch and Strathspey—two from Badenoch and three from Strathspey. We were all nominated and then elected. When I was elected, I was not a member of the Laggan community association but was asked to be its representative. It is feasible to achieve a good representation of the area.

The representatives need not necessarily all be community councillors. In Donside, there is a community trust rather than a community council, although it works along similar lines.

**Rhoda Grant:** If the representatives were not community councillors, how could the community control them? Community councillors are elected and have a mandate, so people have control over what they do.

**Mrs Slimon:** The representatives would be responsible to their community council. They would have to report to it and take due note of what it said. They would have to provide regular feedback.

As it is, although I live in Laggan, I talk to the councils in Newtonmore, Kincaig and Dalwhinnie if necessary. I am duty bound to speak to the other community councils, which do not have someone sitting on the group. We are responsible to them.

**Rhoda Grant:** Do the community councils have some form of sanction, so that if a person does not represent them, he or she can be removed?

**Mrs Slimon:** I am sure that they do. Someone would sit for only two or three years, then there would be fresh nominations.

**Murdoch Cameron:** If we go down that road, there has to be some control. I would like

community councillors to be involved, but if outsiders from another group were involved, they would still be able to attend a community council as an associate member. That is where the community councils could exercise control.

People can be elected to community councils for their expertise or particular interest. They do not necessarily have a vote, but they are part of the council. Some have a vote—it depends on how they are elected.

**Richard Lochhead:** I want to follow that up. Accountability is the crux of the matter. It could be that 20 per cent of the board will be elected from community councils. What would be the lines of accountability? What formal mechanisms would be in place for reporting back? Would people attend every single community council meeting and report back? Would they produce an annual report? What needs to be put in place to ensure that there is a line of accountability?

Should there be a limit on the number of terms of office? Would people stand once, twice or whatever? If the appointment was for four years and you were not happy with the person after two years, should there be a mechanism in place to allow people to be removed?

**Murdoch Cameron:** If someone joins something, they should jolly well attend. If they cannot do that, they should keep out of the kitchen. People should therefore attend every community council meeting or whatever other meetings they are supposed to attend.

**Frank Bracewell:** A number of community councils probably would not want a report at every meeting. Some of them find difficulty getting a quorum. One cannot be dogmatic about what they have to do. The situation will evolve. Community councils will indicate the degree of reporting back that they want and the degree of exercise of control. Once people are on the authority, however they get there, whether put there by the local authority or by Scottish ministers, they have a responsibility and a duty to use their judgment to address the issues before them. They are not there to do what the party says, if they are an elected member, or to do what Scottish ministers want them to do, if they are put there by them. They have their own responsibility. If there were three groups, for example, I honestly would not see a big difference between them.

**Mrs Slimon:** I would expect people to attend if requested. In Badenoch and Strathspey, we have a community council forum, which meets four times a year. I would expect them to attend that and give us reports and updates. Otherwise, they should attend any individual community council that wants them to come and speak. A three-year term of office would be sufficient. A shorter term

would probably not be helpful, because it takes a year to get one's feet under the table. People would stand for re-election or stand down after three years.

**Richard Lochhead:** Should there be a limit on the number of terms for which people can put their name forward?

**Mrs Slimon:** It will be a lot of hard work—there will be many meetings—so I would have thought that three years would be enough, or six at the very most. By that time, they would be exhausted.

**Mr Rumbles:** Members have quite rightly indicated that the line of accountability is key. Do you agree that, as framed, the bill sets out no direct line of accountability, apart from through the 10 members who will face local elections every three or four years? You suggest that some representatives—whether there are four of them or six or seven—should live and work within the community, so that they would be free and able to attend community council and forum meetings as and when necessary. That would provide a direct link and line of accountability. As the legislation is framed, we will not necessarily have that. It is perhaps unlikely, but we could have a situation where none of the 20 representatives lived in the national park area.

Perhaps Frank Bracewell could drop me a note on his thoughts on an electoral college, as I am interested in progressing that idea.

**Frank Bracewell:** I should be pleased to do that.

**The Convener:** Are there any other comments?

**Richard Lochhead:** I would be interested to see that note as well.

**The Convener:** I am sure that the clerk will circulate the note to members.

If there are no further questions, I want to express our gratitude to Councillor Ian Miller, Tim Stone, Frank Bracewell, Murdoch Cameron, Mrs Sheena Slimon and Douglas Murray for coming along to help us with our investigation into stage 1 of the National Parks (Scotland) Bill.

**Frank Bracewell:** Thank you for having us.

15:56

*Meeting adjourned.*

15:59

*On resuming—*

## Petitions

**The Convener:** After our short, self-appointed adjournment, we will progress to item 3 of our agenda, which is consideration of three petitions.

The first petition is PE97, in the name of Thomas Gray, and relates to agricultural support. The petition was sent to the European Committee for comment on 4 April. That committee agreed to note the petition and to take no further action on it. Do members have any comments on the petition?

16:00

**Rhoda Grant:** To be honest, I think that the petitioner has a point. Could we investigate his petition as part of our employment inquiry? There is no ceiling on the amount of assistance that farmers can receive, depending on the amount of land that they have, and that encourages people to farm bigger areas. If a ceiling were to be introduced, there would be more employment opportunities in rural areas, and that would encourage smaller holdings.

**Mr Rumbles:** I agree. We could defer consideration of the petition until we have considered the issue that it raises in our inquiry.

**Richard Lochhead:** Could you repeat that, Mike? I did not hear you.

**Mr Rumbles:** I agree with Rhoda Grant—we could defer discussion of the petition to a later date, until after we have had a chance to examine the issue when we consider employment opportunities in rural communities.

**The Convener:** I am aware that the petition has implications for the long-term policies of the Scottish Executive. It would be appropriate to ask the Scottish Executive for a briefing note.

**Mr Rumbles:** I am happy with that approach.

**Mr Munro:** There is no doubt that the sentiments expressed in the petition require scrutiny, but it could cause the demise of communities if all farmers were absorbed into bigger units. There might be wider implications, of which we are not aware, if we were to support the view expressed in the petition.

**The Convener:** We will approach the Executive for its views and consider the issues raised by the petition within the framework of the broader inquiry in which we are involved.

As there are no further comments on PE97, we

will move on to PE113, which is from the Campaign for Borders Rail. Christine Grahame and Euan Robson, who have expressed an interest in the petition, have joined the meeting today. I will invite both of them to speak during our discussion of the petition. I understand that Christine wishes to speak first.

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I do not sweet-talk committees and meetings of the Parliament on Thursdays just to get a chance to come along, nor am I trying to set a parliamentary record.

The Borders rail petition raises a serious issue—it is not just about a railway line. That is why the Public Petitions Committee, of which I am a member, Euan Robson and many others in the Borders are involved in this cross-party issue, to which a cross-party group in the Parliament is devoted. This issue is about sustainability, and, although the lead committee is the Transport and the Environment Committee, the Rural Affairs Committee has a major input to make.

I do not want to say too much, as I know that members have had a long afternoon, but to give members a little background information, the principal industries in the Borders are agriculture, forestry, electronics and textiles. Of those, agriculture, electronics and textiles have taken knocks, as many members know from their own rural areas. The Borders has huge economic difficulties, added to which is the fact that it is the only area in Scotland that is totally reliant on roads. There is no railway, there are no ferries and there are no operational airfields. The A68 and the A7 are the main roads that go through the area, and that is it. We are used to rural roads with lots of little bendy bits and there is no doubt that they inhibit development in the Borders.

I know that I am teaching my granny to suck eggs, as many members present have rural constituencies, but the issue has a consequential impact. Thirty-seven per cent of the population is aged over 50 and, although the raw unemployment figures might not look so bad, that is because all the young people have moved away. The Borders also has the lowest level of wages in Scotland, at £50 a week below the national average. I know that Euan Robson will wish to say many things. I suggest respectfully that, rather than just taking note of the petition, the committee should consider taking evidence from the Campaign for Borders Rail, which embraces many people from many different backgrounds, on the impact on its community of opening a railway line.

Members will note from the petition that the campaign is asking for a proper debate in Parliament on the issue, in addition to the perfectly legitimate members' business debate held

already. The convener of the Transport and the Environment Committee stated that he would be quite content for such a debate to be held.

I believe that the Parliament can do something positive for the whole Borders community. We all know that funding issues are involved, which is a nettle—or, in my case, a thistle—that must be grasped, but the petition deserves further investigation of the momentum behind it by one of the Parliament's committees, given that it has attracted 20,000 signatures. The situation is like the wild west—when the two ends of that railway were finally joined together, suddenly the community opened up and developed. That is what is needed in the Borders—it is the key to economic development.

**The Convener:** Thank you. Is now an appropriate moment for Euan Robson to add his comments?

**Euan Robson (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD):** Thank you. I will be brief because, as Christine Grahame said, you have had a long afternoon.

All Christine's comments were true. There is a cross-party approach to this major issue in the Scottish Borders. Without doubt, the lack of a railway line inhibits the economic development of the area—we are losing opportunities and we are losing young people, because there is no means of practical commuting from certain parts of the Borders to places such as Edinburgh. If we had a railway line, we would find that a number of our young people would stay to live in the Borders, because they could move to and fro between the Borders and major conurbations. That is why we talk about the social inclusion agenda as well as the economic agenda.

With regard to the economic agenda, there is no doubt that a Borders railway line would stimulate activity, particularly if it were taken all the way through the Borders to Carlisle. There are important, strategic reasons why we should have what would amount to a third or fourth rail route out of Scotland, which is a matter that the Transport and the Environment Committee will doubtless grasp in due course.

As Christine said, there is a positive, local approach to the issue. People are not coming to the Scottish Executive and saying, "Pay for it, please." A major effort is being made to identify a partnership approach to funding, so that the community will deliver, through its working party, a real commitment to the project.

It is important to remember that the road network has not had much investment. With a population of 120,000 to 130,000, it is difficult to get the Borders scheme to the top of the list, because other schemes, involving larger

populations, somehow get in ahead of it. There is a history of under-investment in the transport network.

I emphasise that the east coast line goes straight through the Borders, but there are no railway stations. If one happens to live in the north-eastern part of the Borders, the nearest railway station is at Dunbar. Other stations are at Berwick-upon-Tweed and Carlisle, and all are located outside the Borders.

It is important to consider this as a practical possibility—we would not be building a brand new railway line. The old track bed is still there, substantially, and the local authorities—Midlothian Council, Scottish Borders Council and Northumberland County Council—have protected the route to a large extent.

Therefore, in terms of engineering requirements and local commitment, we are there already, and there are big opportunities for economic development. In the Scottish Borders, there is an understanding and an expectation that the project can be delivered if the political will exists. This committee's contribution to that would be to move the project forward and to say to the Executive—and to others—that it should be done in the interests not only of the Borders, but of the whole of Scotland, for the reasons that I have outlined.

That is enough from me; I will be interested in the committee's comments.

**Richard Lochhead:** I commend Christine Grahame and Euan Robson for their persuasive words.

The committee should unreservedly support the petition. Part of our duty as the Rural Affairs Committee is to support any initiative that would help to regenerate our rural communities throughout Scotland.

I should be happy for the committee to convey its support for a debate in Parliament on the issue and to convey its support for the petition to the Executive and to the other two committees that are considering it.

We are not asked by the petitioners to examine the issue, as the petition specifically mentions the Social Inclusion, Housing and Voluntary Sector Committee and the Transport and the Environment Committee, so there might not be a case for us to take evidence. However, we could notify the other committees of our interest.

**Mr Rumbles:** I would like to echo Richard Lochhead's comments.

I think that all members of the committee will heartily support the petition and the comments made by Christine Grahame and Euan Robson. The way forward, as Richard Lochhead suggests,

is to mandate the convener to make representations to the Parliamentary Bureau on our behalf, as a committee, stating that there should be a debate in the chamber at the earliest convenience.

**Dr Murray:** I declare an interest as part of my constituency is in the Borders. I concur strongly with what both Euan Robson and Christine Grahame said, especially with Euan's comment that the railway should continue to Carlisle. It would make a big difference not just to go north, but to go south and link into the rail network in Dumfries and Galloway as well.

A railway is important both for people who live in the area and for the expansion of tourism, which is not nearly as well developed in the south of Scotland as it should be. I would like strongly to support the campaign.

Christine Grahame suggested that it might be possible to take evidence. I am not sure of the most appropriate way in which to proceed—it might be more appropriate for the lead committee to take evidence. The matter is certainly worthy of consideration.

**The Convener:** Are there any other comments?

**Mr Munro:** There is a unanimous opinion.

**The Convener:** There seems to be.

My one concern is the suggestion that this committee might take evidence at this stage. We have a problem with schedules. Although it might be appropriate at some point in the future for the committee to take evidence on the issue, at this stage we must limit ourselves to support for the principle.

Mike Rumbles proposed that I should write, on behalf of the committee, to the Parliamentary Bureau to suggest that time be allocated for a debate on the issue. I understand that the Transport and the Environment Committee, to which the petition was initially addressed, intends to run with the issue. Members of this committee can support the petition through the work of that committee, if they wish to do so.

Should we do anything else at this stage?

**Richard Lochhead:** We should convey our support directly to the other committees and the Executive.

**Christine Grahame:** I suggest that Petra Biberbach, who is chair of the Campaign for Borders Rail, could provide a briefing paper for members nearer the time of the debate if that would be useful. The group has done a lot of work on economic impact.

To add to what Euan Robson said, a huge number of people, not just cross-party but cross-

political, through all levels of politics in the Borders, are working on the issue. They would be able to submit information if members do not have enough papers already.

**The Convener:** Should we do anything else about the petition now?

**Members:** No.

**The Convener:** We will act on the petition in the way that we have described.

**Christine Grahame:** Thank you very much.

**The Convener:** We will move to the third petition, PE126, in the name of Dunlop and Lugton community council. It states:

"We, the undersigned, declare that Government proposals to pay benefits through bank accounts will make many sub Post Offices unviable, forcing them to close. In rural communities the Post Office is an important public service.

The Petitioners therefore request that the Scottish Parliament takes whatever it considers to be the most appropriate action to relay these concerns to Westminster."

Would any members like to comment on the issue?

16:15

**Irene McGugan:** We have considered the issue briefly and expressed our concerns. It is a moving target, because proposals are still coming forward on how the Westminster Government proposes to act.

I understand that the latest suggestion is that the Post Office has been successful in its bid to formulate a community banking initiative, which will benefit everyone because banks have been reluctant to take on board as customers people who would have difficulty maintaining a bank account. Likewise, there are people who would find it difficult to access an account, whether the banks were willing or not. They could now, with the Government's permission, use facilities to be set up at thousands of post offices, where a banking system would be in operation.

We need much more information about that, because proposals are still coming on stream as a result of the concern that has been expressed about the viability of rural sub-post offices and about the people who might have difficulty accessing a bank account, if that were to be the only means for them to access benefits.

**The Convener:** The Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee is the lead committee for the petition. It has been passed to us for interest, with reference to some of the comments that we have made on this subject before.

At this stage, we could express our support for

the principles that lie behind the petition, to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee. We will retain the commitment that we have made previously to examine the matter in conjunction with a range of other issues, which will contribute towards the completion of the report on our current inquiry.

**Mr Munro:** As you know, within the past two or three weeks, the sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses petitioned the Westminster Parliament directly, with a huge petition. I know that many petitions have been circulated in constituencies around Scotland. The debate in our Parliament was very supportive of the retention of post office facilities.

As Irene McGugan said, the matter is up in the air until we find out for certain what is proposed for automated banking in post offices. I am sure that, whatever happens, if it generates more revenue for post offices, it will be welcomed by the sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses.

The big problem is the individuals who do not currently have an account and still want to collect their benefit in cash at the post office.

**Rhoda Grant:** People will still be able to collect their benefit in cash, but that is not sustaining rural post offices, which are still closing. The petition is about one issue; many other issues must be examined.

**Mr Munro:** If post offices introduced automated banking, which would extend the facilities that they offered in rural communities, that might enhance their revenue.

**The Convener:** We will express our support for the principles in the petition to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee. We will examine the issues that it raises within the framework of our existing inquiries.

If there are no further comments, we will move to item 4 on the agenda, which we have decided to take in private.

16:19

*Meeting continued in private until 16:45.*



Members who would like a printed copy of the Official Report to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

Members who would like a copy of the bound volume should also give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

No proofs of the *Official Report* can be supplied. Members who want to suggest corrections for the bound volume should mark them clearly in the daily edition, and send it to the Official Report, Parliamentary Headquarters, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH99 1SP. Suggested corrections in any other form cannot be accepted.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

**Monday 15 May 2000**

Members who want reprints of their speeches (within one month of the date of publication) may obtain request forms and further details from the Central Distribution Office, the Document Supply Centre or the Official Report.

#### PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

##### DAILY EDITIONS

*Single copies: £5*

*Annual subscriptions: £640*

BOUND VOLUMES OF DEBATES are issued periodically during the session.

*Single copies: £70*

Standing orders will be accepted at the Document Supply Centre.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT, compiled by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre, contains details of past and forthcoming business and of the work of committees and gives general information on legislation and other parliamentary activity.

*Single copies: £2.50*

*Special issue price: £5*

*Annual subscriptions: £82.50*

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

*Single copies: £2.50*

*Annual subscriptions: £80*

Published in Edinburgh by The Stationery Office Limited and available from:

**The Stationery Office Bookshop**  
71 Lothian Road  
Edinburgh EH3 9AZ  
0131 228 4181 Fax 0131 622 7017

**The Stationery Office Bookshops at:**  
123 Kingsway, London WC2B 6PQ  
Tel 020 7242 6393 Fax 020 7242 6394  
68-69 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AD  
Tel 0121 236 9696 Fax 0121 236 9699  
33 Wine Street, Bristol BS1 2BQ  
Tel 01179 264306 Fax 01179 294515  
9-21 Princess Street, Manchester M60 8AS  
Tel 0161 834 7201 Fax 0161 833 0634  
16 Arthur Street, Belfast BT1 4GD  
Tel 028 9023 8451 Fax 028 9023 5401  
The Stationery Office Oriol Bookshop,  
18-19 High Street, Cardiff CF1 2BZ  
Tel 029 2039 5548 Fax 029 2038 4347

**The Stationery Office Scottish Parliament Documentation**  
Helpline may be able to assist with additional information  
on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament,  
their availability and cost:

**Telephone orders and inquiries**  
**0870 606 5566**

**Fax orders**  
**0870 606 5588**

**The Scottish Parliament Shop**  
George IV Bridge  
EH99 1SP  
Telephone orders 0131 348 5412

[sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk)

[www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk)

**Accredited Agents**  
(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers