

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 5 April 2000
(*Afternoon*)

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 5 April 2000

(Afternoon)

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

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): I have much pleasure in welcoming the Very Reverend Gilleasbuig Macmillan, the minister of St Giles Cathedral, to lead our time for reflection today.

Very Reverend Gilleasbuig Macmillan (Minister of St Giles Cathedral): I will read part of Psalm 139.

O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.
 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.
 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.
 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.
 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.
 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.
 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.
 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.
 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.
 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

A prayer:

Almighty God, Spirit of life and love,
 Our author and our destiny,
 in whom we live and move and have our being;

We offer now our thanks and praise
 for this land which we love,
 its beauty and its people,

And pray for help to serve its needs
 and right its wrongs
 and live with common purpose;

Upon us here, and people everywhere on earth,
 we seek thy blessing, wisdom, truth and help,
 and ask for grace to serve with cheerfulness
 and live in humble hope and generosity.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hampden

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): We move to a statement by Mr Sam Galbraith on Hampden. The minister will take questions at the end of the statement, so there should be no interventions. It would be helpful if members who want to ask questions would press their buttons as soon as possible.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): On a point of order. I know that you are not obliged to comment, but why was the amendment that referred specifically to Glasgow not accepted? That decision was anti-democratic and anti-Glasgow.

The Presiding Officer: That relates to the debate that, for obvious reasons, I will not chair. I thought it proper to leave the choice of amendments to my deputies, so you will have to ask them, when they take the chair.

14:34

The Minister for Children and Education (Mr Sam Galbraith): As members are aware, Queen's Park Football Club and its subsidiary, the National Stadium plc, ran into serious financial problems last year while carrying out major redevelopment work at Hampden stadium. I am delighted to report that a rescue package has now been agreed, which will secure the future of Hampden and the survival of Queen's Park, which is Scotland's oldest football club.

The negotiations over the rescue package were concluded last Friday night and all elements of the restructuring were put in place. The deal was finalised on Monday of this week and I reported that to Parliament in a written answer to Mike Watson that day.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who were involved in the development of the rescue package. I described the broad structure of the rescue package in my statement to Parliament on 16 December 1999. At that point, the Executive and the other parties to the negotiations believed that agreement in principle on a detailed rescue package had been reached and that completion would follow soon.

The negotiations were protracted because many difficult and complex issues had to be addressed, including detailed inter-contractual issues. Queen's Park's decision in early January to petition the court for an interim administration order made it clear that the club and the National Stadium were unwilling to complete the deal as negotiated before Christmas.

In my statement to Parliament on 12 January, I

said that the Executive saw the new situation as a further opportunity to progress the negotiations over the rescue deal within a constructive and objective framework. I also made clear that the Executive remained willing in principle to participate in any arrangements that were based on those that had been agreed previously for the rescue of the stadium and Queen's Park Football Club.

The interim managers explored all the other possibilities and concluded in late February that the restructuring proposals that were negotiated almost to completion before Christmas represented the best available option.

Clearly, the passage of time made the deal more difficult and more costly to achieve. There are three main reasons for that, the first of which is the worsening financial position of Queen's Park Football Club. Secondly, some elements of the deal that was marshalled before Christmas were no longer achievable and thirdly, the professional fees that were involved had increased substantially, largely as a result of administration.

Because of that, the Scottish Executive agreed to contribute an additional £600,000 and Glasgow City Council agreed to increase its contribution by the same amount. That additional £1.2 million was not sufficient to close the funding gap, but the administrators negotiated successfully with other parties to achieve that. The directors of Queen's Park and TNS are now also fully committed to the deal.

The co-funders—the Scottish Executive, the Millennium Commission, Glasgow City Council, sportscotland and the Glasgow Development Agency—are contributing a total of £5.75 million to the rescue package, of which the Scottish Executive's share is £2.75 million.

The money will be used to pay off Queen's Park's creditors—in particular Sir Robert McAlpine and the Royal Bank of Scotland plc—in accordance with the terms of the settlement that was agreed among the various parties. The administrators have indicated that a process is under way to finalise the sums that are due to the historic creditors of both Queen's Park and TNS. Payment to such creditors is expected in the next four to six weeks. The money that will be paid to the Royal Bank will reduce Queen's Park's indebtedness to a level that can be accommodated within the new management arrangements.

As I said in my statement in December, the Scottish Football Association has agreed to take on the responsibility for the future management of the stadium under a lease granted by Queen's Park. That lease will run for 20 years, with the option for the SFA to extend it for a further 20

years. The level of rent payments will enable Queen's Park to pay off outstanding debts and derive an income that will help to meet its running cost requirements. Queen's Park will continue to own the stadium and the adjacent land.

There is a reciprocal rights agreement between the SFA and Queen's Park, which will enable Queen's Park to continue to use the main stadium for matches and other purposes. It will also enable the SFA to make use of Lesser Hampden for squad training and car parking when major matches are being staged in the main stadium.

The co-funders' consultants examined carefully the viability of the stadium operation in the longer term. The co-funders were satisfied, as a result of that work, that there was a viable business there, so long as it did not have to serve an unduly high level of debt that had been incurred in the construction phase of the project. The work persuaded the SFA, which carried out its own due diligence, to accept responsibility for managing the stadium.

In taking on a full insuring and repairing lease, the SFA is, of course, accepting the operational risks and liabilities as well as the potential rewards. Responsibility for drawing up and implementing a business plan for the stadium now rests with the SFA. The SFA intends to set up a subsidiary company to manage the stadium and market it aggressively as a visitor attraction. All staff who were previously employed by TNS have been informed that they will transfer to the new company. When the museum of football, the lecture theatre and the sports injury clinic become operational and the football bodies move into office accommodation at the stadium, Hampden will have life about it on a daily basis that it has never enjoyed before.

The stadium and its excellent ancillary facilities are a magnificent asset of which Scottish football and the nation can be proud. I am confident that the new arrangements are in the best long-term interests of Scottish football. The co-funders, including the Scottish Executive, have overcome considerable difficulties and saved for the nation our national football stadium.

I commend this statement to the Parliament.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The minister will now take questions on the issues raised in his statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for such questions, after which we will move to the next item of business.

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I welcome the statement; in particular, I welcome the minister's confidence that the rescue package that has been agreed will secure the future of Hampden and the survival of Queen's Park. I am

sure that both those outcomes were desired by members across the chamber and by the Scottish people.

This episode has thrown up a number of questions, which the Education, Culture and Sport Committee will have an opportunity to address in full in its inquiry. I am sure that the minister will co-operate with that inquiry, but I want to ask him three questions today.

First, can he confirm the time scale that is covered by the business plan's projections? The SFA has a 20-year lease. Can the minister guarantee the long-term viability of the business plan, or is there any chance that in a few years' time we will face new financial problems? Many people will have noted the reluctance of David Taylor, the SFA's chief executive, when he was interviewed on the BBC the other night, to give any guarantee that the SFA would not at some time during the duration of its lease look for additional public funds.

Secondly, given that the SFA is now paying £300,000 a year less for its lease than was originally agreed with TNS—a loss of income of £3 million over the original 10-year lease period—will the minister specify what measures have been proposed in the business plan to make up the shortfall?

Thirdly, will the minister specify what changes the Executive has made to the financial monitoring procedures to ensure that in future it is fully aware of the financial well-being of such projects, into which the Executive has put substantial sums of taxpayers' money, and to ensure that it is alerted early to any financial problems?

Everyone in Scotland wants Hampden to survive and flourish, but the current position has been reached at substantial cost to the public purse. The public has a right to know that lessons have been learned, to avoid such problems recurring in future.

Mr Galbraith: I am grateful to Miss Sturgeon for her comments, and I will deal with each of them in turn.

Members will remember that, before we agreed to put money into the project, we required a viable long-term business plan. Our consultants provided that, and the plan laid out clearly the stadium's long-term viability, with a bright and rosy future.

There is £300,000 less per year than in the original SFA proposal because we are no longer comparing like with like. Originally, the SFA was going to use the stadium only from time to time. Under this plan, the SFA takes over the lease, under which it has to pay for all upkeep and repairs and development of the stadium. That accounts for the difference.

There are certainly lessons to be learned, the most important of which is that we should not consider again putting such large sums of money in the hands of an amateur club to run a national asset such as the national stadium.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that this is an occasion for questions, not secondary statements.

Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): The minister said that the SFA has taken on much of the responsibility for running Hampden, including various financial responsibilities. Will the minister confirm the viability of funding commitments already made by the SFA? In particular, will the minister address the viability of the youth development programme?

Will the minister confirm, yet again, that he is willing to attend the Education, Culture and Sport Committee as soon as possible to discuss the Hampden situation?

Mr Galbraith: As Mary Mulligan knows, I am interested in youth development, which is an important area of sport. The SFA will maintain its commitment to the youth development programme and I have told the SFA that, if that programme were to be threatened, we would consider the situation.

I am more than delighted to come along to the committee, at the committee's convenience. We have a good record on Hampden, and I will be proud to defend that record to the committee.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the minister for coming before us today and for giving us his statement, which is welcome. I also thank him for the advance copy of that statement. I am pleased that he finally has documents on which the ink has dried, and I ask him to ponder whether, in future, he should come before the chamber before an agreement has been reached.

I have some specific questions for the minister. Will he confirm that there are severance packages for members of National Stadium plc, as reported in the media? What effect, if any, will the rates revaluation have on Hampden? From where within the budget does the minister intend to find the additional £2.75 million? Can he explain why he has such faith in the SFA as the new tenant, given that it has no history of running a stadium? One could compare the SFA's record to that of the Scottish Rugby Union, which has a record of running a stadium and which has run up considerable debts. Is not that a lesson that the SFA had better heed?

Mr Galbraith: I am grateful to the minister—*[Laughter.]* Just because Brian Monteith is bald like me, there is no need for me to think that he is

the same person.

I am grateful to Brian Monteith for his comments. As I am a doctor, one of my great problems is that I can never read my writing, but I have worked it out now.

The first question was whether I would refrain from making early statements in future. I made that statement because the chamber demanded that of me. I thought that it was courteous of me to come to the chamber—I am surprised by Mr Monteith's comments on that point.

Severance packages are matters for AR Ltd, the trust fund and Queen's Park—they are confidential matters and are not for me at this stage.

I am confident that the rates revaluation can be handled. The SFA said that it is confident that the sums involved can be reduced significantly and dealt with through other sources of income. However, as with youth development, I told the SFA that, if the rates revaluation proves to be a problem in future, I will certainly consider the matter sympathetically.

The SFA is the correct organisation to run the stadium because it represents more than 50 per cent of the business plan; without the SFA, there is no business plan. That important point locks the national stadium into the sport's governing body. The SFA intends to establish a wholly owned subsidiary to run the stadium under a new director who will have business expertise.

Therefore, with a business plan in place in which the SFA has a large stake, I am confident that those involved in the SFA are the best people to run the stadium.

Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP): I am sure that the minister heaved a great sigh of relief on Friday evening, along with many Scottish football fans.

I want to question the minister on two points that arise from his statement. We know about the rental stream shortfall. The minister said that there are reasons for that, which we understand, but he has not explained how the rental stream shortfall of £300,000 per annum will be made up.

Further, the minister has not dealt adequately with the question whether financial monitoring within the business plan will ensure that the Executive will have early warning of any similar situation that arises in the future.

Mr Galbraith: I thought that I had explained the £300,000 difference—people are comparing apples with pears. The SFA is taking on the running of the stadium, which involves maintenance, repairs, and so on. It is a very different organisation that is doing all that.

As for the financial monitoring, this project was

monitored up until the last sum was paid; further sums were made available, mostly because the returns that we were getting were clearly not showing the whole picture. That is certainly a method that all of us need to re-learn and look into, and I hope that the committee will do that as well.

Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): I welcome the minister's statement and congratulate him on his patience, perseverance and phlegmatic approach to this difficult problem. I share his hopes that the agreement is in the long-term interests of Scottish football.

In his statement, the minister talked a great deal about the viability of the SFA's business plan. However, I want to return to the end of Fiona McLeod's question. What role will the Scottish Executive, or any of the co-funders, have in any direction or monitoring of the new financial arrangements? Will the Executive or the co-funders be involved in the company in any way?

Mr Galbraith: I sincerely hope that we will not be involved in the company. Nicola Sturgeon said to me, "I bet you hope that this is your last statement on Hampden"; I said, "You are absolutely right." A private company has been set up; it must be an on-going private concern, and should not be a public organisation or a drain on public funds. Nevertheless, I assure Ian Jenkins that we will continue to take more than a passing interest in the subject.

Mike Watson (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): Along with everybody else, I welcome the minister's statement and the successful conclusion to what has been, if not a saga, a fiasco over Hampden. I hope that that has been drawn to a conclusion.

It has been noticeable that today there has been an absence of the rancour that was shown after previous statements on this subject—notably from the Opposition parties—and that everybody recognises the role that has been played by Sam Galbraith and the Executive in investing the necessary money to bring this to a successful conclusion.

I have two questions for the minister. First, is Queen's Park Football Club now relieved of the administration into which it went, voluntarily, some weeks ago? Secondly, is it possible to say anything about the SFA Museum Trust, the future of which is in doubt? The trust has had to make employees redundant because it was caught up in a situation over which it had no control.

Mr Galbraith: Yes. I agree that there has been an absence of rancour, and I am grateful to all members for that. As this situation has continued, people have begun to realise how difficult and complex it is. We did not set the thing up in the

first place, and we have been a small player, but we have acted in the public interest.

As for the administration, that is a technical matter and I am not a lawyer or administrator and am unsure of the technicalities; if that has not happened, it will happen.

The SFA Museum Trust is in a complicated position. Its funding stream is different. The trust was run separately from the stadium, although it rented an area within it. I assure you that the SFA is committed to establishing and running the football museum, which will be part of the attraction of the stadium, along with the sports clinic. It is for the committee to develop that as one of the highlights of Hampden, which people from all around will come and visit.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes questions to Mr Galbraith. We move on, a little ahead of time.

Holyrood Project

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is a debate on motion S1M-720, in the name of Sir David Steel on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, on the Holyrood project, and amendments to that motion.

Before we begin, I point out to members that the amendments to the motion will be taken in the order that is set out in the bulletin, which has been circulated. I remind members that this debate will last until 5.30 pm, when we will move on to decision time.

14:55

Sir David Steel (Chairman, Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): I recognise that it might seem odd for the Presiding Officer of the Parliament to be initiating a debate, but there is nothing in the standing orders to prohibit it, and the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, of which I am ex officio chairman, has been legally responsible for the Holyrood project since 1 June last year. The two posts are inseparable and I therefore could not justify shuffling off the responsibility for giving an account of our stewardship to someone else.

I want to report to Parliament on five aspects of the project. First, how the cost and size has increased since our debate last June; secondly, the specific problem of Queensberry House; thirdly, the implications of staying where we are for longer than planned; fourthly, the proposal to look for other sites; and, fifthly, the future management of the project if members decide to proceed with it.

Last June, after the corporate body had been in charge of the project for only eight days, Parliament approved a design of 23,000 sq m at an estimated cost of £109 million. Since then, we have seen the Parliament at work. The committees have met at least twice as frequently as was forecast. The number of clerking and official report staff has grown considerably to meet the legitimate requirements of those departments and the political parties have established their own research assistance. Because of those factors, an extra 3000 sq m had to be found. The design that we took over last June was to accommodate about 800 people daily, including MSPs. We now require to provide desking for more than 200 extra people as well as additional back-up space for servers and meeting rooms. This morning, I checked how many parliamentary passes are currently held. The figure is not 800, nor is it 1,000. It is almost 1,100, although not all those people are in the buildings at once.

We could have proceeded by ignoring that and sticking to the previous size and cost. We could have done that by arranging for any extra staff to be employed outside the building. There are already office buildings within walking distance of the new Parliament and more will be constructed. Why not just stick people in those? That would have made for a quiet life and been fleetingly popular but it would have saddled our successors with inefficient management and perpetual revenue expenditure every year on costly office rents. We are, as yet, nowhere near being in a position to allocate specific spaces to individual departments or parties. That will come later, amid further consultation. However, we have ensured that the building is the required size.

We could also have ignored the criticism of the rather flat shape of the chamber that was expressed in the debate in this chamber and elsewhere. That would have saved us at least three months of delay and costs. However, we did none of those things. We responded to the emerging needs of the Parliament, with the result that delays and changes to the design occurred. It was because we were uneasy and uncertain about the costs that we commissioned the report from Mr Spencely and his team. If members wish the project to continue, that process must stop where it is now. I will come later to its future management.

Mr Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): In February this year, the Presiding Officer issued a statement saying that the schedule was on time and that the building would be completed by the end of next year. He also gave a statement to MSPs that the project was on budget and would cost £109 million. John Spencely's report says that, at that time, the project team had known for nine months that those things were not the case. Under those circumstances, should the project team have told the Presiding Officer that those things were not the case so that he could have given MSPs the correct information?

Sir David Steel: That is arguable, but, because the design was constantly changing, we were not able to get exact figures until February, when we got what I admit was a considerable shock. That was why we called in Mr Spencely.

We have faced an additional problem—Queensberry House. In the estimate that was approved in June, the cost of its renovation was estimated to be £3.7 million, excluding VAT and fees. In December, we were told that, because of the poor state of the structure, the cost would total £11 million—double what had been approved.

How could that be? In December, Mr James Simpson, who had carried out the original survey in 1997, wrote a couple of articles in the *Edinburgh Evening News* and *The Scotsman*, saying that he

had estimated the building cost at £4.9 million. I asked to see Mr Simpson's original report, which was prepared for the former Secretary of State for Scotland. The *Edinburgh Evening News* carried his piece with a front-page headline that read: "We told you so".

I have to tell members that that is unfortunately very far from the truth. Mr Simpson described the building as "fundamentally sound", and recommended the use of high-grade finishes. Our proposals also assumed the building to be sound, but we rejected fancy finishes in favour of standard office space. In other words, the difference between our costs and Mr Simpson's costs was just over £1 million. That was accounted for by the quality of finishes that he chose to recommend.

I do not impugn Mr Simpson's professionalism; his inspection was, as he describes, necessarily superficial. However, it was only after the plaster and harling were removed from the walls that the true state of Queensberry House was revealed. The truth is that, when it was sold off as a barracks around 1800, anything of any value was stripped out and carted off to other houses: there are no marble fireplaces or staircases; no stonework doorways; no decorated plaster ceilings; no fine wood panelling. I have been over it three times, and I am only too painfully personally familiar with the problems of restoring ancient buildings.

I have also read the 84-page archaeologists' report. Interestingly, they record an 18th century description of the houses as follows:

"The Canongate has suffered more by the union of the kingdoms than all the others parts of Scotland: for having, before that period, been the residence of the chief of the Scottish nobility, it was then in a flourishing condition; but being deserted by them, many of their houses are fallen down, and others in a ruinous condition; it is a piteous case!"

I say amen to that. In 1803, Queensberry House was sold for £900; it is worth less than that today. That is real negative equity.

The Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland has recently written to me. Its letter says:

"Queensberry House occupies an exceptional place in both Scottish history and architectural history. It was the only urban palace ever built in Scotland which was on a comparable scale to the ducal palaces of the same vintage in London."

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): Can Sir David tell us whether Enric Miralles was aware of the true state of repair of Queensberry House? How would he have tackled it differently? Presumably, when he outlined to the Parliament how it would be an integral part of the design, he did not believe it to be, as he now does, worse than a ruin and ready to be blown down by a gale.

Sir David Steel: Margo MacDonald is absolutely correct. I am describing the condition of Queensberry House as we all—the architects and the SPCB—thought it to be, and I am describing what was subsequently discovered.

It is because of Queensberry House's history that, while agreeing with Mr Spencely that this, the most expensive part of the whole project, is poor value for money, we do not feel that a Parliament should be destroying part of the capital's historic and architectural legacy.

Two other factors influenced us: the contractors told us that demolition would severely disrupt and delay the work programme on the site, and we are well aware that any attempt to demolish would be likely to be challenged in the courts, which would create still further delays.

The proposals that we submitted in our report last September, as advised by Mr John Hume, create a renovated—but not restored—Queensberry House as the centrepiece of our new Parliament. The only change since then is the abandonment of the much-criticised ground floor corridor in favour of extra buildings in the garden, which will create an echo of the original terraced garden effect.

I come now to the cost of staying on at the present site. Many letter writers, seeing this chamber on television, ask about that. Most of us have indeed got to like this chamber, but the idea that we should either rip out these desks every year, as we are doing next month, or pay the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to go elsewhere, as it did last year, is a most expensive proposition.

We do have not enough committee rooms and there is nowhere to meet constituents. Facilities for the public are poor. Moreover, the public do not see behind the scenes in our six back-up buildings. Last summer recess, I spent two days visiting all the offices. I was frankly shocked by what I saw. MSPs may be a bit squashed, and so may the media in the Lawnmarket building, but that is as nothing compared with the conditions that we impose on some of our staff.

I asked, for example, for extra air conditioning in our basement kitchens after talking with the staff there. That alone cost £20,000. The rented buildings were kitted out to last only a couple of years. If we stay any longer, the necessary running repairs would be literally wasted expenditure. You, Mr Reid, are not the only person to have been stuck in a broken-down lift in our present substandard and asbestos-ridden office block. I honestly believe that staying put is just not a justifiable and acceptable option.

What about other sites? I am not going to go back over the choice of site before we came into

being, except to say that two things have changed since then. First, we are talking about requiring 31,000 sq m—nearly double the space at the time of the original search. Secondly, the plans recently unveiled for Waverley station show development eastwards through the existing car park and New Street bus station so that future MSPs will have direct access to the lower part of the Royal Mile from the station.

I have always defended the right of the Parliament to change its mind and to walk away from the project. However, we should do so only in the full knowledge of the consequences, because every delay and every hesitation costs money. Of course, members will want to listen carefully to the arguments on seeking alternative accommodation, but one critical point that they should bear in mind is that, in my view, even in three months it simply will not be possible to obtain reliable cost estimates for alternatives. Any scheme could only be an outline and therefore any cost could be at best only approximate.

There are substantial practical issues to be considered—in particular, who would produce the designs for any alternative? Would we really know the cost of purchasing existing buildings or constructing new ones without going through the actual process?

The existing design, which is outstanding and is of international eminence, located on a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization world heritage site, is now very well advanced. Indeed, it is almost settled and could be signed off within the next few weeks, should the Parliament decide today to proceed.

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): In the light of what Sir David has just said, will he tell us the truth or otherwise of the story on the front page of today's *Edinburgh Evening News*, which says that the architect has stepped back from the project?

Sir David Steel: I am just coming to that. I regret that report very much for this reason. Much of the credit goes to the collaborative team, including Enric Miralles, who was in cracking form when I had dinner with him and Brian Stewart last month. Sadly, however, I must report that Mr Miralles has lately been quite ill. He has put in an immense effort to finalise the design. It is not clear how soon he will be able to return to work, but I know that we will all wish him a speedy recovery.

Abandoning the project would involve dishing out redundancy notices to those engaged on existing design and construction, disappointing the firms in the west of Scotland who are to manufacture off site everything from the concrete MSP office modules to the specialist windows, and—frankly—unquantifiable potential legal claims

for compensation.

I turn now to the management of the project if we press on. Mr Spencely invited the SPCB to

"consider whether it has the time and expertise to perform the Client role on a day-to-day basis."

The people on the project are working, as he described it,

"in a situation and on a building which are unavoidably more complicated than most, if not all, have ever experienced."

Those are wise words.

Of course, it is easy to criticise the current five individuals who make up the SPCB, but it is simply not true to say that we have not controlled costs. I remind members that, leaving aside Queensberry House, the cost per square metre is much the same as it was in June.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Will Sir David give way?

Sir David Steel: I will give way in a second.

We have cut the car park, removed a whole staircase and lift shaft and removed plumbing from MSP offices. We have been cutting costs as we have gone along and as the project has increased.

Phil Gallie: I thank Sir David for giving way. Is not it the case that those who campaigned for this Parliament made statements to suggest that the cost would be £40 million? Sir David has said that costs have not run away and that they have, to some degree, been kept under control. How then can we have gone from a sum of £40 million to £195 million?

Sir David Steel: I said at the beginning—to Mr Gallie and to the chamber—that I am not going to deal with past history. I can deal only with the period for which we are responsible, which is from 1 June last year, when the figure was £109 million, to now, when the figure is £195 million.

We accept Mr Spencely's suggestion that either a professional individual or a progress-chasing group, including professionals, should watch over the project on a day-by-day basis and report to us. We will be glad to learn views on that in this debate.

Colleagues, this has not been an easy task. Lessons have been learned and I am confident that, if you give the green light, the completed design can be approved within weeks. That would put us on target for completion by December 2002.

That brings me finally to the costs. The budget figure proposed—

Dr Winnie Ewing (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Will Sir David give way?

Sir David Steel: I have already given way a lot, Winnie.

Dr Ewing: Who employed RMJM Scotland Ltd? At least Miralles was going to give us one of the top buildings in the world. The whole world would have come to see it because of his renowned status. Will we have a Miralles building or a RMJM building? Is Brian Stewart a registered architect?

Sir David Steel: I find that question extraordinary—it shows the level of misunderstanding. The consortium that was awarded the contract before the Parliament came into being is made up of four partners, of whom Mr Miralles is one and Brian Stewart is another. The four of them have been working collaboratively and have been meeting us regularly over the period. It was Brian Stewart who made the presentation to members yesterday. It is one and the same firm—

Dr Ewing: No, it is not.

Sir David Steel: It is. It is a consortium of the two firms put together. They are the people who have the contract.

I now come to the final cost of £195 million, which is proposed as the actual cost of creating a major public building to last up to 200 years. I suggest to the chamber that we should encourage some injection of private finance. After all, Edinburgh is a centre of major financial institutions and is booming partly because of the creation of the Parliament. I receive many letters suggesting that, in the new building, we should have memorials both to historic figures and to some of our distinguished political contemporaries who are no longer with us. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Sir David Steel: I would like the corporate body to consider developing an idea that we saw in the new Parliament building in The Hague. Rather than have plaques or statues, why do we not consider having meeting rooms named after such figures. We could—

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): The Steel vaults. *[Laughter.]*

Sir David Steel: Hang on. We could invite private sponsorship to commission Scottish artists, woodworkers, furniture makers, tapestry and carpet designers to provide high-quality rooms, not at public expense. Why should we not have a John Smith room, an Allan McCartney room, a Jo Grimond room, a John Mackintosh room, an Alick Buchanan-Smith room and so on? *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Sir David Steel: Let us engage civic Scotland directly in the project. Let us invite Scottish companies to attach their names to those rooms,

as sponsors.

In his report, John Spencely drew favourable cost comparison between our new Parliament and the House of Commons extension office, Portcullis House. Closer to home, Glasgow City Chambers was ordered in 1882 at a cost of £150,000 for 5,000 sq m. It was finished seven years later, with 16,000 sq m, at a cost of £578,000—nearly four times the estimate—yet who in Glasgow, 100 years later, questions its value?

Two other options will be put before us for consideration this afternoon. Their promoters will have to satisfy us on three counts: one, that their proposal could be substantially cheaper; two, that it would last for the 200 years required; and, three, that it will be worth the cost and inconvenience of staying here until towards the end of the next parliamentary session. I shall listen carefully to what is proposed. I have no vote and it is not for me to tell others how to vote.

I do not always agree with my friend and neighbour, Alan Massie, but in his column on Sunday, referring to our new Museum of Scotland, he wrote:

"It would . . . say something disturbing about the mental state of the nation if we can put up a fine museum to house the relics and evidence of our history, but shrink from building a new parliament on grounds of cost".

I cannot help being a son of the manse, so I hope that colleagues will forgive me if I conclude by paraphrasing a familiar line: courage, brothers and sisters, do not stumble.

I move,

That the Parliament notes:

- (a) the attached report of the SPCB on the Holyrood project (SP Paper 99) together with
- (b) the report by John Spencely attached as Annexe 1;
- (c) the photographs incorporated as Annexe 2 which are available from the Scottish Parliament Document Supply Centre;
- (d) the revised budget of £195 million set out in Annexe 3.

[The text of SP Paper 99, Annexe 1 and Annexe 3 appears after column 1370.]

15:14

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): I wish to make three points: first, we should look forward and not back; secondly, this is a parliamentary issue and not a party issue; and, thirdly, we should make an informed choice between options and not buy a pig in a poke.

First, there will be other occasions for the Parliament to consider the past and to analyse the mistakes that have undoubtedly been made—this is not such an occasion. We are looking forward

and choosing between three propositions on how to provide ourselves with a permanent home. As David Steel has said, we are choosing a building to last for 200 years and we must get it right.

Secondly, this is a parliamentary issue. Every MSP must choose how they think we should proceed—it is not a question of party or Executive. Pressures have been applied on members from many sides—they have been told to be loyal and so on. The loyalty of members is to the Parliament, not to any party. We are voting on the wording of the motion and the amendments; we are not voting on the party political accusations that might be flung across the chamber. This is an important, long-term issue.

The Parliament has not been kept informed. We have not had a debate on the matter since last June and we have had no real input. It is time that we reconsidered the issue. The idea that we are dithering is a load of rubbish. Are those members who voted with the majority last June happy now? Today's vote is similar to that of last year; it is about considering the options, rather than charging ahead in a blinkered fashion.

Dr Ewing: On the subject of being informed, I draw the member's attention to page 40 of the SPCB report and the heading "Report on expenditure to date". The fees amount to £9 million out of a total of nearly £21 million. The individual figures are described as "commercial-in-confidence". That means that the real, big expenditure is commercial in confidence—we are not being informed. I refer members to Gordon Brown's comments in 1979, when he said that we must rid Scotland of closed files and confidentiality.

Donald Gorrie: That is a good example of one of the many issues on which we have not been properly informed. We must pursue that further on another occasion.

Those people opposed to my proposition say that it would cause lots of delay. That is not the case. Mr Spencely's report says that the scheme design would be finished in early June. At that point, the Parliament will have full information about Holyrood—it does not have that now—and will be able to make an informed decision. I suggest that the Parliament should take that time to make an informed decision on two options. The other two options will not be worked up to the same detail. However, with respect to Sir David, the idea that architects cannot produce a decent scheme in six weeks on areas that have already had a lot of work done on them is complete rubbish.

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): Does the member recognise paragraph 6.6.2 of Mr Spencely's report? It says:

"Changing the site would mean starting again. A new brief would be required as a precursor to a new design. The present design could not, in my opinion, be transplanted unchanged. Time would be lost and this would cost money. The money invested in the Project to date would be largely thrown away."

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): On a point of order. Is it appropriate for a reporter on behalf of a parliamentary committee to intervene in a debate on the matter on which he is reporting? Mr Macintosh is the reporter to the Finance Committee.

Mr Macintosh: I am intervening as a back bencher, which is the right of every member of this Parliament.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is the point.

Mr Macintosh: My brief as reporter for the Finance Committee is to look into the costs of the Holyrood project.

Donald Gorrie: Mr Macintosh has asked his question. In answering questions at the briefing, Mr Spencely said that he had not examined any alternative sites and that he had not been asked to examine any alternative sites. There is no proposal to move the Holyrood design somewhere else. Mr Spencely's opinion on alternative sites is of no value, as he would admit.

The amendment in the name of Gordon Jackson asks us to go ahead with Holyrood with a capped budget and a timetable that may or may not be achievable. We would be doing that without having all the necessary information about Holyrood. Would any member buy a house on that basis? We are being asked to put all our eggs in a basket that has consistently proved to have holes in it. Last June, members voted for a project with a budget of £109 million and a completion date of autumn 2001. We were guaranteed that. Now we are being asked to vote for a budget of £195 million and a completion date of December 2002, which, according to Mr Spencely, means occupation in August 2003. Mr Spencely says that at present the figure is £230 million. We cannot guarantee getting that down to £195 million. What cuts are necessary for that to happen? We do not know, as we are not told. Since we last voted on this issue, the designs have been changed radically. Will they be changed again? A considerable part of the Holyrood site is still being designed. How can we genuinely vote for that?

We are told that ending the Holyrood project would entail heavy costs. In my amendment, I am not asking to end the Holyrood project; I am asking for the issues to be looked at. If an investigation shows that the figures are such that it would be foolish to abandon the Holyrood project, members will not vote to do so. If the Holyrood

project is shown to be the quickest, cheapest and best option, members will vote for it. What are people afraid of? Why are the supporters of Holyrood afraid of allowing comparisons to be made? What have they to fear and what have they to hide?

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): When considering the extra costs of the Parliament, members should perhaps reflect on the demands that they have made. As the member was present at the recent briefing, can he give a likely estimate of the increased costs that would be incurred by the Parliament if it were to postpone a final decision on the site until June, given the expectation that firms would hold this Parliament to ransom in the tendering process between now and that date?

Donald Gorrie: At the briefing, one of the design team claimed that a considerable number of contracts might be let in the next few months. I argue that it is more important that the Parliament should have full information about Holyrood, as well as the other options, before making up its mind. I do not see how members can vote conscientiously for the proposition as it stands, because it is so unclear.

We are asking for full information on three sites. The Calton Hill site offers great opportunities that have never been properly explored. Page & Park have proposed a very good scheme with a boulevard up Waterloo Place, which would use a considerably rejigged St Andrew's House and include a very fine debating chamber. We could also use the Royal High School. Nobody is suggesting that, if we stayed on the Mound, we would stay in the temporary accommodation. We could work out a scheme to acquire the whole of New College campus and develop the areas round about. There are serious alternative propositions.

We are not calling for a delay or for the abandonment of the Holyrood project. We are calling for options to be explored. If my amendment is rejected, members will have to explain to their voters and to their grandchildren why they refused to examine any other option before going ahead with this proposal, which is extremely incomplete. Members should think about that and not about party whips.

I move amendment S1M-720.1, to insert at end:

"and, in order to be fully informed when making a final decision on the location, design, specification and cost of its permanent home, (a) directs the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body to present to it in early June the scheme design for the Holyrood buildings prepared by the design team, along with the most detailed possible plans, with evaluation and costs, prepared by independent experts for (i) the St Andrew's House/Royal High School site with new build parliament chamber and (ii) the Mound site based on the acquisition of the New College Campus and development of nearby buildings; (b) calls upon the

Scottish Executive to co-operate fully with the study of these options and to publish a report on financing options for the parliament buildings; (c) approves the SPGB's proposal for a progressing group to take on day to day responsibility for the project of creating the Parliament's new home and (d) agrees to make a final decision on the permanent Parliament buildings in June in the light of the information requested."

15:25

Gordon Jackson (Glasgow Govan) (Lab): A building to be paid for by public funds was, in June 1999, estimated to cost £109 million. Less than a year later, a cost of £195 million is proposed. It does not surprise me that eyebrows are being raised and questions are being asked; it is proper that that should happen.

Two questions are of particular importance: first, how did we get here and, secondly, what should we do now? The second is the more important question, but the first had better not be ignored, because, apart from anything else, how we got here will to some extent determine what we do next.

The increase is nothing whatsoever to do with choosing the wrong site. Spencely makes that absolutely crystal clear.

Phil Gallie: If the increase is nothing to do with choosing the wrong site, were the public misled by the figure of £40 million that was suggested at the time of the referendum as the cost of the Parliament?

Gordon Jackson: The first broad-brush estimate was £50 million for construction costs. By the time the total estimate reached £109 million, the construction cost had risen to £62 million on the basis of detailed design.

David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con) *rose—*

Gordon Jackson: Let me finish responding to Phil Gallie's question. I can answer only one question at a time.

At the time of the original estimate, the Calton Hill site was more expensive. Are we really to believe that, like for like, that site would have been cheaper? I do not think so.

Mr Salmond: Mr Jackson has argued for a like-for-like comparison of costs, and he will be aware that the St Andrews House and Regent Road site covers 25,000 sq m, while the original Holyrood plan covered 16,000 sq m. Does he think that that was a like-for-like comparison?

Gordon Jackson: The comparison was between proper building costs, as I said. But let me move on.

David McLetchie *rose—*

Gordon Jackson: I must move on, as time is

limited.

Tempting as it might seem, and I understand the agitation, this is not an appropriate matter for blame. I am not suggesting that we should be complacent or that no mistakes have been made. Communication has not always been what it might have been. Perhaps the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, which we should remember is an all-party group, has not always communicated exactly as we would like.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): It is not an all-party group.

Gordon Jackson: Indeed.

The simple fact is that this has been a hugely complex and novel project. It is quite easy to criticise individual decisions, and it is also easy to try to gain cheap political advantage out of doing so. Having considered the matter, I believe that everyone involved at every stage has acted in good faith. None of us, if we are honest, would have done any better.

The real reason for the increase is much less exciting, and Sir David has touched on that. It has come about simply as the inevitable result of legitimate changes being made as the project progressed. It is no more complicated than that.

Ms MacDonald: We are getting used to talking to one another across the chamber about this matter. I would like to return to what Gordon Jackson said about the site. The choice of the site was all-important. It is absolutely true that Spencely said that the location was okay. He did not comment on the size, other than to say that any normal developer building on that site to the same density as the current plans would not receive planning permission. The site is overdeveloped. That has been caused by the design and by the fact that we need more room. That is not allocating blame; it is stating the obvious. Can we get the facts on the record?

Gordon Jackson: I did not understand the question in that, so I will move on.

As I was saying, the real reason for the increase is much less exciting than some would suggest. The chamber has been radically redesigned, as Sir David mentioned. It might be worth reminding ourselves just who it was that wanted a lot of that redesign work done. The members who are criticising from the back rows were the leading proponents of that redesign work. That should not be forgotten.

Dorothy-Grace Elder (Glasgow) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Gordon Jackson: No, I want to finish this point.

Queensberry House has proved to be a very costly business. Sir David told us that the building

was originally thought to be fundamentally sound.

Michael Russell: Will the member give way?

Gordon Jackson: No, I am not giving way again for the moment.

Please remember that we are dealing with an A-graded listed building. The decision to incorporate Queensberry House was, at the time it was made, perfectly reasonable. Using hindsight now does not mean that that decision was unreasonable at the time that it was made.

The building that is now proposed is much bigger than was originally thought to be necessary. There has been an increase of about 7,000 sq m. Reasons for that increase have come from a variety of sources. The Executive has asked for a comparatively modest amount for ministerial purposes, an amount that is a very small percentage of the increase. The nationalists and the Conservatives have asked for increased space for their own purposes.

David McLetchie: That is not true.

Gordon Jackson: My understanding is that all parties have wanted more space for their own quite legitimate purposes. The Parliament itself needs space for a variety of reasons; for example, there has been an explosion in the amount of space needed for committees. The chamber office wants more space, as do other necessary services. In total, we have had an overall increase in demands for space of about 30 per cent. Let me be clear: in my opinion, none of that is open to criticism.

For all of us, this is a new project and we are on a learning curve. If we are told that the Parliament needs more space, the right thing to do is to accommodate it accordingly.

Mr Lloyd Quinan (West of Scotland) (SNP) rose—

Gordon Jackson: No, I would like to carry on.

Whatever members may say, we will be doing no service whatsoever to a future generation of Scottish parliamentarians if we leave them a building that is quite unsuitable for their needs. We have altered the building to make legitimate changes. The end result—and I say this without apology—is that we are creating a splendid, world-class building for our needs and for future generations. Scottish National party members may complain, but it is not over-lavish. They should go down to the site and look at the plans. It is suitable for its purpose as a national Parliament. I have no doubt that it will provide good value for money.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Gordon Jackson: No. I have two minutes. I am

not taking any more interventions.

We must not abandon this project. That is not a sensible option; it would be a real waste of money, and a lot of it. To write off millions of pounds—and I suspect that the amount has been underestimated—and to end up in years of litigation would be an unhappy state of affairs in any situation. To do so in order to abandon a good project and end up out of pocket would be an act of lunacy.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Gordon Jackson: No, I am not taking any more interventions.

Alex Neil: Will—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. The member has indicated that he is not taking any more interventions.

Gordon Jackson: There are amendments that suggest a middle way: halting the project and examining other options. Frankly, I find that disingenuous. Time costs money, and to halt the project would cost a lot of money. We would evaluate other sites, some of which we know to be unsuitable. We would be left, at best, with vague guesstimates for an ill-advised change. I believe that the real agenda of those amendments is to halt the project. The simple fact is that, if we are satisfied with the rightness of this project, as we ought to be, we should not be wasting time and money in the way that Donald Gorrie has suggested.

We must learn from the past; we must put a figure on the project and make sure that it has adhered to; we must finalise the design and put in place proper supervision. My amendment does that. The figure of £195 million is reasonable and the target date is realistic. A project group of suitably qualified professionals will oversee the whole enterprise, and, most important, the Parliament will be kept informed. We must now make a definite decision to finish the work.

I have read the Spencely report and will quote exactly a comment that no one has mentioned so far. In paragraph 1.5 of the report, Spencely says:

“The creation of a building to house the Nation’s Parliament is a great enterprise.”

Without being romantic or sentimental, I think that we are losing sight of that aim. We should remember what we are doing: we are building a building for a nation’s future, and of which succeeding generations can be proud and can say that the first members of the Scottish Parliament did well. Posterity will not forgive us if we fail to accomplish that task.

We should by all means ask pertinent questions,

criticise, make political points and vote appropriately—that is the function of Parliament—but we should not lose sight of what we are trying to achieve. We are building something for a nation to be proud of. We should all want that, and the intention of my amendment is to make it happen. I commend the amendment to the chamber.

I move amendment S1M-720.2, to leave out from “(a)” to end and insert:

“the report of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body on the Holyrood Project; approves its terms, and directs the Corporate Body to establish a progress group comprising representatives of the Parliament and relevant professionals to work with the Corporate Body to (a) finalise the design; (b) complete the project by the end of 2002 within a total budget of £195 million, and (c) report regularly, or as from time to time may be required, on progress including on expenditure to date and estimated completion costs to the SPCB and to members.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I should perhaps inform members at this point that when we come to put the questions on the amendments to this motion at question time, if Mr Gorrie’s amendment is agreed, Mr Jackson’s amendment will be pre-empted and the question will not be put.

15:37

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): I want to start by refuting Gordon Jackson’s closing remarks. He said that building a building would be a great enterprise; however, the great enterprise was the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, and we, the 129 MSPs in this chamber, are that Parliament—not some building with foundations that was designed elsewhere. Indeed, our great enterprise is perverted if we think that our job is simply to build a building. Our job is to serve the people of Scotland, and we will not be doing that if we go ahead with the motion before us.

We have a unique chance to revisit and correct a decision made on 17 June last year that was based on false information. There is no doubt about that. The resolution on 17 June was fatally flawed in four ways. First, there was a basic flaw at the heart of the resolution. Every Parliament should have the right to choose its own destiny in terms of where it sits and what it does. This Parliament was not given that choice. The root of the whole problem is that that decision was made before we were even elected.

The second flaw is the figure of £109 million on which the resolution was based, and I am sorry to hear Sir David Steel repeat the figure today. Mr Spencely’s report tells the truth about the matter. The figure was not £109 million; it was £27 million more than that, even on 17 June. As the Parliament did not have the correct information, the resolution was based on a figure that was not

true.

Thirdly, the 17 June resolution talked about fulfilling the contract within the time scale. That has not been possible, as the corporate body knows, for some months now. Therefore, that decision cannot stand. The resolution is flawed in a fourth regard, because it talks about doing it within the budget—a budget that was not true then, was not true at the start of this year and is not true now.

In all those regards, the motion that we passed on 17 June last year cannot be fulfilled. Therefore, we have an obligation to revisit the issue and make a decision, on behalf of the Parliament, as to what we should do next.

The worst decision to make would be the one that Mr Jackson proposes. He is essentially trying to repeat history. We got it wrong on 17 June, because the figures were wrong and we thought that we would just say that it could be done for that. We are now being told, from figures plucked out of the air, that it can be done for a certain figure. The Spencely report told us that there is no plan, there is no final cost. Who on earth, in those circumstances, would say, “This is the cost, this is the time scale, just go ahead”? That amendment repeats the error of last year.

We must examine what we can do from now on. That is why I and many of my colleagues support the Gorrie amendment, which takes a sensible position. It acknowledges that we were wrong last year and that we now have to make a choice. The worst argument against that is the one that we are hearing again this afternoon—that a delay would cost too much. This morning, I reread the debate from last June. We were told then that it would cost £1 million or £2 million to delay; at one stage we were told that it would cost £3 million to delay. The cost of going ahead has been another £40 million. That is the difference between the real figure last June and the figure now. Failing to delay has cost us £140,000 a day. There is no question that we must stop now and consider what we should do. If we do not do so, we will compound the errors that we made last year.

Dr Richard Simpson (Ochil) (Lab): Will Mr Russell make it clear that he does not believe that the increase in size, since the debate last June, is appropriate? Is he saying that we should reduce the size back to 24,000 sq m? Will he acknowledge that the Parliament’s changing function has had to be recognised in the increased design?

Michael Russell: That is one of the reasons why we should look for a better site.

I am interested in that question because Dr Simpson has, perhaps unwittingly, referred to one of the issues that Mr Jackson raised and that I

heard the Minister for Parliament raise on radio this morning. It has been implied that profligate MSPs were demanding too much space and were even trying to change the shape of the chamber. I advise him to consult Mr McLeish—here he comes now, walking into the chamber—because it was Mr McLeish, in the debate on 17 June last year, who advised us to change the shape of the chamber and told us that it was our duty to influence the design. I say to Dr Simpson that there has been far too much spin on this, including false figures being given for other projects.

This Parliament made a mistake last year; it has a chance to revisit this now. We could look elsewhere for advice. The Emperor Augustus said, “Festina lente”—hasten slowly. I am attracted to that advice in the light of another saying of the Emperor Augustus, which may apply to the First Minister and to Sir David. Augustus, speaking of Rome,

“could boast that he inherited it brick and left it marble”.

That is where we are going. This project is out of control. Brick is becoming marble.

Mr Andy Kerr (East Kilbride) (Lab): Will Mr Russell give way?

Michael Russell: No, I will not give way. I want to finish within time.

The First Minister (Donald Dewar): To inform my remarks when I get an opportunity to speak, will Michael Russell say—as it is an implication of those remarks—that he thinks that the space standards in the Parliament design are too generous and that we ought to cut back on the materials used?

Michael Russell: No. The position that we should be in—and I am glad that the First Minister is moving towards this position—is that we should pause and look at all the figures again. That is the sensible approach. The First Minister will have the opportunity this afternoon to inquire further. If he votes for this amendment, we will have the opportunity to examine all those matters again and compare all the sites fairly.

Mr Spencely has told us more in four weeks than the Parliament was told in nine months. Mr Spencely says that there should be a pause to allow us to get a plan. Who would believe that we do not even have a plan? I, for one, want to go with that suggestion, to discover what is going on. I am sorry that the corporate body, in paragraph 24 of its report, rejects that. It comes out with a very odd assertion. It says it has received assurances from the project team—we have heard those before—and that

“We cannot in reality give an absolute commitment until we have signed off the scheme. Once we do so, we would report again to colleagues with a firm commitment.”

Even the SPCB accepts that, in terms of Mr Jackson’s amendment, it does not know if the project can be done. We are back to where we were last June. We are asking for things to be done that cannot be done, to a cost that does not appear to be possible, on a site that has difficulties; yet incredibly the partnership parties seem to believe it is a good idea. It is nonsensical.

Many questions about the project must be asked of the First Minister and of the SPCB. I am sure my colleagues will ask them in the debate, but the really big question is for every member. Are we prepared to spend £200 million or £220 million? Is there another bid? How about £230 million or £240 million? Are we prepared to write a blank cheque for the Parliament? [MEMBERS: “No”] Or are we prepared to act responsibly and look at all the options, do the job we are here to do, act on behalf of the people of Scotland who want prudence and responsibility? Let us not use this debate as a fig leaf to cover the embarrassment of others; let us speak up for the Parliament and for Scotland.

15:47

David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con): I am happy to speak in support of the back-bench amendment promoted by Donald Gorrie and others because I believe that it seeks to bring the Parliament building project back under control through a rational reassessment of the three main options available to us, before a final decision in June. As Mr Gorrie and others have pointed out, that need not involve any substantial delay for the Holyrood project if Mr Spencely’s estimate of early June for the publication of the design scheme is correct.

I take to heart what Sir David Steel said: that we have to have a full knowledge of the consequences of walking away from Holyrood. We must also have a full knowledge of the alternatives before we can take a rational decision—and we do not. That is what Mr Gorrie’s motion would achieve.

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): Will the member give way?

David McLetchie: A little later, George.

As I said at First Minister’s question time last week, I believe that the Parliament should have taken the opportunity last June to undertake a review. It would have been possible if we had supported the motion then promoted by Mr Gorrie and Mrs MacDonald. The First Minister dismissed it at the time because

“the immediate costs of a two-month delay would be around £2 million to £3 million”.—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1999; Vol 1, c 524.]

Since the £2 million to £3 million estimate was

presumably supplied to the First Minister by the same civil servants and advisers who hid from him the true costs of the Holyrood project—albeit with his approval—it should possibly have come with a strong government health warning: “swallowing estimates can damage public figures.” That is exactly what it has done.

Even if we suspend our disbelief and accept the figures at face value, many of us here would say that that estimated figure would have been a small price to pay for greater savings over the lifetime of the project. Nothing has done more to tarnish Parliament’s reputation than the handling of the Holyrood building project. The chain of deception that has characterised the project from the beginning has rightly angered the people of Scotland, including many who were among the Parliament’s most passionate supporters.

It is about time the First Minister showed leadership and accepted responsibility for the mess we now find ourselves in. Sadly, the hallmark of his handling of the issue has been to bury his head in the sand, refuse to listen to others, and pass the buck. Last June, the First Minister moved the motion to press full steam ahead with the Holyrood project; today, he has had to draft in one of Scotland’s top criminal Queen’s counsel to defend him. In any other context, that would be called getting away with murder.

Gordon Jackson’s allegation that costs have grown because of space demands by Conservative members is utterly without foundation. The only reason we now need space for one more person is that we have one more member and Mr Jackson’s party has fewer—that will be a constant trend.

It is no use Mr Jackson coming out with pleas in mitigation; this is the time to apportion some blame. The First Minister cannot evade the guilty verdict. It was the First Minister who claimed in the white paper, which Mr Jackson obviously did not read before preparing his speech, that the Parliament could be built for £40 million. It was the First Minister who chose Holyrood as the site for the Parliament, and who said that the Parliament would cost £109 million, all in. It is the First Minister who has stood by while costs have escalated to £230 million and bust his own budget.

Karen Gillon: Will the member give way?

David McLetchie: I said that I would give way to George Lyon.

George Lyon: Mr McLetchie will accept that the corporate body authorised the increase in floor space in the new building, provision for 203 extra researchers, and the change to the debating chamber. His party has a member on the corporate body. Does his party not accept some

responsibility for those decisions?

David McLetchie: We do not. As is clear from the Spencely report and the statement by the chairman of the corporate body, no member of that body was informed of the cost implications of any proposed change. Because of that lack of information, we cannot make a rational decision.

No doubt the First Minister will claim, as he did in *The Herald* last week, that this issue has been turned into a witch-hunt. No doubt he will repeat his fear that

“there is a great deal of politics in this and it isn’t the way to approach it.”

Spare us from pompous politicians who decry their own trade. It is funny that they do that only when their own political actions are called into question.

Bearing in mind the history of the Parliament building, it is a bit rich for Donald Dewar to accuse others of playing politics. Was there not a teeny-weeny hint of politics in the original estimate that was given at the time of the devolution referendum? I might add that the SNP and the Liberal Democrats were happy to endorse that estimate, even although we all knew that it came straight out of the Alice in Wonderland school of arithmetic. The idea that politics was the last thing on the First Minister’s mind when he chose the Holyrood site stretches credulity to breaking point.

The Scottish Executive repeatedly boasts of its commitment to freedom of information, but actions speak louder than words. Gordon Jackson said that we are entitled to ask questions; we are, but we are also entitled to receive full, frank and honest answers, which is what we have not had since the project started. Freedom of information means giving the public clear and accurate information, not hiding the unpleasant details in the small print.

Gaining information on the costs of Holyrood has been like pulling teeth.

George Lyon: Will the member give way?

David McLetchie: No, I have already taken an intervention from George Lyon; I will take someone else.

Dr Simpson: May I intervene?

David McLetchie: If Richard Simpson lets me finish this point, I will let him in.

When the public were told that the cost of Holyrood would be £50 million, people accepted that headline figure at face value. It was only thanks to the diligence of Mr Gorrie in the House of Commons that we gleaned from parliamentary answers that the real figure, including all the extras, was something like £90 million.

We have also learned from the original Holyrood

project manager that the £50 million estimate of construction costs was too low in November 1998 and that when he asked for that estimate to be uprated he was, allegedly, told by senior civil servants to cover it up to protect the reputation of the then secretary of state.

Before the debate last June, we were told that construction costs had risen to £62 million which, when all the extras were added, gave us the £109 million to which the First Minister committed himself during that debate. Of course, in keeping with the half-truths and Orwellian doublespeak that have clouded discussion of the matter from start to finish, that figure excluded any estimate for landscaping at Holyrood park and traffic calming measures, which we now know will cost another £13 million. That is another charge to the taxpayer and another dent in the Scottish block.

Thanks to the Spencely report, we also know—as other members have said—that the £109 million was far from reliable, although the First Minister believes that that information was rightly withheld from him by his civil servants. In the light of his experience of what happens to cost estimates for the Parliament, that must rank as one of the greatest triumphs of hope over experience ever to be witnessed in the chamber.

The Presiding Officer has—in an act of some chivalry—shouldered some responsibility for the mess and sought to protect the First Minister. He has done so to this extent: paragraph 9.3.2 of Mr Spencely's report states:

"That the Client's expectations for time and cost were not being met has been known within the Project Team for some nine months at least."

That, however, is flatly contradicted in paragraph 11 of the SPCB's report, which states:

"It may well have been possible for the project as it then stood to have been completed for a figure in the region of £109 m."

That represents a total contradiction and is wholly unreliable.

We should support Donald Gorrie's amendment: not only because it gives us an opportunity to take control of the new Parliament building, but because that will send the message to everyone in Scotland that members do not put their interests before those of the people. We must be honest—we have a lot of work to do if we are to convince people in Scotland that the Parliament can make a difference to their lives. If we agree to Mr Gorrie's amendment, that will be the first step in putting Parliament on the right track.

Mr John McAllion (Dundee East) (Lab): On a point of order. If—as all the parties in Parliament claim—each member has a free vote at the end of the debate, why do party spokespeople have twice

as much speaking time as other members? In the debate, they speak for nobody but themselves.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That does not affect the free vote, Mr McAllion. Watch the timings as we move through the debate.

We move now to open debate. To inform that debate I will, for obvious reasons, call the four members of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body. Robert Brown will speak later and Des McNulty will speak first. You have four minutes plus intervention time.

15:57

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): Large public buildings have always been subject to controversy. There is no doubt about that, but we have rarely heard such a tirade of hyperbole, misinterpretation and misrepresentation as we have heard from Mr Russell and Mr McLetchie today.

If we examine the history books, we see that Glasgow city chambers and the Westminster Parliament building were as controversial in their day as Holyrood is today.

Phil Gallie: Will the member give way?

Des McNulty: No, not at the moment.

In *The Times* of 18 June 1849, those who were building the Houses of Parliament were obliged to

"endeavour to cause every new arrangement to be made with a view to the strictest economy by postponing such proportions of the buildings that are not absolutely necessary, and even by the sacrifice of the highly decorative style in the fittings, fixtures &c., which forms the basis for the estimates of that branch of expenditure."

They had the same problems and addressed the same issues.

I believe in Miralles's design. One of the issues that we must examine is the architectural merit of the building. We must also examine its suitability for the purpose for which it has been designed. If Miralles's design is effected as it has been agreed, our Parliament building will enter the world league of international importance. It will make the work of Parliament accessible to the people.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): I am obliged to Des McNulty for giving way.

There has been much talk about MSPs and our needs, and passing reference has been made to the needs of the people—in particular, members of the public who are able to attend debates in the chamber. I understand that 520 members of the public have attended today's debate—the capacity of the gallery is 456. Is Des aware that the proposed capacity of the gallery in the Holyrood chamber is 170? Is not that inadequate and

undemocratic?

Des McNulty: Public accessibility to all the workings of the Parliament, including the committees, is substantially greater in the new buildings. That has been one of the clear objectives of the design.

There are legitimate concerns about cost, especially because so many different estimates have been produced.

Ms MacDonald: Des mentioned his admiration for Señor Miralles's design. I have no doubt that there are many aspects of it that lots of us will like, but can he assure us, as a member of the SPCB, that Señor Miralles is still the designer? There seems to be some doubt about that.

Des McNulty: I can give that absolute assurance. Miralles has done a tremendous amount of work in conjunction with RMJM in carrying forward the design and getting it to the point where it can be finalised in detail within the next month or two. That is the assurance that has been given. The points made by Mike Russell, who said the opposite, are simply wrong.

The figures produced by the corporate body, which have been validated by John Spencely's report, reveal the true cost of creating a building that will meet the needs of the Scottish Parliament. The redesign of the chamber, which many MSPs advocated and on which they were fully consulted, has contributed to cost escalation. There is no doubt about that. If members want to explain why costs have gone up, the redesign of the chamber was a cause. It cost four months in time and a substantial amount of money.

Dorothy-Grace Elder *rose—*

Phil Gallie: Will the member give way?

Des McNulty: I am sorry, but I will carry on.

Dorothy-Grace Elder: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: He is not taking interventions.

Des McNulty: There were also problems, given the state of the building, with converting Queensberry House, which no politician could reasonably have anticipated in June 1999. That is not anybody's fault. By far the biggest contributory factor has been the demands from elected members for more support in carrying out their functions. Those demands have come from all sources. They have come from committees. They have come from members wanting legal support for putting forward bills. They have come from people wanting additional support in the chamber office.

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland)

(Con): Will Mr McNulty confirm what the Conservative group asked for?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr McNulty, please respond, and then close.

Des McNulty: The Conservative group has a resource centre, and that is to be accommodated in the new building. That is my understanding.

The Scottish Parliament has been in existence for barely nine months. We have a much better grasp now than we did in June of what is required to make the Parliament function effectively. The corporate body took that change in circumstances into account in developing the design brief. We would have been culpable if we had not done so.

Finally, turning to Donald Gorrie's amendment, I do not accept the arguments for delay. The reality is that, thanks to the Spencely report and the work of the design team, we now have more information than we have ever had about this design. Even if we were to look at other sites at this stage, the amount of information that could be gathered about them in the time available would be nothing like what we now have about Holyrood. I argue that we should proceed.

16:03

Mr Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP): The truth is that the original budget for this devolved Parliament did not have any basis in its actual work load or needs. The original capital and revenue estimates that were allocated were completely inadequate. With direct daily control over revenue budgeting, the corporate body has ensured proper revenue resourcing for Parliament and its committees to allow them to do their work, but control over Holyrood capital spending has always been indirect and reported through a project team. Therefore, corporate body decision making was always dependent on the accuracy of the information that was supplied to it. From June 1999 to February 2000, the project team held to its statement that the £109 million budget agreed by Parliament, and its estimates of timing, were accurate. That was what was reported to Parliament in good faith by the Presiding Officer.

Brian Adam (North-East Scotland) (SNP): In connection with the overall capital budget, can Mr Welsh assure us, as a member of the corporate body, that any future reports that may be made on this project, or on any others that we may decide on later today, will demonstrate the total of public expenditure? As I understand it, the landscaping and road changes are to be funded by other public bodies, but those funds will come out of the public purse nevertheless.

Mr Welsh: The corporate body is acting on the Spencely report and I am sure that we will take

Brian Adam's advice and try to ensure that future reporting is as accurate as possible.

The minutes clearly show that the corporate body consistently asked about timing and costing. The Spencely report reveals both a massive failure in communication and that the corporate body was not properly informed. When the all-party, non-partisan corporate body received revised costs, it acted immediately to commission the Spencely report, to make the findings available to the Parliament and to allow MSPs to debate the issue.

George Lyon *rose*—

Mr Welsh: The corporate body also gave MSPs direct access to Mr Spencely and the design and project teams.

Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab) *rose*—

Mr Welsh: As an extra safeguard, I asked Audit Scotland to undertake an in-depth, detailed study and to report back to Parliament.

The original £50 million capital budget was inadequate—

George Lyon *rose*—

Karen Gillon *rose*—

Mr Welsh: I have very limited time and wish to finish my speech. [MEMBERS: "Give way."] I will give way.

Karen Gillon: Given that Mr Welsh is a member of the corporate body and is legally responsible for the completion of the Holyrood project, will he clarify whether he will vote for Gordon Jackson's amendment on a free vote, or will he be whipped to vote for Donald Gorrie's amendment?

Mr Welsh: I have a free vote and I will let the member know my answer in due course.

Members of the corporate body are jointly responsible for the Holyrood project. We have all tried to ensure that Parliament receives the maximum information—a point on which I insisted and on which I shall continue to insist.

George Lyon *rose*—

Mr Welsh: The original £50 million estimate was totally inadequate, as was the estimate of £109 million. Now, the project team has given a new figure of £195 million, before the brief has been settled. No one can guarantee that the £195 million budget will deliver what it is supposed to deliver. We now know the accurate space and staff requirements and the contractors now have expertise on the site and experience of the site. We require a budget that is guaranteed to deliver and that will meet the needs. Producing a building that does not match up to those requirements simply stores up unnecessary trouble for the

future.

Dr Simpson *rose*—

Mr Welsh: The Gorrie amendment allows Holyrood to continue, while costing out alternative sites. [MEMBERS: "Aha."] If Holyrood is the best value for money, it will be seen as such, but it must be able to stand up on its own merits and it must be seen to stand up against alternatives that could guarantee to meet our space and staff needs.

George Lyon *rose*—

Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab) *rose*—

Mr Welsh: The problem is that, so far, we have been denied that choice, which has not been put properly to the Parliament.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. We cannot have three members standing simultaneously.

Mr Welsh: This decision is rightly one for Parliament to make. The corporate body will follow whatever Parliament decides to do. Parliament's choice will end this debate once and for all—what Parliament decides must now be delivered. I will vote according to my conscience and on the facts before members.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call John Young, who is the third speaker from the corporate body.

16:08

John Young (West of Scotland) (Con): Frederick the Great said, "If you try to defend everything, you end up defending nothing".

When I became a member of the corporate body, a colleague told me that I had been handed a poisoned chalice. He was wrong in a sense—some would say that we were handed several poisoned chalices.

We were elected as MSPs on 6 May 1999 and, 26 days later, before any committees were established, the corporate body came into being. Under a list of contract headings, we found that we were responsible for 50 different types of contract, overseeing 11 major functions, including property, staff and services. The corporate body was responsible for using such powers as borrowing sums of sterling, arranging overdrafts and so on. Other responsibilities involved Crown body immunities, building legislation, allowance facilities, data protection, the parliamentary shop, the parliamentary logo and a number of other items. At the same time—like the rest of the chamber—we were trying to come to terms with being MSPs.

In addition, we became responsible for the most complex construction project ever developed north of the border. All those responsibilities were to be carried out by the Presiding Officer, four other MSPs and the two Deputy Presiding Officers, who also attend the corporate body meetings—a grand total of seven MSPs. Some members will remember a film called “The Magnificent Seven” from a few years ago. Their task was simple when compared with the task faced by the corporate body seven.

On 1 April, Brian Wilson, the Minister of State at the Scotland Office, said that Donald Dewar was not a glorified clerk of works. I have news for Brian Wilson: members of the SPCB are not glorified clerks of works either—we are not even unglorified clerks of works.

That brings me to the crux of the matter. From the beginning, there should have been a full-time project-progressing committee. Spencely clearly identifies that. Most of us on the SPCB believed early on that there was a missing link somewhere. The corporate body finally agreed unanimously that an independent assessment should be commissioned, of which Mr Spencely was the author.

David Whitton was quoted, on 30 March, as saying that the last time the First Minister had anything to do with the project was last year. We know that the First Minister has a lot on his plate, but could he have absolutely nothing to do with this huge endeavour? I doubt it. Mr Whitton went on to say that the figures that were given by Donald last year were given to him by his officials. He added that the First Minister did not pluck those figures out of the air. Fair enough, but neither did members of the corporate body. If Mr Dewar could not get realistic figures, who else would have a hope of getting them?

In May 1998, Mr Bill Armstrong, who was highly experienced and had a reputation for getting things done, was appointed project manager. He resigned in December 1998, only seven months after being appointed. A newspaper report stated that he was frustrated. Indeed, by September 1998 there had been virtually no progress, and by late 1998 costs were already climbing.

The First Minister, when he was Secretary of State for Scotland, considered three potential sites—Leith, Haymarket and Calton Hill. He was then advised of Holyrood’s availability. A question arises over the selection: did he alone make the choice, or did he consult officials or anyone else? It would be interesting to know. The architectural competition took place and 80-odd applicants were shortlisted to six—including Americans, Australians and one Spaniard. Mr Miralles was the winner.

The ingredients were present, but requirement requests were coming in from various quarters—including the media. I am speaking now as a member of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body and in no way with political bias. I can say that the Conservatives had the minimum requirement requests—and I would have named the party if it had been Labour, the Liberal Democrats or the SNP. If we had not stopped and listened to the applications, we would have been accused of not listening. There were problems with securing off-site accommodation for staff over the long term, but Sir David Steel dealt adequately with that.

Karen Gillon: Will John Young give way?

John Young: No, I am on my last minute.

Then some Westminster MSPs started to come into the frame—pretty rich when one considers that they let Portcullis House costs soar from £147 million to £247 million. No wonder they included a £13.6 million bomb-proof shelter. The cost of headquarters for MI6 soared from £252 million to £547 million; the European Parliament’s costs soared; the millennium dome costs soared.

I have considerable respect for Donald Gorrie, who was an Edinburgh councillor and MP before he became an MSP. I have spent some time looking at the Old Royal High School and St Andrew’s House, which now has the caption “Scottish Executive” above the main doorway and is—along with other offices—undergoing a refurbishment programme that is due for completion in 2001. The Mound site is not worth considering, but the Calton Hill site may be a possibility. However, can the information be obtained in time; what is the estimated cost of the operation; and would there be an effect on whether the Holyrood site works?

Finally, it is worth making the point that, apart from the European Parliament, new Parliaments in other countries normally have appropriate accommodation. We are the only Parliament in the world that sits in rented accommodation: no other Parliament has had to put up with that.

I am not a builder or an architect, but the first time I walked into Queensberry House it was in an appalling condition. I wonder why Historic Scotland did not ask questions when, for three years, that building was under the control of City of Edinburgh Council. Why has Historic Scotland come trotting along now to the Parliament?

To cite Churchill’s edict: “Action this day”. It is up to the 129 MSPs to make a decision on a parliamentary complex—wherever it is—that must last 100 years.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Tommy Sheridan raised a point of order about his missing

amendment. That is a matter purely for the two of us. I am not setting a precedent, but Tommy has four minutes in which to speak.

16:15

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): I am disappointed that the amendment that I submitted to Donald Gorrie's amendment has not been accepted for debate because I agree with the sentiments of Donald Gorrie and others that we need time to pause and reflect on what has been a serious and costly mistake for the people of Scotland.

It is disappointing that, in the course of analysis of the other options that have been mentioned today, this Parliament is not being given the chance to vote on whether to consider the option of building the Parliament in Glasgow. Glasgow has been completely isolated in the consideration of sites for the Scottish Parliament. All the answers to the questions of office accommodation, space, transport links and links to the media lie within the former Strathclyde Regional Council headquarters in India Street. Its 150,000 sq ft are available and integrated with the Glasgow High School building.

Together, those buildings would have provided an excellent parliamentary village that would have suited Scotland and regenerated Glasgow. I remind the Parliament that the overall cost would have been £100 million and that that is at least £100 million less than what is being proposed today. After analysing that option for eight weeks, the Parliament might have decided that Glasgow was not the best option and that Holyrood or Calton Hill was the most suitable. The sad fact, however, is that the Parliament was not even prepared to give consideration to Glasgow at all. That is anti-democratic and anti-Glasgow.

With regard to Gordon Jackson's amendment, I have to say that I and some of my colleagues were unsure whether he was speaking in his previous professional capacity or as an MSP. He was reputed to be—and I would not question that reputation—one of Scotland's top criminal defence lawyers and what he was doing today was defending a top crime. In 1997, the figure for the Parliament was between £10 million and £40 million. In 1998, it was £90 million. In 1999, it was £109 million. Now, in 2000, it is between £195 and £230 million.

Many council leaders and direct labour organisation workers in Scotland will be sick at the fact that they are redundant because they overshot budgets by £1 million or £2 million, yet this Parliament has overshot by more than £100 million. The First Minister should take responsibility for what has been an expenditure

disaster.

Dr Simpson: The Glasgow cost of £100 million was based on a 20,000 sq m project, but the requirement is now for 31,000 sq m. I ask Mr Sheridan the same question that I asked earlier and which I will continue to ask of those who oppose Gordon Jackson's amendment: what reduction in the size of the Parliament does he propose that will allow the Parliament to function and fulfil the needs of the Scottish people?

Tommy Sheridan: Mr Simpson is guilty of not having all the facts before he makes his intervention. The Glasgow option has not been considered; that is the problem. The Glasgow option provides more than any of the other options that have been considered at a cheaper cost. That fact has not been considered by this Parliament because of what is, in effect, Edinburgh establishment snobbery. That is a sad state of affairs, especially considering that we have a First Minister who bides in Glasgow and represents a Glasgow constituency.

This Parliament made a grave mistake last year when it went ahead with a project that we were told would cost £109 million, a sum that is £9 million too much. Let us remember what £100 million means to the people of Scotland: it means 4,500 nurses, 4,500 teachers, 4,500 firefighters, or 60 new primary schools.

Let us put this discussion into a wee bit of perspective: what is most important is what this Parliament does, not how good it looks, not who designed it and not the architectural brilliance. That is why we should have a limit of £100 million for this Parliament. At the very least, we should pause now for reflection.

16:20

Mike Watson (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): That was a quite deplorable speech by Tommy Sheridan—I say that as a Glasgow representative. Let me say clearly that only the last part of his speech had any relevance at all: he said that there should be a pause for reflection. That is not what I believe, but it was at least a legitimate point. The rest of his speech was pure populist rhetoric, which was nonsense. I am a Glasgow MSP and I would love to see the Parliament in Glasgow—I am sorry, Tommy, but generations ago, Glasgow was not made the capital city of Scotland. We are in the capital city of Scotland and, in any country, the Parliament should be in the capital city. Having the Parliament in Glasgow is romantic nonsense. That is no disrespect to Glasgow; it is merely disrespect to you, Tommy.

I support Gordon Jackson's amendment, for a number of reasons. I have not, however, been impressed by the defence put forward by

members of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body. We have to be big enough to accept that we as a Parliament put its members in charge in June last year. Therefore, if there is responsibility, we members share it, because that was our decision. If those on the corporate body were not exactly asleep at the wheel, they were certainly gazing out of the side windows for quite a bit of the journey.

I do not think that John Young's contribution was particularly helpful. What about the questions that he finished with? Where was he when those questions should have been asked? Why did he not ask them? They were perfectly legitimate questions, and he had loads of chances to ask them.

We have to move forward, and I am not convinced that it would be of benefit if we were to pause now, even if we came up with workable options for the Mound site. I am sorry, but this is not a suitable long-term chamber for the Parliament. We will have to leave and return to it every year. It is cramped, whatever members may like to say. In reference to Fergus Ewing's speech, there is indeed enough room for the public here, but there is not enough room to conduct any kind of meetings: members cannot meet constituents; we cannot properly and appropriately meet organisations that wish to lobby us.

Alex Neil: Will Mike Watson take an intervention?

Mike Watson: I will take one intervention only.

Alex Neil: As convener of the Finance Committee, does Mike Watson agree with Mr Spencely, who says, in paragraph 4.3.8:

"the Project design is less settled than it was in March 1999 . . . the estimate for the basic construction cost is less reliable than it was in May 1999"

How can he say, on the basis of that statement, what kind of Parliament we will get for £195 million?

Mike Watson: It is interesting that Alex Neil quotes Spencely—Gordon Jackson's amendment calls on us to endorse the Spencely report. If Alex wants to endorse the report, he should support what Gordon Jackson advocates.

I will quote back a bit of the Spencely report to Alex Neil:

"the present state of the Project has nothing, in my opinion, to do with the location of the site.

Changing the site would mean starting again . . . Time would be lost and this would cost money. The money invested in the Project to date would be largely thrown away."

It has already been shown that £20 million has been spent; the cost of ending the project now would be anything between £16 million and £30

million. That is a figure of £50 million—can Alex Neil say that either of the other options would cost less than £145 million, the net cost? I bet he cannot. The site of the Mound and the associated buildings is not appropriate. Calton Hill is not big enough for what we want to do. There is not enough room there—that has been admitted by its supporters. I have been on record saying that I was a supporter of Calton Hill in 1998, when Donald Dewar first made his suggestion. I now see that Calton Hill is not suitable for the project.

Mr Salmond: Is Mike Watson aware that the St Andrew's House/Regent Road project was 25,000 sq m while the Holyrood project is 16,000 sq m? It is not just the Royal High School building, but a development of St Andrew's House/Regent Road. Has Mike Watson even seen the designs?

Mike Watson: Yes, I have seen the designs, and I am aware that it is not just the Royal High School building. I am also aware that we would need to build a brand new chamber for the Parliament. What would happen to the civil servants based at St Andrew's House and the other buildings that they occupy?

We have to inject a dose of realism into the debate and stop the point scoring that we have had so far. Donald Dewar has been criticised for having made a decision on where the building should be sited when he was Secretary of State for Scotland. That decision was made in an attempt to ensure that, in the first session of this Parliament, we would have a new building to move into. He would have been hammered if he had not made that decision in his role as Secretary of State for Scotland and we had come here on day one with nowhere to go.

As Sir David Steel said, the building that we are in was taken on for two years. I have a great deal of time for Donald Gorrie and Margo MacDonald. I know that they are not trying to score party political points, but they have two things in common. One is that they both support Donald Gorrie's amendment and the other is that they have been categorically and implacably opposed to Holyrood from day one. That is where they are coming from, albeit from an acceptably non-political standpoint.

If we are to move ahead on the project, we must do so now. It would be intolerable to go through the whole first session of the Scottish Parliament without moving into the new building. We can still do that. Of course nobody can absolutely guarantee that the final figure will be £195 million—what project can honestly be absolutely guaranteed?—but Gordon Jackson's amendment puts the emphasis clearly on those continuing with the project to stick within the parameters and the time scale. That is why the amendment in the name of Gordon Jackson is worthy of support.

16:26

Brian Adam (North-East Scotland) (SNP): I want to speak about three things: time, choice and space.

First, I want to talk about time. As a nation, Scotland has been around for more than a millennium, for by far the greater part of that as an independent country. For at least a century, there was a debate about whether we were going to reconvene our Parliament. I am delighted that we have and I am delighted to be here. However, the debate was not about the kind of building that we would have, where it would be or how much it would cost; it was about the kind of Parliament that we would have.

One of the things that has, to some extent, turned the people against us in recent times is the fact that we have ended up debating how much we are going to spend on ourselves, how much we will spend on the Parliament—dare I say it—section 28 and, if Mike Watson will forgive me, the fox hunting bill. Those issues are not the highest priority for the people out there. I hope that we can distance ourselves from apportioning blame, although that will undoubtedly be part and parcel of the overall debate, and get down to the practicalities of what we need and when we need it.

The Parliament has been elected for four years. I hesitate in saying this, but some of us might not be here after the next election. It might be that there is a certain incentive for those in power and who have influence to deliver the Parliament building within the time scale, but it is not necessarily the time scale in which the people are interested. They are interested in what the Parliament can deliver for them, not the building. A little pause for reflection would be no bad thing, so that we can decide what we want to do about the Parliament building.

We should take a longer-term perspective—not the short-term perspective that many of us in politics are used to—to get the quality of building to which Gordon Jackson referred, although I do not think that his route is the best one to ensure that we get there.

I always thought that choice was what politics was about. Unfortunately, in the past couple of decades, the choice that has been presented in politics in Scotland is not, “What would you like?” but, “How would you like to get what I want to give you?” That is the kind of choice that we are being presented with now. If we go along with Gordon Jackson’s amendment, the choice will be whether we accept the Holyrood building willingly or grudgingly. That is not the kind of choice that made me get involved in politics.

I much prefer the choice that is being offered to

us by Donald Gorrie, which is a realistic choice that measures one option against another and does not just say, “Take it or leave it.” I wholeheartedly support the amendment in the name of Donald Gorrie, but not from a political, partisan point of view, although I am one of the whips. There have been constant interventions and mutterings from Duncan McNeil, trying to score points by suggesting that members are being whipped into position. I can assure members that the Scottish National party has not been whipped on the issue; it is a free vote.

I do not have a fixed view as to whether we should favour Calton Hill, as Alex Salmond does, the present site or Holyrood. However, I do have a view on how the matter is perceived by the people. There are a lot of people in the gallery today. That number will be significantly reduced under the proposal before us today. Des McNulty made the point that overall there will be greater access for the public. However, I believe that the people want to see the major debates, such as this one. If we are reducing the access to a third of what it is currently, we will not get a great debate.

Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab): Will the member give us an estimate of the cost he anticipates would be involved in preparing design briefs for three separate sites, to inform the public of what the potential costs of Mr Gorrie’s amendment might be?

Brian Adam: The basis for a number of those briefs is in existence already—Donald Dewar commissioned them. He made a choice on that, although until now he has not allowed us the opportunity to debate those options. All we need is a little more work on that.

I do not wish to take away any more time from other members who wish to contribute to the debate, so I will close now.

16:30

Alex Fergusson (South of Scotland) (Con): The warning was there for all to see when the concept of the Holyrood Parliament was first unveiled. It was, we were told, a concept based on upturned boats, but—as the ever-sceptical press reminded us at the time—it has turned out to be more reminiscent of a shipwreck. For once, the press was right.

From the moment when the concept was unveiled—perhaps even since the Holyrood site was first chosen as the then secretary of state’s personal choice—this parliamentary voyage has been destined to run aground on the beach of incompetence and mismanagement.

I am sure that, if it goes ahead, the project will not be a functional disaster. However, for ever in

the minds of the Scottish electorate, it will have been a financial disaster. No matter how the figures are explained and no matter how much we are told that building costs do not include VAT, fees or fitting-out costs or how much we hear any other obfuscating terminology, the incontrovertible fact remains: from the devolution referendum onwards, the Scottish electorate was sold the idea of a new Parliament on the basis that it would cost between £10 million and £40 million.

It was, therefore, in the spirit of the much-vaunted but yet to be witnessed new politics that I spent much of the year prior to the election, as I went about the business of being a candidate in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, trying to help Mr Dewar out of his increasingly difficult predicament. Wherever I went, I was asked the same question: "Will the new Parliament really cost as much as £40 million?" "Not a chance," I replied, at meeting after meeting, week after week. "It will cost at least £100 million." For once, I was right, as was proved by the First Minister's admission in the chamber on 17 June last year.

We have now reached the stage where, if the final cost of the Parliament is to be the £230 million upper level that is mentioned in the Spencely report, the VAT alone will come to £40 million—coincidentally the figure at which the Parliament was first sold to the Scottish electorate. It is incredible that we have witnessed a 500 per cent rise in estimated cost over a period when our national Government will boast to anyone prepared to listen that inflation is at 2 per cent.

It is worth noting that the good people of Dumfries and Galloway only narrowly agreed to the establishment of the Parliament in the first place. Members can imagine the mood of any meetings that I attend now. That feeling is echoed wherever I go within and without the region that I represent and at whatever type of meeting I attend. Within the past 12 days, as well as my normal surgeries, I have been at meetings with gamekeepers in Perth, National Farmers Union members in Stirling and the poverty action group in Carlisle—Castle Douglas, I beg members' pardon. [*Laughter.*] I do not go that far out of my region.

On each and every occasion, the subject of the cost of the Parliament has been brought up by those present—not by me, but by members of the electorate who are feeling cheated, let down and in many cases downright angry that, yet again, we politicians have given the impression that we can be neither trusted nor believed.

That is the reality for which the First Minister must take responsibility and it must be an awesome responsibility. Sir David Steel can say as often as he likes that the buck stops with him, but it started with the then secretary of state and it

is on his shoulders that it must remain.

We are now being asked to note the Spencely report and—basically—to get on with it. I would gladly do that if I could be convinced that the £200 million approximate cost bore favourable comparison with the alternatives that are available. That is what the Gorrie amendment, to which I am a co-signatory, is all about. It is a constructive amendment, allowing us, as responsible MSPs, to make an informed decision, not on conjecture or empty promises, but on proper cost comparisons, with the correct amount of robust information that is needed for such a decision.

Lewis Macdonald: Will the member give way?

Alex Fergusson: I am sorry, but I have to wind up.

One of the downsides of being elected to the Parliament is that I have had to rehouse my mother—if members had met my mother, they would know why that is a downside. Consequently, I am altering a cottage for her in her home village in South Ayrshire.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Patricia Ferguson): Please wind up.

Alex Fergusson: The concept of the alteration was priced at a certain amount. The design was costed within the same amount, despite changes to the original concept, and the final cost will not exceed that amount. I understand that, the architect understands that and the contractors understand that. If honesty had prevailed and the new Parliament building had been originally costed at £150 million, the people of Scotland would have understood that.

Elaine Thomson (Aberdeen North) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Alex Fergusson: I have to wind up.

The way in which the project has been handled since its inception reeks of incompetence and mismanagement. Donald Gorrie's amendment gives us an excellent chance to put that right. I urge members to take that chance.

16:36

Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab): Listening to today's debate, particularly Donald Gorrie's speech, and re-reading the debate from June, I am reminded of the film "Groundhog Day". In the film, the main character continually repeats the same experiences time and again. The only difference is that in the film, the main character eventually learns that he is repeating the same experiences and tries to move forward. That is something that we can learn and that is what Gordon Jackson's amendment proposes.

Mr Salmond: I was re-reading the same debate and I was struck by the fact that many of the things suggested last June by Mr Gorrie have come to pass. Does the member acknowledge that fact?

Bristow Muldoon: One of the things that Mr Gorrie suggested last June was that the building should be a parliamentary issue on which members should make individual decisions. That is something in which he has been sadly mistaken, given that all the SNP members and the Tories, supposedly without a whip, voted in exactly the same way. [*Interruption.*] The rare appearance of Mr Salmond in the chamber and the co-ordinated behaviour of the Tories and the nationalists on the issue indicate whether today's vote will progress on a partisan basis.

Mr McLetchie, who referred to Orwellian doublespeak, went on to demonstrate his own Orwellian tendencies by trying to airbrush the involvement of a Conservative on the SPCB out of history. Mr McLetchie and Mr Young should accept their responsibility for any increase in the costs during the past year.

David McLetchie: Members of the SPCB had no idea of the mounting costs of the Parliament over the past nine months. How can Mr Young or any of the other members of the SPCB accept responsibility for that? How could they make a decision without being given the proper information?

Bristow Muldoon: The members of the SPCB were in a position to ask questions of those who were presenting the options. [*Interruption.*]

Mr Russell also tries to airbrush history by putting the blame for any redesign of the chamber on Mr McLeish. However, I refer members to Mr Russell's speech in the June debate. Mr Russell spoke well before Mr McLeish and said:

"The issue of the chamber is essential. I will briefly quote from the report by Mr Miralles. Mr Miralles talks about the chamber as being somewhere where MSPs could embrace each other. I see little sign of that happening here. He complains about the tendency for Parliaments to seat members of the assembly facing a wall."—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1999; Vol 1, c 531.]

It was Mr Russell who first introduced that issue into the debate.

Ms MacDonald: Will the member take a point of information?

Bristow Muldoon: I have already taken several interventions and I want to press on.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please wind up.

Bristow Muldoon: The other issue concerns the approach of SNP members and whether they have been whipped on the matter. During the debate in June, Linda Fabiani indicated that she

agreed that Scotland's new Parliament should have a new building. She went on to say that she adored Señor Miralles's design, yet she voted against it.

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): I still like Señor Miralles's design. What I do not like is the incompetence of the client management of the project.

Bristow Muldoon: I am sure that Linda Fabiani will accept that there is an SNP member of the SPCB.

Like Mike Watson, I believe that we should be concerned by the increase in costs that has taken place, that we should learn lessons from that increase and that we should put in place procedures to ensure that costs are controlled in the future. That is exactly what the amendment in the name of Gordon Jackson would do. If we support that amendment, we will finalise the design, put a ceiling of £195 million on the budget and tighten up the control of the project, through the establishment of a progress group. I encourage members of all parties who support the design to support the amendment.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Christine Grahame and ask her to keep her speech as short as possible.

16:40

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I shall.

I know an elephant when I see one and I know a shambles when I see one. This is not an elephant—the Holyrood project is a shambles. Sir David Steel suggested named rooms—I know crisis management when I see it. For the first time—courtesy of the Spencely report—the Parliament has the mistakes, mismanagement and misleading laid bare before it.

The table at paragraph 4.2.3 provides us with a rich mine of information. Nugget one is the figure of £49.53 million in the first column, above which there is nothing—no figure for Queensberry House, a catalogue of errors if ever there was one. Are Simpson and Brown at the other end of a writ? No. Can we see that survey? No. Does Spencely think that we should go ahead with Queensberry House? No. He couches it in very careful words, but in paragraph 6.7.1 he says:

"In my opinion, the expenditure on Queensberry House, at an estimated £10-£11 million, is not value for money when compared with the benefit gained."

He goes on to say that we would end up with a 21st century building, which would be nothing like the listed building.

In the table at paragraph 4.2.3, there is not even

a reference to an MSP block. We are not talking about changing sizes—we are talking about a whole area that did not exist. Where were we going to work from—tents on Arthur's seat? That is what I call misleading, to say the very least.

I accept the First Minister's explanation that he was told about the extra costs on top of the £109 million figure of June last year, but I want to know why he did not ask whether the figures that he had been given represented the worst possible scenario and whether there was anything that he ought to know.

Here is the second nugget. In the first column of the table at paragraph 4.2.3, there is something called "Design risk assessment". That is a funny thing to find—it means the client changing their mind all the time. So many millions have to be built in for that. That is the important issue in this debate, because we do not yet have an agreed scheme design. I refer members to paragraph 5.4 of the report, where Spencely makes a key point:

"It is clearly imperative that the Brief is frozen now and that the Design Team proceeds immediately to produce a Scheme Design including a cost plan to a Brief and a budget approved by the Client, so that approval may be given to proceed with the Project by 8 June 2000".

We do not have an agreed design, so we do not have a budget that can be approved.

To me, those are basic contractual requirements. It is as obvious to me as the effects of the proverbial elephant in the proverbial china shop that to sign up to the motion that is before us today would be to sign a blank cheque for a building without an agreed design. That might be fine if that blank cheque were not being drawn from the block grant. As Tommy Sheridan said, it is additional and indeterminate money, from the pockets of such people—

Des McNulty *rose*—

Christine Grahame: That is rich from Des McNulty, who never gives way to anybody. We are talking about money from pockets of the auxiliary nurse on £140 per week take-home pay and from the resources that would allow the transfer of elderly patients who are stuck in hospitals because there are no funds in the social work budgets to pay for residential care. The First Minister may be prepared to do that, but I am not.

At last, in the Spencely report, we have a glimpse of that famous transparency and accountability. Let us see the whole picture. Let us see the finalised costs of the Holyrood project and comparisons with alternatives. It is a simple plea.

We need complete information. Duncan McNeil has left the chamber but, for his sake, let me make it plain that I am not whipped. I have no hidden agenda. If Holyrood comes up tops, I will go for it,

but let common sense—which has not featured so far—prevail. Let us stop saving face and save some millions.

16:45

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): We have heard about chains of deception and poisoned chalices, and now we have an elephant in a china shop. I would like to bring a few words of good sense from the north highlands, and I shall support Gordon Jackson's amendment.

As many members know, my wife is disabled. Winnie Ewing was making nods of agreement about how accessible this place is to the general public, but I can assure her that it is not, and I speak from personal experience. Anyone who has had the trouble that I and my family have been through of humphing my good lady up and down those steps—with plenty of help from parliamentary staff—will know that it is not easy. That is one bad point that shows why we should not stay in this place, and one reason why I cannot support Donald Gorrie's amendment.

Let us turn to the Royal High School and Calton Hill. Those of us who were involved in the Scottish Constitutional Convention know only too well that, underneath, Calton Hill is a rabbit warren of a place and completely unsuited to being a Parliament. There has been a wee bit of shifting of ground among opponents of Holyrood on that matter. At first, they wanted to go for the Royal High School, but they were persuaded that it was not a good idea because the traffic was a problem. Now, any cabby in town will tell you that the traffic is not a problem.

Mr Salmond: Will Mr Stone give way?

Mr Stone: No, I will not. The question of where to put the civil servants who would have to be taken out of St Andrews House is pertinent. I wonder how big the bill would be for that.

Although Donald Gorrie is my good friend and colleague—we drink pints of Guinness together—I think that his amendment is something of a Trojan horse, in which resides that unholy alliance of the SNP and Conservative armies. Margo MacDonald and Donald Gorrie have been honest enough to admit that they are agin Holyrood, and they have never been anything else. There are other members, however, who would like to damage the project for political gain. The hypocrisy is that many members of those two parties secretly want the project to go ahead, but they are prepared to let other people do the dirty work for them, put their heads above the parapet and take the flak.

I will stand up and be counted. Donald Gorrie said that we should look forward and not back. He

referred to what I might or might not say to my children and grandchildren. It will be with great pleasure in the years to come that I shall take my children and grandchildren to see the new parliament at Holyrood, and I shall be proud to say that I played a part in it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now move to closing speeches. I call Miss Annabel Goldie to wind up for the Conservative party.

It appears that she is not here.

The Deputy Minister for Rural Affairs (Mr John Home Robertson): She has changed her mind.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): We understood that the First Minister would make his contribution before the winding-up speeches.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is not the case. We were expecting Miss Goldie to close for the Conservatives.

Mr Salmond: Perhaps I should speak now.

Members: She is here.

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Justice (Mr Jim Wallace): I know a shambles when I see one.

Mr Salmond: I give way to Annabel.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We were about to start without you, Miss Goldie. Welcome back. You have five minutes.

16:49

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): I am sorry, Presiding Officer. I was—metaphorically—in the embrace of a minister.

George Lyon: On a point of order. Why do the parties have winding-up speeches? Surely only those who are supporting the amendments should be winding up, as we are debating a back-bench motion and amendments.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is of interest to the public and the Parliament to know the views of the parties on these matters. Miss Goldie is to wind up for the Conservatives.

Miss Goldie: Thank you, Presiding Officer. I would like to begin—

Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): On a point of order. Could you please explain your ruling on George Lyon's point of order? As I understand it, this is not a party-based debate. There is no party whipping. Every MSP is voting as an individual.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Those things are not related, Mr Rumbles, and I do not have to

explain my ruling to you.

Miss Goldie: I am beginning to wish that I had remained in the embrace of the minister.

I speak in support of Mr Gorrie's amendment. I do so because I feel that MSPs are on a test of trust with the Scottish people. The people in the galleries of this chamber, and the people out beyond, will look keenly both at our judgment on where our new Parliament should be, and at how much it will cost. Unless an investigation of the other options is made, there is a grave risk that the new Parliament will be identified as a product of self-interested, self-indulgent and profligate MSPs.

I do not affect to be Gypsy Rose Lee. It never entered my head when I spoke in the chamber in June last year that I should require to utter the same words again, more than nine months later, with perhaps a more chilling relevance. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry, Presiding Officer. It is a little difficult to concentrate with a kind of fairground going on in the background.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I agree. I ask members to respect Miss Goldie's right to continue.

Miss Goldie: I recall that, for expressing views in support of Mr Gorrie's amendment last June, I and other colleagues were chided and rebuked. When we spoke of other options, we were told that the cost of a two-month delay would be between £2 million and £3 million. Is not hindsight wonderful? That figure seems like a drop of water in the ocean in comparison with the figures that we are now speaking of.

Last June, we agreed—by a very narrow margin—that the Holyrood project should proceed within a time scale and within cost estimates that were detailed in the Presiding Officer's note. That amount of money was £109 million.

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Miss Goldie: If Helen Eadie does not mind, I am reluctant to give way because I was badly delayed by the disturbances.

We now know that the cost of £109 million was understated, apparently by £27 million, because of design risk costs. We now learn that the figure has escalated to perhaps £230 million, or perhaps £190 million, or perhaps £195 million.

The debate this afternoon is about much more than votes on a building. It has become far more than an exchange of views about who wanted what, who said what, why silent secret costs crept up and up, who knew what, and—more pertinently—who did not know what. In the perception of the public, this project has become a farce. Something insidious is happening: the

public is making a judgment on the Parliament itself. It affords me little comfort to repeat some of the comments that I have heard recently from members of the public: "what a shower", or "they are out of control" or "who do they think they are?" The public are looking at an institution that has become associated with costs and rising costs; that has a huge swathe of ministers; that has legions of advisers; that has embraced the controversy of section 28; that allows a Lord Advocate to hop off and become a judge; that seems to be obsessed with fox-hunting; and that has presided over crises in our civil and criminal courts.

It is small wonder that the public use epithets such as "what a shower" and "out of control". That is a judgment on the First Minister and the Executive. Leadership could, and should, have come from them. Although today we may take a vote on a building and where it should or should not be, at issue is something far greater. At issue is the integrity of this institution. The questions that we must all consider before we vote should be these: how do we begin to redeem ourselves in the eyes of the public, and how do we start to restore credibility and respect?

If the advice that was proffered to this chamber in June last year by Mr Gorrie and others had been heeded, we would not be in this situation today. The building of a Parliament has now become just a detail of the problem. The only way of starting back on the road to good faith with the public is to approve Mr Gorrie's amendment so that the other options can be considered, and then to explain to the people of Scotland why we made that decision.

Mr Jim Wallace: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. It came as a surprise to my Liberal Democrat colleagues and me that party statements were to be made. As we genuinely have no party line on this issue, the party waives its right to make any statement on its behalf. Each Liberal Democrat member will vote according to his or her conscience.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you for that clarification. I call Mr Alex Salmond to speak on behalf of the SNP.

16:55

Mr Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): Like Bristow Muldoon, I have read the debate from last June, and what is absolutely clear is that—whatever the positions that have now been adopted and however we as individuals or parties think that we should proceed—Donald Gorrie's arguments were absolutely right. No one can seriously challenge the validity of his argument. If we had accepted his advice, we would be in a

much better position today.

There were other good speeches in that debate. For example, Margaret Smith pointed out that there was not enough information about the transport implications of using the Holyrood site. Of course, many of us did not know then that, in January 1998, the Scottish Office completed a substantial transport and environmental comparative assessment which found overwhelmingly in favour of the Regent Road site. That assessment was placed in this Parliament's library six days after last June's debate. Had that report been available in the parliamentary library, we might have been able to answer many of Margaret Smith's valid points during that debate.

As this debate has continued, the Executive parties have been less willing to say that the increased cost is due to the redesign of the chamber. Perhaps that is because of Henry McLeish's comments in last June's debate. He said:

"We have an excellent chamber here, but should we not have an excellent chamber in the new Holyrood Parliament? Do members think that we will go to all this expense just to downgrade the quality of our chamber when we move to Holyrood?"—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1999; Vol 1, c 567.]

Henry McLeish agreed with the argument that the proposed banana shape of the chamber was not adequate for a Parliament. However, we should reflect on the fact that the design of this current excellent chamber cost not tens of millions of pounds, but £1.5 million. As an explanation for the astronomical increase in the cost of the Holyrood site, it is wanting to say that £50 million, £60 million or £70 million is necessary to redesign a chamber from a banana to something that resembles a Parliament.

Helen Eadie: Does Alex Salmond accept that it is predominantly his party that has doubled the square-metreage costs of the new Parliament? I have asked every member of my party whether they have asked for extra capacity. Which party has asked for two extra sections for each of its offices, as well as a room for its members?

Mr Salmond: If Helen Eadie believes that, she has come up the Forth in an upturned boat. If she examines the documents that Sir David Steel provided for me, she will find that the additional space for all four parties is 400 sq m. If that comes to 100 sq m per party, that is half the space of the staff requirements of the junior ministers of the Executive. Quite frankly, Helen Eadie's accusation will not wash.

In last year's debate, the First Minister intervened passionately to say that he did not want a whipped vote, despite the fact that he was proposing an Executive motion. As today's motion

is a back-bench motion, the SNP will not have a whipped vote. However, a senior Labour MSP told Angus Macleod, whose sources of information are comprehensive:

"There are free votes and there are free votes. This is what might be called a five-line whip free vote."

So there is a five-line whip on Labour MSPs today.

The overwhelming argument from the Executive last year was that delay would cost money—it would cost £1 million, £2 million or £3 million if we delayed the building of the Parliament. That was the Executive's argument last year and protagonists of the motion have used the same argument today. Surely the lesson of this project is not that delay has cost money but that rushing ahead without the information and the facts has cost money.

The First Minister will no doubt explain why he thought his civil servants and advisers were right not to tell him about the £27 million identified by Spencely—that sum was not revealed to this Parliament last year. While he is doing so, he might explain this: the document about Queensberry House that was produced in December 1997 by the architects Simpson & Brown says that renovation of Queensberry House would cost £7 million. Why is it that, in the estimates produced for us last June, that figure is estimated at less than £2 million, despite the fact that the information was held by the Scottish Office?

I do not think that the arguments about the project team hold water. The Spencely report says that, for at least nine months, the project team knew that the project was not on time or on budget. Why did the project team not inform Sir David, as chair of the corporate body? If it did not inform him, why is he now accepting its advice in telling this Parliament that the project can be done for £195 million?

The fundamental mistake is that the project has not been carried through as a matter of consensus. A Parliament should have debated its own permanent home; the Secretary of State for Scotland should not have selected it and then said, "Like it or lump it or it will cost you lots of money." A Parliament's home should be a matter of consensus, but how can it be a matter of consensus unless the alternatives are identified, evaluated and compared with one another fairly? That has never been done with this project.

Perhaps the most valid point that has been made in the debate is that we are the Parliament. The Parliament is not Holyrood or St Andrew's House—much as I like that design—and it is not this excellent chamber. The Parliament is each and every one of us with a democratic mandate to act for the people of Scotland. As long as this

Parliament was acting for the people, even if it was meeting in a hut it would still be a valid Parliament and the people would respect it. It will not be respected unless it has the courage to evaluate the various alternatives that are before us.

One of the hopes of those of us who campaigned for a Parliament—of various kinds—was that it would embrace a new type of Scottish politics, which would mean that decisions would no longer be made behind closed doors and deals would not be stitched up in the New Club or elsewhere; they would be subject to democratic scrutiny. Throughout this debate, we have not had the information required. It has been withheld; we have been misled. This Parliament and each and every one of us as parliamentarians must live up to that expectation by finding the courage at last to say, "Let us have a proper evaluation and, as a Parliament, make a parliamentary choice."

Mr Rumbles: On a point of order. Rule 7.2 of the standing orders states:

"In deciding who should be called, the Presiding Officer shall have regard to the nature of the business under consideration."

This debate has been held on a non-party basis; each speaker has spoken on a non-party basis. That has been emphasised throughout the debate. I ask that, when we have another such debate, we ensure that we do not make the mistake that has just been made.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The decision to call speakers is made with that consideration in mind, as has happened this afternoon.

17:05

The First Minister (Donald Dewar): I start by stating my conviction that the Holyrood project was and is the right solution. I of course welcome a debate about the future, the way forward, and how we secure a fit and appropriate building to house our Parliament. I hope that it can be conducted rationally and that we will look at the realities. I do not criticise Alex Salmond, but people jump to conclusions about many things. One small example is that the transport survey, which was one of the main points of his charge, was put into the House of Commons library in January 1998, along with the four feasibility studies. It was in the public domain from then; I am surprised that Alex Salmond did not know that and that, if the document was so important, he did not take the opportunity to consult it.

I am not interested in arguments *ad hominem*—there will be other occasions for that. I do not deny that there are lessons to be learned. As we have been reminded, the Controller of Audit will be picking through the entrails of our experience

thoroughly and expertly. I look forward to the result of his inquiries and we may well want to act at that point.

Much has been made of the difficulties that we have had in the construction process and of the £62 million versus £89 million controversy, which is relevant to what I told this chamber on 17 June last year. I acted in good faith on the basis of the advice and information available to me. I resent the implication—to be fair, made not so much today as in many press statements—that I deliberately withheld information from members or misled the Parliament. That is not the case.

Phil Gallie: Will the First Minister give way?

The First Minister: Let me finish this. I announced the figures available to me on 17 June. The decision not to include potential costs was deliberately taken because, after thorough consideration, it was held that there was no justification at that time for including most of the elements of that figure in the estimate.

To take up Christine Grahame's important point about design risk assessments, let me say that the whole point of a design risk assessment is to look and see whether there are problems ahead and then to deal with them. One element of the £15.8 million was £5 million to cover an assumption that proved very quickly to be incorrect—that there would be a hiatus because of the transfer of responsibility from me as the First Minister to the corporate body. It would have been ludicrous and misleading to have included that £5 million.

Most of the rest of the figure was to allow for the possibility of increasing the specification of the materials used. For example, it could have been the case that we would face big charges for balustrades on buildings. The decision was taken that we were not going to increase the specification so those figures would also have been misleading. A document available in SPICe sets out those matters in more detail, which I hope will be helpful and explain the reasoning on that decision.

Mr Salmond: Will the First Minister give way?

The First Minister: This is the only intervention that I will take.

Mr Salmond: Many of us were surprised not because the First Minister said that he gave the information to Parliament in good faith—I accept that—but because he said that his officials quite properly withheld information from him. Would he care to revise that statement and to answer this point? The Simpson & Brown survey said in December 1997 that Queensberry House would cost £7 million to renovate, so why did the First Minister's estimate say £2 million? Was he aware of that difference?

The First Minister: I have offered a taste—as broad a taste as I can manage in the time available—of the contents of the document in SPICe. The Simpson & Brown survey, as I remember it, suggested there would not be major problems with Queensberry House and Simpson & Brown are people with conservation expertise. I say unashamedly that I will have to check the point Alex Salmond raises. Along with many other members, I have a very good knowledge of the arguments on the new Parliament, but I cannot remember the detail of that point. I will certainly remember and I will come back to him.

My situation is rather strange. On the one hand I am assailed by accusations of being intemperate, of taking headstrong decisions and of deciding on the site at a time when I should not have. At the same time I am accused of a lack of leadership and a lack of decision. The truth is that I acted because I thought that in the interests of the Parliament it was essential to get this process under way while I was secretary of state. Later, I did not act because I did not have authority to do so, as the matter had by law been transferred to the corporate body. It must be understood that I was not in the loop in any special or privileged way—I make no complaint about that.

Let us remember that the choice of site was not arbitrary. The feasibility study and the chartered surveyors' reports suggested that that Holyrood was "eminently suitable" for the purpose. As members have been reminded, John Spencely makes it clear in his report that, in his opinion, any problems with the contract were totally unconnected with the site.

Let us look at where we are; I want to look forward as well. What are the consequences of cancellation or a long pause at this stage? Members will remember that John Spencely put a figure on cancellation of between £16 million and £30 million. Anyone who has been down to the site—and who has looked at the plans, at the sophistication of the design and at the 12,000 tonnes of concrete that have already been poured—will know that costs would be bound to be substantial. John Spencely's figures take no account of potential litigation, which, I believe, would inevitably result if contracts were broken and those involved in the work were evicted.

Phil Gallie rose—

The First Minister: If we start on a new site with a burden of £30 million or £40 million, which might be a conservative estimate, the chances of getting a building that would be suitable for the Parliament or that would be acceptable to members would be enormously reduced—I believe that there would be no chance. A change of start would imply a new design competition, a new architecture team, new contractors, rising costs, and—I tell the

chamber seriously—a delay that could be counted in years

I caution against the suggestion that in some way we could know a great deal more about alternative sites in time for a decision in June. I know how long it took at the start of our selection process to get the indicative costs that are now so much mocked. The figure of £50 million was a ballpark figure for a building of the necessary square metreage on the site that was being assessed. If members want to go beyond that, they will need an architecture team and quantity surveyors to work to an advanced stage of design.

Ms MacDonald: Will the First Minister take information?

The First Minister: No, I am under terrible time constraints.

Nobody in the chamber would accept the figure of £65 million for the Park & Page design for the adaptation of St Andrew's House—of course, we know that that design would not have enough space to accommodate the demands of the Parliament—but £65 million was obviously a ballpark figure and it should be judged on that basis.

David McLetchie: Will the minister give way?

The First Minister: Time eats money, so I do not think that it is sensible to seek alternative sites.

Phil Gallie: On a point of order. My understanding was that this was a debate. If no interventions are allowed to challenge points that are raised by the First Minister, debate is—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Gallie, your microphone has been switched off because that is not a point of order. I think that you know that, because you have made that point before.

The First Minister: I must truncate my remarks to hold the length of my speech within reason. However one reads the Spencely report, there is no encouragement for the idea that changing to another site would be practicable.

The main pressure for the growth of the building was the demands that were made on the corporate body. The envisaged 16,000 sq m ended up at 31,000 sq m. It is important to take that lesson on board. That is why I believe that a progressing group of the type that Gordon Jackson's amendment recommends is sensible.

Many people forget—again, this must be shorthand—that Spencely endorses the decision to take a construction management road to drive this contract on, using competitive tendering on packages of work as we proceed. If we now try to turn back to a fixed-price contract, we fly in the face of his advice and the advice of all the people who told me about the best way forward. We

certainly invite inflated costs to guard against design changes and other problems.

Alex Salmond said that we could meet in a hut. Of course we can meet in a hut if there is nowhere else to meet, but no one wants to meet in a hut. We want to meet in a Parliament that has decent facilities for members, our staff and the public.

Winnie Ewing is making gestures that suggest we will build something akin to Kubla Khan's pleasure dome.

Dr Ewing: Will the First Minister give way?

The First Minister: No, I will not. I will leave Dr Ewing to dream.

A dozen constituents came to visit me the other day from a centre whose members have physical and other disabilities. They bore with great fortitude the obstacle course of getting inside Parliament headquarters at George IV Bridge and getting a cup of tea. That is not something that I would like to contemplate happening for a further four, five or six years.

Some extraordinary comparisons have been made. Let us examine Portcullis House—it is mentioned in the Spencely report, so it should be familiar to all members. That cost £1,000 per square metre more than the MSP accommodation that is planned for Holyrood. That represents some £50 million or £60 million more than Holyrood for office accommodation that has none of the complexities of a parliamentary complex.

The amendment in Gordon Jackson's name is a practical attempt to find a way forward. It calls for a progressing body to take day-to-day responsibility for the project. That body should have professional rigour; that requires, therefore, the input of professionals and, perhaps, an independent element. The motion allows for that.

There must be new and strong control—hence the emphasis on the need for regular reports on expenditure to date and estimated completion totals to be given to the SPCB and to the chamber. The firm budget of £195 million and the completion date of the end of 2002 will, I expect, be adhered to. If there are difficulties, regular reports can be produced and reconsideration can take place.

The team that has been working on the partnership—including RMJM and Enric Miralles and his people—has provided an outstanding design. I visited the site the other day for the first time in what was—because I have not been in charge of the project—a long while. I was impressed by the visualisation of the project: the massing of the component parts; the continuation of the line of the Canongate; the sweep of the chamber; the splash of colour of Queensberry House; and the opening to the royal park and

Salisbury crags. I do not want to be sent back to the architectural and financial drawing board—we will find ourselves in intolerable trouble if we take that course. The practical and sensible way forward is to support the amendment that is in Gordon Jackson's name.

17:18

Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD): I was under the impression that this was a back-bench debate and I am disappointed that that has not been the case. We have heard front-bench speeches. I hope that that will be sorted out through the appropriate channels in due course. [MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

I want to support the amendment that is in the name of Gordon Jackson—it takes the Holyrood project forward and asks Parliament to get on with the task of building a modern, challenging building. The amendment addresses members' concerns and gets a grip on costs. Parliament will be able to pass a motion to do that today. It establishes a rigorous mechanism for controlling costs and seeks completion of the project by the end of 2002. It gives a precise and clear go-ahead to the design. Members have given their views on the chamber, on office space and on staff space.

The public want to know why the costs have escalated from the original estimates to the £195 million that has been quoted today. Parliament took responsibility for the project last June. The cost then was estimated at £109 million. Gordon Jackson has explained those increases logically. Today we have heard too many people say, "It wisnae my fault." The truth is that if members want to allocate blame, they need look no further than the chamber. Since last June it has been up to us; to argue otherwise is to avoid the logic of Gordon Jackson's argument.

The debate has become a front-bench debate. I could not believe my ears when I heard David McLetchie say he was Parliament's most passionate supporter.

David McLetchie: Will the member give way?

Tavish Scott: Ye can just haud yer wheesht.

The Tories have opposed the building today and yesterday and they will do so in the future. They opposed the creation of the Parliament; they opposed the voting system that gives them all, bar John Scott, their seats in the chamber; and they now oppose the creation of a modern and dynamic building within which Parliament can operate.

Phil Gallie: Will Tavish Scott give way?

Tavish Scott: No.

That I can understand. At least the Conservatives are consistent. What I cannot understand so readily is the Scottish National

party. It is a party that should believe in vision, and which says much about self-determination, but unfortunately today it has turned its back on a definite future and instead favoured the blame game. Mike Russell said that there had been "far too much spin." That from Mike Russell—I ask you.

Brian Adam *rose—*

Tavish Scott: No.

Mike Russell would not answer questions on the finishes, the size or the cost of the building. As usual, we get no answers from the SNP, just the blaming of someone else every day and every week.

For those who say that Gordon Jackson's amendment is the cheapskate option, I refer them to paragraph 6.8.1 of the Spencely report. With regard to the MSP block, changes and reductions in cost would

"reduce the frequency of maintenance, without compromising the integrity of the architectural design."

So things can be done to make this building a better project for those who will use it.

When Sir David Steel opened the debate, he pointed out what has happened and what has changed; for example, the need for an additional 200 people. No one can dispute that. He said that if the chamber had not changed, it would have saved three months and considerable costs.

On the option of staying put, I have taken numerous school parties round, across three roads and into four different buildings, yet the supporters of that option are seriously suggesting that we should stay where we are. That is not realistic.

Dorothy-Grace Elder *rose—*

Tavish Scott: The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body has not kept members up to date since last June but—

Donald Gorrie: Nobody is suggesting that we stay here in our temporary accommodation permanently. We are suggesting that it be looked at to be developed as a permanent site. The people who have consistently peddled the wrong view of that should look out.

Tavish Scott: Donald Gorrie is behind me and I am looking out.

The corporate body has accepted responsibility, and today it is right, as the Spencely report shows in paragraph 9.4 on management recommendations, to move towards a rigorous method of keeping the Holyrood project on time and within budget. That is what Gordon Jackson's amendment is all about.

Members today have picked up the fact that the corporate body is a parliamentary body, and that means that Andrew Welsh and John Young cannot be semi-detached members of the SPCB. Those gentlemen were appointed by Parliament, and they should accept that.

On Donald Gorrie's amendment and changing the site, Mike Watson had it right when he made his introductory remarks. Donald Gorrie and Margo MacDonald speak with considerable conviction but, as Mike Watson said, they have opposed Holyrood all the way down the line. That is perfectly respectable. They oppose it for their own reasons, and they come from that perspective. But are the alternatives in Donald Gorrie's amendment realistic? Calton Hill has already been through the system.

I certainly do not believe that the time scale is realistic. Donald Gorrie's amendment says that comparisons of alternative sites should be completed by early June, yet the Holyrood project team will have completed the scheme design by 8 June. Any alternatives could not possibly have reached anything other than the outline proposal stage with indicative budgets. If Donald's amendment were passed, we would not be comparing like with like, in design or cost. The result would be more delay as Parliament, not unreasonably, asks for briefings that would compare like with like. It would suit some members to let this matter go on and on.

The full design means drawings worked up to a certain level and ready to go out to tender. I have worked in the private sector. I know what that means. To get to that point from where we are now for the other sites, which is nowhere, would take a considerable time. Neither I nor anyone else in this chamber knows how long it would take, but it would take a considerable time. In fairness to Donald Gorrie, I will not say how long it would take, because I could only speculate, but he could only speculate too. A delay would not end on 8 June. How could it possibly? It would not be fair to anticipate the length of the delay, but there are some who would like to delay and delay and delay.

Today, we have to decide whether we are a Parliament that considers and acts, or a Parliament that uses every excuse to prevaricate. Do we take control and move forward, or do we run away and hide? Gordon Jackson's amendment learns from the problems of the past, and takes us forward. It puts tight controls on the project. It brings in proper professional advice. It sets us on the road to the creation of a Parliament building that we can be proud of, and more important, a Parliament building that Scotland can be proud of.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Margo

MacDonald to close for amendment S1M-720.1.

17:25

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): Before I address myself to summing up, I note that the First Minister had almost 13 minutes for his speech and that Tavish Scott had almost seven, as did an earlier speaker. I am informed that, if I am lucky, I might have five minutes to refute the contents of those speeches. Therefore, I crave your indulgence, Presiding Officer.

I also ask members in the chamber to listen to the people. I have with me a representative sample of the communications that I have received—by fax, letter, e-mail and telephone and from people stopping me in the street. Not one of those communications says, "Go ahead with the Holyrood project without proper examination". Anyone is welcome to examine them, because I am not in the business of copying Tavish Scott, who suggested that some people do this, some do that and others do the next thing. The names and addresses of the people who pay our wages and who will pay for this Parliament are here, and anyone is entitled to examine them. We must listen to the people and we must answer their questions, which is one of the issues that Donald Gorrie's amendment tries to address.

One or two questions have arisen in the chamber today—for example, I have one. Who is in charge of design? Was the *Edinburgh Evening News* correct—believe me, it was—when it said of Señor Miralles:

"Colleagues at his practice in Barcelona said they did not know when he would be in Edinburgh again?"

However, we know that he is lecturing in America. I will come back to that point shortly, because it begs another question.

What happened to the request that I made of the Presiding Officer, when I wrote to him earlier this year and asked for an independent assessment of the project? I am happy to say that he agreed to appoint John Spencely. I also requested that Enric Miralles should be asked to keep the promise that he made to MSPs when he spoke to us last year. He said that he would be willing to come back and to discuss with us the progress of the project. Where is he? I would like to discuss progress with him.

As Annabel Goldie said, we must rebuild the confidence of the people who are represented in these letters. We must convince them that we are spending their money—the Parliament's money—on a suitable building that offers the best value for that money. Our amendment will allow that to happen. Work would continue on the MSP block at Holyrood and a start could be made on repairing the damage done to Queensberry House. I will not

have time to go into the nefarious activities that have gone on in Queensberry House, but I am willing to talk about them outside the chamber, if anyone is willing to take me up on that.

Mr Stone: I will.

Ms MacDonald: You are on, Jamie.

I emphasise Donald Gorrie's point. When we talk about studies on developing the Parliament's site, we are not talking about the temporary campus of this building and those across the road at George IV Bridge. We are talking about developing an area of land that reaches from Mylne's Court right up to Ramsay Lane. I believe that that site would be feasible, and we have time to consider whether it would provide a suitable Parliament at better value for money. Certainly, many people in Edinburgh think that it might.

For around £20,000, we could obtain an immediate feasibility study, and if the site were not feasible, I would be the first to say, "Walk away from it". I think that we owe that to the people who are questioning what is happening to the project, its operation and the Holyrood design. We owe it to them to say that there may well be alternatives, and that we have considered them. Even people who are absolutely enamoured of the design envisaged for Holyrood would be in a much stronger position if they could say to people in Scotland that they have considered the alternatives and still recommend Holyrood.

I appreciate that many members think that we should just go ahead with Holyrood, because it makes a statement about Scotland. Well, it sure does—we thought big and we built small on too small a site. I take issue with those who say that John Spencely said that there was nothing wrong with the site, because he said that this had nothing to do with the location of the site. We should not forget that he was not asked to consider the traffic implications and so on, nor did he comment on the size of the site, which is an issue that Donald Gorrie and I raised during the debate last year. We asked whether the Parliament would be able to expand on that site once it got into its stride. Yesterday, at the presentation, I asked the architects what room for expansion was still possible. I was told, "Perhaps 2,000 sq m." When I asked, "Where?", I was told, "On the tower".

The First Minister spoke—quite movingly, I thought, as someone who now lives in Edinburgh—of the beautiful sweep of the architecture in total harmony with the natural development that has occurred over millions of years in that part of Edinburgh. However, the tower—it is no longer an upturned boat, but a tower—is higher than Queensberry House. According to the model that we saw yesterday, it is higher even than the new hotel that stands behind

what is envisaged as the MSPs' block. That goes against the grain for most of the people who think that Edinburgh should develop as a historic site and a place of architectural beauty and excellence.

Señor Miralles's design has much to commend it, and I do not deny that. However, I question whether that is the best site for it in Edinburgh. In Edinburgh, the people who have written to me stop me in the street and say, "Dinnae put it there." They know fine that it is the last place in Edinburgh to put the Parliament. I do not know where the first place should be, but we now have a natural hiatus in which work can continue on the MSPs' block—and on the repairs to Queensberry House—while we look at the alternative sites, to report back to the people of Scotland by 8 June, in line with the time scale that was outlined by John Spencely. If Señor Miralles is ill, that gives us another week or two to play with—that was something else that we learned in the course of this debate.

I appreciate what the other amendment seeks to do: it seeks to cap expenditure. People in Scotland cannot understand how we can start out with a proposed cost of £50 million and end up with a proposed cost of £200 million. However, I do not believe that a project of this sort can be capped. The First Minister told me that the SPCB does not believe in fixed contracts, but it has virtually tied itself into a fixed contract if it accepts that amendment. The target is £195 million, but what happens if the building does not reach the roof when the money runs out, because the designer is ill and cannot meet the targets that the SPCB has set for him? That amendment is all too restrictive.

Our amendment is not restrictive. We must get this right; if we get it wrong, the whole Parliament will be diminished in the view of the people who wrote these letters to me. I urge all members to support our amendment.

17:32

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): I have the responsibility of responding to the debate on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body. My friends and colleagues on the corporate body have their own views, which they have expressed today, and will have free votes at the end of the debate. Therefore, although I am authorised to reply and express several points on their behalf, my comments are my own.

The debate over Holyrood has been bedevilled by a variety of conflicting agendas—political, professional and media—but there is one central fact: this is, and must remain, a parliamentary project in which the corporate body and the Parliament act as trustees for the true client, which

is the people of Scotland. That is not dramatic licence. The Scottish Parliament is the settled will of the Scottish people, and its parliamentary building is the place where the democratic decisions are made under the scrutiny of the public and the media. It is where individuals and groups—and the crucial third force of the voluntary sector and civic society—bring forward their grievances and contribute their expertise.

It is important that this Parliament speaks today with authority and on the basis of a genuinely free vote in all parties. It is not for parties or for the Executive, but for every MSP in this chamber to decide whether we proceed with Holyrood or stop the building.

In June, I voted for a reassessment of the project. I believed then, as I believe now, that the site should not have been the choice of the former Secretary of State for Scotland, but of the Parliament itself. In June, I did not fully realise that our needs could not be properly assessed until we had experience of the Parliament in operation—until we had experience of the level of public interest, of the interplay with the media and civic Scotland, of the way in which the parties worked and of the level of support staff that was needed. It is now clear that that was a major underlying problem.

The design team has done a splendid job in developing a design that is far superior in many ways than the one with which we began, simply because it reflects more accurately the needs of the Parliament. Whatever the precise story of the costings, John Spencely confirms that the price is right: £195 million is a realistic budget to build a Parliament—not one fitted with gold taps, but one where prudent decisions were taken by the corporate body to reduce the car parking space against official advice and to reduce the specification of MSP accommodation, again against official advice.

Although John Spencely has worked miracles to produce his report, neither the corporate body nor the Holyrood project team accept his view that the project design is less settled than it was in March 1999 and that the estimate for the basic construction cost is less reliable than it was then. It is important that the chamber appreciates that the final scheme design, cost plan and approved budget have not been produced because of the fact that the design has not been finalised and frozen.

The legal responsibility for the project rests with the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, but I would like to share with the chamber the ambit of that responsibility. We have heard about the chamber design and the increased costs but the chamber should be aware that it was only on 9 November that we identified the emerging

demands for space, which were held over at that point for more detailed consideration.

Since then, such matters have been analysed in depth. The report that was produced in February took a while to bring about because of the nature of the design arrangements under which we operate. The issues of cost and programme were dominant for the corporate body and the design team. The crucial time was between November and February, when Parliament's accommodation needs were being finalised and costed. I do not accept any major fault in the stewardship of the corporate body in that regard.

Spencely was instructed by the corporate body to produce a report. There might be an issue about the timing of the report, but Parliament was told in December that there might be extra costs and the reasons why. It was right that we obtained a proper verification of the likely figures before giving Parliament the information on which to make a realistic decision.

It is right that the corporate body should take action to tighten up and improve reporting, monitoring and decision-making procedures, but the major design decisions had been made before Spencely was brought in, as had the simplification of the design of the MSP block to which he alludes. We are now entering a different phase where the design is more or less completed. However, I do not think that any deficiencies in those matters would have altered the facts that necessary changes cost money, that the original plan would not have produced a Parliament that was anything like adequate and that the current costings are realistic.

Annexe 3 of the report summarises the figures involved. It shows how the figures of £109 million and £195 million are made up. I am surprised that nobody has detailed that in today's debate.

The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body rejected the suggestion to delay design approval for three months as that would have involved the abandonment of the 2002 target date. The idea that we could do on the back of an envelope in the next few weeks the same task that caused John Spencely difficulties, even with all the information and resources that were available to him, is nonsensical. We cannot start all over again from the feasibility study stage. That is not on.

All members have received a letter from Sebastian Tombs, the secretary of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland. It is worth listening to what he has to say. His letter reads:

"The current project, at Holyrood, is located on a fine site and has been developed by a talented design team, which has worked hard to respond to client adjustments to the brief, while retaining the integrity of the design.

Now that a brief is finalised, it is possible to predict for

the Parliament the full order of cost—which would remain the same, wherever located.

Given these considerations, the Incorporation considers that the wise course of action will be to maintain the momentum, to be courageous and look to the long-term benefit to the country as a whole, and to aim for the best.”

The way forward is clear. Let us reaffirm the project on the basis of the two reports and get on with it. Let Parliament speak today with authority for Scotland.

Decision Time

17:40

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): I should explain that I am taking the chair at decision time because I am the only one of the 129 members who has no vote on this matter; the two Deputy Presiding Officers have the same rights as everybody else.

The first question is, that amendment S1M-720.1, in the name of Donald Gorrie, which seeks to amend motion S1M-720, in my name, on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, on the Holyrood project, be agreed to. Are we all agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnston, Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine)

(LD)

Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Dewar, Donald (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, Mr John (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)

Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 58, Against 67, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that amendment S1M-720.2, in the name of Gordon Jackson, which also seeks to amend motion S1M-720, be agreed to. Are we all agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Dewar, Donald (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)

McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, Mr John (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnston, Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)

Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 67, Against 58, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that motion S1M-720, on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, on the Holyrood project, as amended, be agreed to. Are we all agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Dewar, Donald (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)

MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, Mr John (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnston, Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)

McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 68, Against 56, Abstentions 2.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament notes the report of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body on the Holyrood Project; approves its terms, and directs the Corporate Body to establish a progress group comprising representatives of the Parliament and relevant professionals to work with the Corporate Body to (a) finalise the design; (b) complete the project by the end of 2002 within a total budget of £195 million, and (c) report regularly, or as from time to time may be required, on progress including on expenditure to date and estimated completion costs to the SPCB and to members.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

We are now running very late, and I want to move as quickly as possible to members' business. I ask those who are leaving to do so quietly, to allow Lord James Douglas-Hamilton to introduce his debate on the A701.

A701 (Upgrading)

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): We are running very late. It is nearly a quarter to 6, and we are starting the members' business debate, on motion S1M-643, in the name of Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, on the A701 route. The debate will be concluded, without any question being put, after 30 minutes.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the more than 400 objections to the upgrading of the A701 to dual carriageway and the case for a public enquiry so that the views of the objectors can be properly considered.

17:44

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): In raising this topic, I wish to make it clear that an important issue of principle is involved: that a listening Parliament should be prepared to take proper and objective account of the large number of substantial objections to a large-scale development with far-reaching implications.

The normal procedure in such a case is to have a local public inquiry. The case for an inquiry is overwhelming on many grounds, in particular, on account of the strength of opposition to the proposed development. There have been 442 objections, among them notes of opposition from the relevant three community councils. I need hardly add that the number of letters of support can be counted on the fingers of a single hand. In the light of such strong opposition, the appropriate course is to have an inquiry to enable the concerns of local residents to be considered fully.

The concerns are well founded. First, the area is in Edinburgh's green belt. It is believed that the proposed upgrading will lead to unsustainable development. The route cuts across a site of special scientific interest, good agricultural land and an historic bridge. The ecological implications require at least further investigations and detailed surveys.

There is also the conviction that communities at the southern end will have enormous increases in traffic inflicted on them during peak periods, which is contrary to the policy of the Government's 1998 white paper, "Travel Choices for Scotland". The proposals would end the green belt between Edinburgh and Penicuik. It is therefore believed that the proposal will adversely affect quality of life and the well-being of the environment in the vicinity of the development. However, it is not just a question of intrusion into the green belt.

Secondly, there are allegations that the road contravenes local, regional and national policy

policies relating to SSSIs, the green belt and agriculture. It has been pointed out that the proposals were not included in any approved local or structure plan. I understand that claims have been made that the proposal conflicts with the Executive's policies on transport, conservation and sustainable development.

Furthermore, I am informed that when the proposals were discussed by councillors, they were approved in less than four minutes, leaving a great many questions unanswered. The council consists of 17 Labour councillors and one Liberal Democrat. There is, effectively, one-party rule on the council. It is therefore all the more important that the Labour administration does not abuse its power and is seen to be taking minority representations properly into account.

Thirdly, the development is likely to have a substantial knock-on effect. Protestors have said that the proposal will open up the Penicuik to Edinburgh corridor to massive-scale, car-based out-of-town developments, which again appears to contradict the Government's stated aim of rejuvenating town centres.

Fourthly, the local community wants not just a preoccupation with issues surrounding the local economy, but a balanced view, which takes into account the need for sustainable development to protect the environment and the quality of life. The reluctance of the Administration to listen to legitimate concerns and its refusal to give permission for those concerns to be put to an inquiry have provoked outrage, resulting in the strongest campaign of opposition ever seen in Midlothian since the days of Mr Gladstone's Midlothian campaign.

Fifthly, apparently the finance for the project will be raised in part from the sale of two Dalkeith high schools and their playing fields, much to the consternation of pupils and parents. That is in clear contradiction to Labour's 1997 policy document, "Labour's Sporting Nation", which states on page 4:

"We will tackle the decline in schools by ending the sale of playing fields."

Sixthly, there are safety arguments. As the minister knows, a 50 ft by 50 ft crater opened up at Straiton, beside the proposed route, as a result of either redundant mineworkings or an old landfill site, which caused a slippage. Campaigners have argued that the incident proves that the area is unstable and that drivers could be subjected to danger if the proposal goes ahead. Certainly, we know that in 1986 a caravan was lost down a 90 ft hole and that the residents of some 32 nearby homes had to be evacuated. The safety considerations must be taken into account.

I do not intervene lightly. I was roads minister for

10 years and would never have been associated with a refusal to listen to more than 400 substantial objections by denying the opportunity for a public inquiry. If that refusal stands, it will be viewed as a blatant abuse of the democratic process, which reflects badly on the coalition.

On 31 March, the *Edinburgh Evening News* reported that the minister would secretly like the proposal to be scrapped. I feel that a heavy responsibility rests on her shoulders. I can think of nothing that will increase her stature more than if she agreed to the legitimate calls for a public inquiry and proved that she has the ability to be an objective, fair-minded minister, listening to the people.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you very much. I hope to be able to—[*Applause.*] Order. No applause in the gallery, please.

If members can stick to four minutes, I hope to be able to call everybody who has requested to speak.

17:50

Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): I should declare an interest, in that I use the A701 as I come to work every morning.

The minister will recall that on 22 November last year, I asked a question on the upgrading of the A701. I asked which documents had been received from Midlothian Council and particularly how many objections had been received. The reason I asked the question was to flag up the extent of opposition to the proposal. I felt certain that once the minister told me that over 440 objection letters had been received, as well as petitions containing hundreds more signatures, there would be a public inquiry; I was therefore surprised and disappointed when one did not take place.

I went to a public meeting on 3 March in Penicuik, at which I made clear my feeling that it was a shame that a public inquiry was not held. Midlothian probably has a case that it would wish to put forward in favour of the road. However, the issues have not been heard on a fair basis.

There are certainly questions to be answered. There are questions on policy. As Lord James Douglas-Hamilton said, there is the policy of sustainable development. There is the idea of funnelling traffic into a city, when we are trying to reduce the impact of traffic on the city centre. There are questions on the environment and whether the green belt is under threat, as many people believe. It is believed that sites of special scientific interest are under threat.

There are questions on transport impacts and

integrated transport policies. It may be that Midlothian had not fully investigated all the options. The A701 is like a big avenue between Edinburgh and Penicuik, with a bottleneck at either end. In one direction, drivers encounter traffic entering Edinburgh, and in the other direction, traffic entering Penicuik.

There are questions about finance: £18 million to £20 million is to be spent on the road. Can Midlothian demonstrate that it is best value? It might be able to do that. Is it the best use of that sort of money, when there are other public transport issues—railways, light rail, buses and so on—to be dealt with? As Lord James Douglas-Hamilton mentioned, there is the issue of the source of funding for the road from the potential sale of areas that are currently school sites in Dalkeith.

There are questions about planning. There is the idea that the proposal was nodded through fairly quickly and that this is a landfill site that might have underlying problems. There is the possibility that, to do the thing properly, as Midlothian says it wishes to do, it must get co-operation from City of Edinburgh Council in regard to park and ride. It is suggested that there should be a park and ride at Burdiehouse. It is not in Midlothian's gift to provide that. Has the issue been properly discussed with Edinburgh? I understand that Edinburgh does not fully approve of the proposal—it noted it, but it did not go further.

There are questions about democracy, which is where Lord James Douglas-Hamilton started and where, in a sense, I would like to finish. Community councils appear to be against the project, yet, while there is a large number of objectors, they are not given a hearing. If this is a listening Parliament, we must avoid that fear of disfranchisement and the feeling that people cannot get their views heard.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton might not agree, but when he talks about Midlothian Council having 17 Labour members and one Liberal Democrat, it is a wonderful argument for proportional representation in local government. Even without a public inquiry, people might feel better if they thought that their views had been given a proper hearing at the council.

I ask the minister to consider reversing the decision and to declare a public inquiry. If not, perhaps she could find a way to extend the consultation surrounding the Midlothian plan to include consideration of the road. That would allow people's full arguments to be heard in public.

17:55

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): I want to pay tribute to Lord James Douglas-Hamilton for

bringing this matter before Parliament; I concur with the points that he has so eloquently made. This matter is worthy of debate; it should be debated in public and it should be the subject of a public inquiry.

As Lord James Douglas-Hamilton said, it has been suggested in an article in the *Edinburgh Evening News* that the minister does not approve of the scheme. If that is true, the minister should have the courage of her convictions and ensure that a public inquiry takes place—she should act as her heart and head tell her. The danger is that not only Midlothian Council, but the minister, will drive the proposals through in the face of objections.

The remit of the inquiry should be expanded. The A701 is not simply about extending and expanding the road at Straiton; it is a fundamental link from Midlothian to the city of Edinburgh. It affects more than Midlothian—it affects points north and south. The debate and inquiry would be equally relevant and important to the Borders and points north. We must consider the effect on other areas of building the road, not simply the effect on the land on which the concrete is laid. That, after all, is what an integrated transport policy is all about. The road would have a substantial impact on the south side of Edinburgh, the city bypass, points leading towards it and related areas further south. The matter needs full consideration.

Full consideration means a multi-modal study. Not just road, but other options, particularly rail, should be considered. The possible reopening of the Bilston Glen line is one such issue. Some people have registered opposition to the road and others have campaigned for the reopening of the Bilston Glen line; I pay tribute to them.

Today, I have managed to obtain a copy of the report by Scott Wilson to Midlothian Council. The report refers to the reopening of the line, which was closed only in 1989; it is viable and could be opened up quickly. To some extent, that line runs in parallel to the road. Any inquiry should consider that option. To be fair to Midlothian Council, it has viewed the matter not as either/or, but as both. We cannot proceed with the road without considering not only the effects mentioned by Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, but the other options.

I refer members to the first point in the executive summary in the Scott Wilson report:

"Reinstatement of the disused branch line to Loanhead is technically feasible for an estimated cost of £4.8 million based on single train operation."

That is significantly lower than the costs that will be incurred by building the road, never mind the knock-on effects on health and other matters.

The report goes on to say:

"Corridors exist for subsequent extension of the branch line to Penicuik, either via Roslin avoiding the Bilston Glen Viaduct or through Straiton."

That also should be considered. If it is not, Burdiehouse and other areas will become glorified park and rides, similar to areas close to where I stay in Edinburgh, which have, in effect, become park and rides.

The report also says:

"Options exist to reduce the funding gap, including sourcing external funding and the potential benefits to be obtained by combining a rail service to Loanhead or Penicuik with parallel rail proposals, such as the Edinburgh CrossRail project."

As the crossrail project has been given the green light, it is essential that we consider where we take and extend that project.

We have already had debates on the Waverley project and the Borders rail link. Here is another option. Let us consider all options, not simply the A701. I accept that, as the executive summary states:

"The anticipated demand for the rail service is unlikely to generate sufficient revenue to meet operating costs, either to Loanhead itself or with an extension to Penicuik."

However, very few, if any, rail lines in Scotland would qualify on that criterion. It is our duty as parliamentarians to ensure that we do not become a society that knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. We need to consider all options. That is why I pay tribute to Lord James Douglas-Hamilton and say that we should open up all aspects of this issue to public inquiry in a multi-modal study of how the city of Edinburgh, the Borders and other areas will be accessed in the 21st century. Let us raise our horizons and have some vision.

18:00

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): I, too, would like to compliment Lord James Douglas-Hamilton on the precision and elegance of his speech. I would also like to compliment Kenny MacAskill on the clear presentation of the research that he has done.

It remains for me to address three further issues. First, I joined the second protest march—or country walk—along the route of the projected road. I can assure all members present that the road will obliterate a very pleasant and beautiful piece of countryside, which includes woodland, copses, meadow and farmland. It is real green belt, rather than a piece of land that has been left to go down the tubes in preparation for building over, as has happened to some pieces of land in Scotland.

Secondly, there is a democratic deficit. I think

that I speak for all the protesters and people who have signed the petition when I say that they have had great difficulty relating to Midlothian Council, which takes most decisions in secret and meets in public for periods as short as four minutes. If the minister is minded to listen to the petitioners, she will be addressing that democratic deficit.

Last—this point has not yet been made—I believe that at some point a cost-benefit analysis of the construction of the road should have been presented. The opening of a 50 ft by 50 ft crater in close proximity to the planned path of the road devalues—in fact, invalidates—any cost-benefit analysis that has been made so far. Surely that in itself is enough to convince the minister that she should examine this issue.

18:03

The Minister for Transport and the Environment (Sarah Boyack): I would like to thank Lord James Douglas-Hamilton for giving us the opportunity to discuss this issue. I am mindful of the comments that several members have made about the level of objections to this project and am grateful to have the opportunity to reply to many of the points that have been made in the chamber. I know from personal experience and from the many written questions that members present for this debate have asked me that there is strong public interest in this matter. I am aware of the level and nature of objections.

I believe that it would be helpful if I set out briefly some of the background to this issue and, by doing so, answered the questions that have been raised tonight. The project that was the subject of this application envisages the construction of a stretch of dual carriageway from New Milton to the Straiton junction on the Edinburgh bypass. The new road would follow a separate route from the existing single carriageway. An integral part of the council's proposals is the implementation of a package of public transportation measures on the existing A701. That relates to the point that Mr MacAskill raised. The measures would ensure that the A701 is developed as a dedicated route for pedestrians, cyclists, local traffic and buses. The project also incorporates the construction of 4.9 km of side roads and junctions. Further traffic management improvements are planned by the council for the stretch of the A701 from Milton Bridge to Penicuik. They involve traffic calming measures.

It is important to bring to the chamber's attention the fact that the plans for the road go back some time. The council applied to the previous transport challenge fund for this project. It was notified on 18 February 1997 by the then Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Forsyth, that £2.5 million was being made available to assist with the

development, under the private finance initiative scheme. Mr Forsyth's letter to the council said that he and his ministerial colleagues had considered the submissions from the local authorities carefully and that:

"We recognised the importance placed by the Council on improving the A701 and I am therefore pleased to advise you that your application has been successful in the competition."

As I think Mr Forsyth's letter makes clear, there had been a collective decision by the then Government. The ministerial colleagues included Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, as he himself said. The project has been on the go for a long time. No additional funds have been allocated to the council since that award. In May 1998, the council followed up the application with an outline business case to the then Scottish Office.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Does the minister accept that whatever challenge funding is made available after a competition throughout Scotland, it does not invalidate the case for a public inquiry, especially when there are a substantial number of objections?

Sarah Boyack: I was making a point about the financial background. I will come on to the planning issues shortly. I wanted to bring to the Parliament's attention the fact that the project has been going on for some time and had already been given financial support before the planning matters that have been mentioned arose. My concerns are about the planning issues rather than the financial issues, but I wanted to address the points that members have raised.

Planning permission is a central issue. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton peppered his opening remarks with such phrases as "I understand that" and "It has been put to me that". We must acknowledge that there have been a lot of comments, all of which I have had to address in making the decision to pass the issue back to the local authorities to enable them to move ahead with the project.

Local authorities may not submit planning applications to themselves for developments that they propose to carry out. That is why they must go to the Scottish Executive. They must follow the procedures set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development by Planning Authorities) (Scotland) Regulations 1981. Under those procedures, authorities must first advertise their proposals in the form of a notice of intention to develop. If objections to their proposals are lodged, they may not proceed to develop without first notifying the Scottish ministers. That procedure gives ministers the opportunity to decide whether they wish to call the proposals in for their own determination or clear them back to the council, thereby granting deemed planning

permission, which is what happened in this case.

Scottish ministers will normally presume against calling in a submitted notice of intention to develop where the proposed development is in line with the adopted or approved local plan for the area. That is in line with guidance set out in Scottish Office development department circular 4 of 1997. It is a matter of law that the determination of any planning application must be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Midlothian Council, having advertised its proposals for improvements to the A701 and having received objections, duly submitted its notice of intention to develop to the Scottish ministers. It was accompanied by a statement from the council that made it clear that the council is committed to pursuing other initiatives as part of a package of measures to improve transportation within and outwith Midlothian. That addresses the points that Mr MacAskill made about developing a multi-modal approach across that corridor.

Whether or not to intervene in the determination of the council's proposals was a matter that required extremely careful consideration in the light of the weight of the objections that had been received. Scottish ministers had to take account of the national planning policy guidance and the current development plan for the area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton raised a point that I think requires a direct response. I stress that the development plan consists of the Lothian structure plan, which was approved by the then Secretary of State for Scotland in July 1997, the Bonnyrigg and Loanhead local plan, which was adopted in 1992, and the villages and rural areas local plan, which was adopted in 1995. It is a function of those plans to resolve the competing—and often conflicting—demands for land and to consider whether the loss of green belt, for example, is outweighed by other benefits. That can make for difficult choices, as all members acknowledge and as is reflected in all the objections that we have received.

There was no objection to the proposals from Scottish Natural Heritage, but it identified a number of issues that it felt should be taken on board. When writing back to Midlothian Council, Scottish ministers noted that Scottish Natural Heritage, although not putting in an objection, had made certain points that it wanted the council to deal with. Those points, especially those relating to Straiton bing, were made directly to the council.

Robin Harper's points about the green belt were very relevant. The opening up of land in the Straiton-Penicuik corridor is covered by the new local plan that is currently available for people to comment on. Because of concerns that have been

raised, and in the light of the current development plan, I have already called in both the proposed biotechnology park at Gowkley Moss and a single house in the corridor area. I can assure Robin Harper that, in line with Scottish Executive policy, I will be vigilant in protecting the green belt from unjustified and inappropriate development.

Several members mentioned national planning policies. As members may be aware, national planning policy guideline 17 on planning and transport promotes development in a way that minimises the need to travel. It also encourages more environmentally friendly ways of moving around. The guideline recognises the important strategic role that roads can play in carrying long-distance traffic and improving accessibility, which can be important for the local economy. However, it also indicates that proposals for major new roads should be included in wider development plan strategies. Such proposals should, as far as is practicable, be integrated with existing settlements, and should be capable of being accessed by public transport and by local cycle and footpath networks.

Although the Lothian structure plan predates NPPG 17, its policies are still consistent with the guideline. The structure plan sets out a clear commitment to improvement of the A701 road transport corridor. During the processing of the plan, only one objection was received on that issue. The current local plans, and the proposed replacements, also contain policies to support that improvement and to safeguard land for the road's construction.

I want to emphasise strongly that development plans have to be drawn up following a process of extensive public consultation. They provide the basis for efficient, effective and consistent decision making. In reaching decisions on whether to call in planning applications, ministers attach considerable weight to whether a proposal is in line with the development plan.

In considering the proposals that are before us today, it was clear to Scottish ministers that the proposed improvement of the A701 was in accord with the statutory development plans and the Executive's own guidance. Accordingly, ministers decided—as would normally be the case where proposals are deemed to be consistent with established development plan policy—that intervention was not warranted. The Executive is committed to seeing councils and others deliver projects and proposals that are consistent with the statutory development plan for an area.

The sensitive nature of the A701 proposal was, however, fully recognised. My department's letter of 1 February, which intimated our decision not to intervene, noted that the council was committed to pursuing a package of transportation measures.

Those measures include proposals to enhance the potential for public transport, walking and cycling along the existing A701. They also include proposals on the long-term work on the provision of a park and ride facility at Burdiehouse; a rapid transit route providing a link between Midlothian and Edinburgh; and a scheme of traffic management measures for Penicuik.

All those proposals were set out in the existing Lothian structure plan. The council will therefore be proceeding in line with established statutory planning policy. The decision letter said that Scottish ministers hope that the council will pursue those initiatives with a view to delivering a comprehensive and sustainable package of transport improvements as soon as possible.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Will the minister give way?

Sarah Boyack: No, I am just about to wind up.

I have been asked by, I think, all members whether I will consider the case for holding a public inquiry into the proposed development. That choice was available to me when I decided whether to call in the development. As ministers decided not to call in the notice of intention to develop, we have no further locus in that issue. It is for Midlothian Council, which now has deemed planning permission for its proposals, to decide whether to proceed with the development. It is also for the council to decide whether to carry out any further assessment of its proposals and whether a public inquiry would be appropriate.

Members have raised a number of issues that were not in front of us when we dealt with the initial application. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton and Robin Harper both mentioned an issue that was mentioned in Parliament two weeks ago—the subsidence close to Straiton, on the route of the proposed new dual carriageway, that has opened a crater that is some 50 ft deep and 50 ft wide. Midlothian Council will have to take that into account. It is a matter for the council, not for me as a minister.

I hope that members have found the debate useful. There is much local interest in this issue and I hope that I have been able both to shed some light on it and to answer members' questions. Furthermore, I hope that my answers to the many written parliamentary questions on this matter have been helpful. It is now up to Midlothian Council to decide how to proceed on this planning application.

Meeting closed at 18:15.

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