

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 28 February 2001
(*Afternoon*)

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28 February 2001

Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 28 February 2001

(Afternoon)

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): To lead our time for reflection we welcome Rev Archie McPhail from Campbell Street Associated Presbyterian Church in Oban.

Rev Archie McPhail (Campbell Street Associated Presbyterian Church, Oban): When Jesus of Nazareth was questioned, he often avoided giving a direct answer. Instead, he sent the questioner back to first principles. For him, the basic principle was the character of God, whom he called "Righteous Father".

Relationships are at the heart of what God is—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus took people back to the most basic of all relationships—the relationship with one another and with God.

"In the beginning God made them male and female"

was his answer to a question on sexuality.

"Our Father in heaven"

opened his model prayer.

When Jesus criticised the clergy of his day for majoring in trivia, he pointed to two aspects of God's character. He said:

"You have neglected judgment and God's love."

Our emphasis on inclusiveness and individual rights must seem to him a less than adequate foundation for life. Intolerance of moral judgments ignores God's character and distorts reality. Asserting our rights often denies God's love to others. On the other hand, when we judge ourselves and receive God's forgiveness, we are more likely to love others and respect their rights.

Jesus was concerned to re-establish our relationship with God. Gathering the wayward is inclusiveness according to Jesus; giving them freedom as God's children is his goal. According to him, his crucifixion was God's judgment on humanity.

"He bore our sins in his own body".

He saw that as a warning, for God does not change; and an opportunity, for it opens the door to forgiveness and help. He gives us the right to pray, saying:

"Whatever you ask in my name I will do it."

Can we pray for one another?

Gracious God, help us to honour your name.

We give thanks for the men and women here whom you have given to lead our nation. As they carry our burdens may they know your strength. We ask for your care for their persons, their families, their homes. Give success in their work, for their sakes and ours.

We pray for all who influence the spirituality of our people, especially our young people. May our work be informed by the realities of life, guided by the teaching of Jesus, and helped by the Spirit of God.

Forgive us when we exclude you from personal or national life, and when we seek to justify our own evil or the evil of others.

May all of us who shepherd this nation be able to say,

"The Lord is my shepherd."

We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following designations of Lead Committee—

The Justice 1 Committee to consider the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 2001 and,

The Justice 1 Committee to consider the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 2001 and,

The Justice 2 Committee to consider the draft Limited Liability Partnerships (Scotland) Regulations 2001.—
[*Tavish Scott.*]

Foot-and-mouth Disease

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): We now come to the ministerial statement on foot-and-mouth disease.

14:34

The Minister for Rural Development (Ross Finnie): I want to bring Parliament up to date on the status of the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease and the measures that I have taken to control its spread in Scotland.

As Parliament knows, Great Britain is facing a widespread outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. As I left my office, further cases were being reported. There are now 24 confirmed cases of the disease, 21 in England and three in Wales. So far, there have been no confirmed cases in Scotland, although 41 farms are under supervision because they have links with infected premises. In addition, two farms in Lockerbie and Canonbie are awaiting the results of tests, and veterinary staff have been called to investigate a farm at Bo'ness. There remains a severe risk that the outbreak may develop in Scotland, therefore the whole farming community must be vigilant for signs of the disease.

I judged correctly in applying in Scotland equivalent measures to those that are in force in England and Wales, and in introducing the necessary measures to contain and control the disease. It was vital to the livelihoods of our farmers that we took rapid and effective action to contain and, ultimately, eradicate the disease. On 21 February, I agreed to the UK Government's order that implemented an earlier European Commission decision to prohibit temporarily the export from the United Kingdom of live animals, meat, fresh milk and other animal products. That was a necessary step to prevent the spread of the disease to other countries. However, animals and animal products that are not susceptible to foot-and-mouth disease can be exported if they are accompanied by veterinary certificates issued by animal health officers.

With the confirmation of the case in Northumberland on Friday, it became clear that the disease is potentially more widespread and has been in the country longer than was first thought. Along with the agriculture ministers for England and Wales therefore, I accepted the advice of the chief veterinary officer that stringent controls on animal movements were needed. An order banning livestock movements for seven days, which was brought into force on 23 February, is due to expire at midnight on 2 March.

In view of concerns that the virus might be

spread by people walking on farmland, yesterday—along with the ministers in England and Wales—I brought into force an order allowing local authority and animal health inspectors to prevent access to footpaths and other land if that is necessary for disease control purposes. I appreciate that that is a significant power, and I am taking it only to tackle the present emergency. The order makes powers available that I would not expect to be used unless clear advice was received that closures were necessary to contain the disease. In practice, I would expect such action to be necessary only if outbreaks of the disease were confirmed.

I fully appreciate that the measures that we have introduced are causing severe dislocation to the farming and meat-processing industries. The longer the movement ban continues, the more serious the consequences will be. However, I emphasise that control and eradication of the disease are my overriding priorities, and I am grateful for the support of the farming and meat industries for the measures that have been taken. I recognise that, without them, Scotland would be at much greater risk from the disease than it is already.

Of course, we will move as rapidly as we can to reduce the restrictions that are now in force. However, I emphasise that we will do so only on advice from the State Veterinary Service, which is in overall control of the outbreak. It is our intention that the present restrictions on the movement of livestock will be extended on 2 March for a further two weeks. I fully appreciate how serious a complete ban on movement for that further period will be.

The chief veterinary officer has advised that, in light of the difficulties that have been caused, licensed and strictly controlled movements of animals to slaughter may safely be permitted. My officials are today in discussion with local authorities and police representatives to determine how such a scheme might be enforced. The new arrangements, which will come into effect on 2 March should, if we can resolve the problems, allow Scottish meat to re-enter the food chain.

At this stage, it is impossible to say when a full return to normality might be possible. I know that farmers recognise the need to maintain for as long as possible measures to control the disease. I am grateful to members of the public for their co-operation and ask them to carry on avoiding unnecessary visits to places in which livestock is kept. The more that people keep away from livestock and livestock farms, the better.

In light of the seriousness of the situation, I should also advise the Parliament that, for the time being, I have decided not to proceed with the publication of the Executive's agricultural strategy,

which was due to be launched next week. Clearly, it would be wholly inappropriate to launch the strategy during the current crisis. It remains important to identify ways of making progress on strategic issues, but I think that that can wait a little longer.

I will touch briefly on the financial issues. Farmers will receive compensation to the market value of the animals slaughtered. However, the wider financial and economic impact of the situation on livestock farmers is serious. It is all the more serious when taken against the background of the recent pressures on farming incomes. A key aspect of that additional pressure has been the sterling-euro exchange rate. I was, therefore, pleased by the UK Government's decision to call down all the agrimonetary compensation available for livestock sectors, which is worth £156 million for the UK and around £24 million for Scotland. I have pressed hard for that measure and I am sure that it will provide some welcome encouragement to the farming industry at this difficult time. I also welcome the decision to bring forward aid for those leaving the pig industry.

I assure the Parliament that the Executive will continue to work in the closest co-operation with other agriculture departments in the UK, the National Farmers Union of Scotland, other bodies representing industry and the public to do everything that we can to eliminate the foot-and-mouth epidemic and remove the restrictions affecting farming as quickly as possible. Foot-and-mouth disease has struck another devastating blow to the farming industry in Scotland, just as it has to the farming industry in the rest of the United Kingdom. We will all have to work together with great determination to help the farming industry recover once the progress of the disease has finally been stopped.

The Presiding Officer: I call the convener of the Rural Development Committee, Alex Johnstone.

Alex Johnstone (North-East Scotland) (Con): I speak not only as the convener of the Rural Development Committee, but as the Conservative party spokesman on the issue.

I welcome the minister's announcement and I thank him for making his statement available to us in advance.

That foot-and-mouth disease has once again attacked our country is a significant issue for us to deal with. As a livestock farmer, I am as concerned about it as many of my colleagues in the Scottish Parliament. I express my gratitude for the fact that the minister has dealt with the issue on a UK-wide basis. There are no boundaries for an infection such as foot-and-mouth disease. It is extremely important that regulations that are

brought in apply across the UK.

I must express my concerns about the effect that the outbreak will have on the meat supply chain. I acknowledge that the minister referred to that. We must take into account the abattoir sector, the livestock haulage sector and the other sectors that are dependent on the meat supply chain in Scotland. It is a particular concern that each of those sectors be addressed. We must find a way of doing so that brings us into a situation of normality as soon as possible. I am particularly pleased that the minister has instructed officials to act quickly and to find ways of implementing the chief veterinary officer's recommendation that strictly controlled movements of animals for slaughter may safely be permitted.

I would like the minister's views on the ways in which the situation might affect Scotland differently from the rest of the UK. Given that we are, so far, free of the disease, and that many parts of Scotland have relatively dispersed animal populations, I believe that we are afforded the opportunity to restart the meat supply chain in Scotland rather faster than in the rest of the United Kingdom.

I would like the minister to address two further issues. The first concerns the approaches that I continue to receive, saying that not enough information is yet reaching those who are afraid that they might be affected by the disease. I am aware that every effort is being made to get information into the public domain, but I would wish the minister to make further effort to ensure that that process is speeded up.

Secondly, I have also received individual approaches about people's extreme concern in relation to the availability and supply of the disinfectant and other chemicals that are necessary to ensure that proper quarantine restrictions can be observed.

Ross Finnie: I thank Alex Johnstone for his whole-hearted support for the general line that we are taking in our efforts to eradicate foot-and-mouth disease. This is not a matter for narrow party politics.

Alex Johnstone referred to how quickly we might be able to resume some deliveries into the food chain. He raised a question about whether a different regime could arise in Scotland. We must remember that 41 supervision orders are in place. It will, therefore, be for the chief veterinary officer to conduct a risk assessment, having regard to the geographic location of those orders. I have a note of those by office: 20 of them are reported into my Inverurie office—although that covers various parts of the Highlands, not just the Inverurie area. The Inverness office covers 11 of the orders, including, I think, two that are in effect in Orkney.

Nine orders are technically controlled from the Ayr office—those apply largely in the Dumfries area. One is dealt with through the Galashiels office.

Alex Johnstone will understand that it will be a difficult task to carry out a risk assessment of how to license movements that would not prejudice the possibility of an outbreak in the areas concerned. In a sense, Scotland will have a different regime, but that difference will be largely because we will have different considerations to take into account with regard to the input that the chief veterinary officer will make in carrying out that assessment.

Alex Johnstone asked about information. We are aware of the problem of information getting to the people concerned—unfortunately, those who have computer links have perhaps the best access at the moment. Wales, England and Scotland are sharing the release of information to a website, but members will appreciate that all the area offices of the Scottish Executive rural affairs department are doing their very best. Indeed, I think that they are coping extraordinarily well with the very high volume of inquiries that they are receiving.

Alex Johnstone's final point, which I know will also be of considerable interest to other members, was on the availability of disinfectant. I have already been in touch with the United Kingdom Agricultural Supply Trades Association—known to most of us as UKASTA—and just before I entered the chamber I received information that it has written to its suppliers, asking them to advise it if there are any bottlenecks or serious supply considerations. UKASTA has undertaken to do everything in its power to ensure that all its suppliers have adequate supplies of disinfectant for distribution to the farms concerned.

There is no question but that, earlier this week, a number of areas of Scotland were suffering quite badly from an absence of disinfectant, but I am very pleased by UKASTA's co-operation in trying to remedy that position.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): I wish to express the support of the Scottish National Party for the measures that have been taken and our total support—which we have expressed from the outset—for the emergency measures, including the export ban.

I also express my appreciation to the minister, his staff, the veterinary surgeons and all those who have worked around the clock since the crisis began, both north and south of the border, to ensure that the aim of the eradication of this most contagious of animal diseases is achieved.

I received the courtesy of an advance copy of the statement an hour ago. I hope that I am not transgressing any rule by saying that that advance copy stated that 39 farms were under supervision, but the minister has revealed that since I received

that copy that figure has gone up to 41, which illustrates the gravity of the situation that we face.

In supporting the measures that have been announced today, I urge the minister seriously to consider going further in three respects.

First, the minister should consider using the powers under section 7 of the Animal Health Act 1981 to introduce a programme of compulsory disinfection. I am sure that we have all heard stories—the evidence is perhaps anecdotal at this stage—that some people are not paying heed to the commonsense advice that is given. Indeed, I heard of one person who, instead of walking over straw doused with disinfectant, walked around it to avoid getting his feet wet. Is disinfectant available? Is it available in the areas in which it is most needed? That is an issue that is raising great concern in many parts of Scotland. Much more disinfectant will be needed if a programme of compulsory disinfection is considered necessary.

Secondly, it is obvious that the public, most of whom, like myself, are too young to remember the last outbreak in 1967, may not be aware of just how horrific this disease is. In echoing the concerns of the convener of the Rural Development Committee, I will go a little further by urging that the Executive and Her Majesty's Government consider running a television advertising campaign on both the BBC and independent commercial channels to advise the public, first, that there is no risk to human health from the consumption of meat and, secondly, of the dos and don'ts in this matter, such as the need to keep away from farm animals and the need for all farmers to remain vigilant. Such a television advertising campaign should commence before the weekend, when many people might otherwise be tempted to stray into areas into which they should not go.

Finally, on compensation, we welcome the announcements that have been made today, although agrimonetary compensation has nothing to do with foot-and-mouth disease, as is stated. Will the minister consider the economic catastrophe that faces our rural communities and the individual tragedy that faces many farmers, as well as the plight of hauliers whose businesses are devoted to carrying livestock and who have no alternative means of obtaining an income?

I hope that the minister will consider those points sympathetically, although I know that he cannot give definitive answers now. I hope that our approach of constructive opposition will be of some comfort to him and his department at this time.

Ross Finnie: I thank Fergus Ewing for his unequivocal support for the measures that we have introduced to deal with the situation. I also

thank him for illustrating the rapidly moving situation in terms of the number of farms and cases that are involved by referring to the version of the statement that he received an hour ago.

On Fergus Ewing's first point about the possibility of using section 7 of the Animal Health Act 1981 to implement compulsory disinfection, that is a matter for the advice that I continue to receive from the chief veterinary officer. On an hourly basis—it seems to be even more often—we receive his advice on the situation that is developing. I am confident that that possibility is on his radar screen. I think that I already dealt with the question of the availability of disinfectant when I referred to the statement that was made to me as I entered the chamber on UKASTA's request that suppliers of disinfectant should tell it of any potential bottleneck. It has undertaken to try to ensure that there are adequate supplies of disinfectant throughout Scotland.

On Fergus Ewing's second point about a television advertising campaign, we are prepared to consider any form of further public information that we believe might be necessary. In my statement, I emphasised that although I have taken powers to restrict movement and to close footpaths, those powers are fairly draconian and I would envisage them being used only in the event that an actual case of foot-and-mouth disease was confirmed in Scotland.

I am happy to consult the chief veterinary officer as to whether he thinks other public information is required. I am bound to say that I do not normally feel comfortable about wide press publicity. On this occasion, however, I think that it has been highly commendable, as it has drawn the issue to the attention of a very wide range of the public. Regrettably, we have a few instances—but only a few—of people ignoring the regulations that are in place.

I have two points to make about Fergus Ewing's third and final point on compensation. The first is that I have been pressing for compensation, and I am glad that the United Kingdom Government is coming forward with what, I think, will be a very necessary package.

Secondly, Fergus Ewing should be aware that in sectors that are already subsidised, there are real difficulties in constructing compensation schemes that overcome the state aid regulations. Those who have a close knowledge of the pig industry will know that it has taken almost a year to get proper clearance for the pig restructuring scheme. One is therefore not optimistic about trying to get another scheme through the European Commission in a relatively short space of time. I believe that utilising an existing mechanism, which is entirely consistent with the state aid regulation, is the right way of doing that. I am keeping my eye

on the wider ramifications of what could be a very serious issue. If the situation remains the same for very much longer, naturally I will keep the issue of compensation in mind.

The Presiding Officer: Members will be aware that this important statement is an emergency statement, and that it eats into the debate that is to follow, which is already heavily oversubscribed. I appeal to members and the minister for very short questions and answers.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I thank the minister for his statement and express my support for the measures that he has taken. Our overriding concern must be for the farmers and their families in rural areas, who are going through a period of great anxiety at the moment.

Would it be useful to consider setting up temporary abattoirs in rural areas to allow animals to enter the food chain without having to travel great distances? That could help those farmers who are not directly affected by foot-and-mouth disease. It could also help the supply of Scottish and British products in the food chain.

Will the minister give advice on what action should be taken by members of the public? For example, people who use airports and railway stations may come into contact with people from other areas. Are there any steps that they should be taking?

Ross Finnie: I can well understand Rhoda Grant's desire for Scottish and British products to have some access to the food chain. Since we are dealing here with a critical matter of public health, I am bound to say that, given the essential nature of the other controls that must be put in place before any ordinary abattoir would meet the required standards, I would be very dubious indeed about our being able to construct temporary abattoirs that would meet a different, but equally essential, set of public health regulations. I understand where Rhoda Grant is coming from on that, but we would be kidding ourselves if we thought that we could put in place an arrangement that would meet the required standards.

Rhoda Grant also asked what the general public should do. Since there is a very rare risk of individuals being associated with infection—a point that was made by Fergus Ewing, I think—if members of the general public have been close to livestock or have been on premises that are inhabited by livestock, the whole process of disinfecting themselves as they leave and enter those premises is just as applicable to them as it is to those who actually work on farms.

John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): Like everybody else, I welcome the steps that are already in place and I congratulate the rural affairs department on the

speed with which it has acted in this case. The minister suggested that there was sufficient information, or lots of information, being sent out on the radio, on television and by information technology. I wonder whether another measure might be to send a simple one-page letter in an envelope to all the livestock producers to advise them on the steps that they can take to contain the spread of the disease among their livestock.

Ross Finnie: I am happy to consider that proposal. I will consult our area offices, as I do not wish to put an unnecessary burden on them if we have already disseminated a fair level of information. I want them to concentrate on dealing with inquiries and on being on farms, where they are required. However, I will certainly look into John Farquhar Munro's proposal.

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I also welcome the minister's statement.

I understand that much of the focus is on the agricultural industry and on farming in particular. However, animal haulage is now a pretty specialised activity. For example, animals now require to be transported in specialised wagons and there is specialised training for the wagon operatives. I understand that an articulated lorry costs around £4,000 a week, while a driver is paid an average of about £300 a week. There are other overheads and approximately 300 wagons operate in Scotland—

The Presiding Officer: Mr Crawford, I appealed for short questions.

Bruce Crawford: I am coming to my question right now, Presiding Officer.

What plans are there for emergency support for the haulage industry? Once that element of the delivery mechanism is gone, it might be difficult to get it back.

Ross Finnie: I will be absolutely blunt: I have no such immediate plans. To be frank, my immediate plans are to contain this disease in a way that enables me to exercise the powers that I propose to extend on Thursday night or Friday morning so that we can introduce licensing. That would be the first step in bringing back into play those in the haulage industry, as it would allow some direct movement between farms and abattoirs to begin.

I believe that I addressed the general issue three questions ago. I am keeping my eye on the wider consequences. The best remedy for getting the haulage industry back on the road is for us to concentrate on the existing measures, which might give us the hope of an early resumption of some movement, under licence, from farms to abattoirs.

Alex Fergusson (South of Scotland) (Con): I will make three brief points.

First, will the minister ensure that the media play their full part in informing the public of the role that they can play in helping to limit the spread of this disease? Last Saturday morning, I was horrified to hear an announcement on BBC Radio Scotland that the public would be welcome to walk anywhere in Scotland's rural areas.

Secondly, given the minister's understandable desire, which is absolutely correct, to postpone the launch of the forward strategy for agriculture, will the Executive consider postponing its access consultation proposals until the full lessons have been learned from the appalling situation that we are in?

Thirdly, will the minister consider allowing farmers to protect, by putting down disinfected straw, those unfenced areas of their farms that are crossed by minor roads? I gather that the police do not allow that to take place, but it would be helpful.

Ross Finnie: I am satisfied that the incident last Saturday was isolated and we are now receiving very full co-operation from the media—that is certainly the case with all the media events that we have monitored since then. We have been satisfied with the responsible way in which the Scottish media have dealt with the situation and warned the public.

On Alex Fergusson's second point, I am postponing the launch of the agricultural strategy simply because it would be wholly inappropriate to discuss a forward strategy when the industry and those closely involved in it are feeling such pain. There is no read-across to a consultative process on a document that will form legislation at a much later stage. We are in a process of consultation on access that is in no way affected by the current situation and I do not agree with Alex Fergusson.

I have noted Alex Fergusson's point on the question of laying down disinfectant on minor roads and will take it up separately.

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): I express the widespread support of my farming constituents for the measures that have been taken. I welcome the introduction of the system of licensed movements from farms to abattoirs. That system is important, given the huge backlog of livestock that is starting to build up.

I ask the minister to turn his mind to looking a little further ahead. We support the further two-week suspension of livestock movement, but I remind the minister that, at this time of year, there is a huge transfer of livestock from the west to the east of the country as store producers sell on their cattle from the breeding farms to the finishing farms.

Although I fully support the suspension of

movement at the moment, if foot-and-mouth disease is not under control in two weeks' time, we will have to consider the impact on breeding farms of not being able to shift livestock. Most breeding farms are about to start calving for the coming year. There will be a severe shortage of housing and feeding if animals are kept on farm unsold while the mothers are calving down. Has there been any consideration of whether the system of licensed movement could be extended to breeding farms, if, in two weeks' time, we have not got to grips with foot-and-mouth disease?

Ross Finnie: I am all too well aware of the issue that George Lyon raises of cattle moving on for finishing—in some areas, calving has just begun. I cannot give him a definitive answer. Fergus Ewing said that this was a very rapidly moving situation. My priorities are to deal with matters for the next fortnight; however, my department is aware of the issue that Mr Lyon raises and of the need for us to think ahead and have contingency plans. I take Mr Lyon's point, and I understand the difficulty that will arise if, in a fortnight or just over a fortnight's time, we have no further developments. I will be guided by the advice of the chief veterinary officer as to what measures he regards as safe, consistent with eradicating foot-and-mouth disease.

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): I welcome the minister's statement. I also wish to express my dismay that two farms in my constituency are awaiting test results. I can only hope that they are negative.

Has the Executive any definitive information on the origin of the outbreak, given that there are many rumours on how this particular strain got into the UK? Can the minister reassure us that the Scottish Executive and the UK Government are drawing up plans to reinvigorate the meat and livestock industry once this epidemic is over?

Ross Finnie: I have no further information on the exact source of the disease. UK ministers are absolutely convinced that the sources of distribution are the farm at Heddon-on-the-Wall and the abattoir in Essex. All the cases that are under supervision orders result directly from the excellent work that has been carried out by agricultural and veterinary staff in tracing movements from those two sources. The precise source of the disease has still not been determined, but the sources of distribution are Heddon-on-the-Wall and the abattoir in Essex.

The second question was about whether we would help the industry once this crisis is over. The answer to that is yes. The starting point for that was for the UK Government, in consultation with the devolved Administrations, to draw down the maximum agrimonetary compensation and give a sense of hope that some £30 million will be

available to Scottish agriculture in the immediate future.

Dr Winnie Ewing (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I have a question on the European Union, state aids and compensation. Will the minister bear in mind the fact that some areas of Germany got compensation for swine fever?

Ross Finnie: Yes, I am very aware of that fact. Even before the swine fever outbreak, there was a catastrophic collapse in the pig industry. It is a great regret that it took 10 or 11 months for the pig restructuring scheme to get past its various hoops and hurdles and be put in place. It seems to me that using the agrimonetary vehicle—which is assured and not open to challenge—will mean that cash can get to farmers who need it earlier than might have been the case.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I must declare an interest, as I am a farmer. The minister said that nine supervision orders were being administered through SERAD's Ayr office at Russell House. How many of those affect Ayrshire farms? Will the licensing measures that the minister intends to put in place from next Friday guarantee the continuity of the food supply?

Ross Finnie: I regret that the best way in which we could get the latest figures in this ever-moving situation was on the basis of our offices rather than individual cases. I hope that we can get that information to John Scott.

I would be a very foolish minister if I were to start to give guarantees in this situation. It is my earnest hope that, given the CVO's risk assessment and the state of play on supervision orders and the other farms that require examination, if we can work out a licensing arrangement that could be properly supervised and does not cut across cases that are already under examination, it will make a sizeable contribution towards reopening the food chain. That is my hope, but it would be wrong for me to guarantee it. My overriding priority is to eliminate foot-and-mouth disease—that must come first.

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): Like Dr Murray, I would like to look forward. We all know of the unrivalled reputation of the quality of Scottish meat and Scottish meat products. Can the minister assure me that once we are clear of this dreadful episode, the Scottish Executive will make every effort to underpin and promote Scottish meat and Scottish meat products at home and abroad, especially in respect of our overseas markets?

Ross Finnie: I have no difficulty in giving Jamie Stone that assurance. Quality Meat Scotland had moves in hand to re-emphasise that and had it not been for the onset of the disease, that initiative would already be in train. I suspect that that is now

on hold.

The real difficulty will be the public fear that is caused by foot-and-mouth disease. As we know, but as the wider public do not know or recognise, foot-and-mouth disease has no read-across to human health. Educating the wider public will be an enormous job. Once we have established that we have eradicated the disease, we must remind the public that there is no read-across to human health and get on with the business of promoting the high quality of Scottish beef.

The Presiding Officer: I apologise to members—of all parties—whom I have not been able to call to speak. The following debate is heavily oversubscribed and we have already eaten into its allotted time.

Sustainable Development

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): We move to the debate on motion S1M-1694, on sustainable development, in the name of Sam Galbraith, and three amendments to that motion.

15:13

The Minister for Environment, Sport and Culture (Mr Sam Galbraith): Sustainable development has the potential to deliver substantially on the Executive's social justice agenda. It binds together much of our programme for government and, as people become more comfortable with the positive benefits that it offers, we will be able to make connections with other fundamental concerns, such as biodiversity and education.

The Scottish Parliament held its first debate on sustainable development on 3 February 2000. At the end of that debate we passed a motion that said:

"That the Parliament places sustainable development at the core of its work".

The Scottish Executive has made and renewed its commitment to sustainable development. It was a key theme in last year's programme for government. This year's programme for government carries that theme through and embeds it in the machinery of government. We have now moved from an ambition for sustainable development that needed explanation and justification, to an action programme that stands up in its own right.

The ministerial group on sustainable Scotland, which is an important focus for taking our programme forward, has two external members: Kevin Dunion of Friends of the Earth Scotland, and Mark Hope of Shell Expro. They provide perceptions that are difficult to obtain by other means, and have given our group particular vigour. I am grateful to both for their commitment and hard work, and for the knowledge and expertise that they have brought to the group.

In its first year, the group has addressed three main areas: resource management; energy use and generation; and transport and planning. Those themes should ring loud and clear for Scottish people and Scottish business. They should be daily concerns for Scottish communities and, if we get them right, they should improve the lives of many people who live in the worst circumstances throughout Scotland.

A major programme is under way to deliver our national waste strategy, which is an important component of the resource management priority

that was adopted by the group. We are putting £50.4 million into the strategic waste fund over the next three years. That will help local authorities to implement their area waste plans to reduce, reuse and recycle as much waste as possible.

We are also continuing to invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy. The Scottish climate change programme was published on 17 November last year. It sets out policies to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases in Scotland, which will help to deliver the UK's Kyoto commitment to reduce emissions by 12.5 per cent of 1990 levels by 2008-12. We have also set a goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20 per cent of the 1990 level by 2010.

Under our warm deal, thousands of pensioners and other low-income households are now entitled to free central heating and home insulation measures. The important point about that policy is that it means not only that people who could not do so can now afford to heat their homes—which I stress is an important part of social inclusion—but it will, through increased energy efficiency, reduce the energy that they use.

The new renewables obligation (Scotland) will increase Scotland's already significant renewable energy resource. Responses to consultation will help to decide which forms of renewable energy will receive financial support from the Executive.

The third matter that I mentioned was transport and planning. Last November, Sarah Boyack announced £33 million for projects throughout Scotland to be supported by the third round of the public transport fund. Many local authorities have spent considerable time and effort on their revised structure plans. They have committed themselves to ensuring that new developments, whether for business or services, are accessible to everybody by public transport. As well as local authorities, business is involved. By reducing landfill waste, energy usage and unsustainable forms of business travel, companies make big savings. Promoting sustainability therefore makes good sense for business.

Members will see from what I have said that we can truly claim that sustainable development is becoming a routine part of the work of the Scottish Executive, Scottish business, Scottish local authorities and the Scottish people.

Mr Murray Tosh (South of Scotland) (Con): Will the Executive continue with the temporary funding that has been given to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to allow COSLA to work with local authorities to promote the local implementation of sustainability?

Mr Galbraith: Murray Tosh is talking about local agenda 21, which is one of the Prime Minister's commitments. No, we will not continue with that

funding. It is not the job of the Executive to fund posts in COSLA. That is COSLA's duty.

We are also examining how we should measure our progress towards a sustainable Scotland. The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions has adopted a set of indicators for its work. It is a vast set of 150 numbers, whose application to day-to-day programmes cannot be easy. We have commissioned a report on how indicators might be made more relevant to Scotland and we plan to publish that, along with our own thoughts, in the next month or so. Our report suggests that 40 indicators might do the job, but even 40 indicators will be daunting to many ordinary businesses. Is that still too many? It might be that we should find a simple set of numbers that have day-to-day significance if we are to influence large sectors of Scottish life to move on to the sustainable path. We want indicators that can be measured and that can tell us something useful. Most importantly, we want indicators that mean something to people in their daily lives. Above all, we want relevant indicators, not simply unachievable figures that are plucked out of the air. As always, there is a tension between getting something done quickly and getting it done properly—we intend to get things right.

Sustainable development started in earnest as a world movement at the Rio earth summit in 1992. Britain was then at the forefront in adopting a strategic approach. The impetus has been kept up in Europe, where the environment is high on the agenda and is one of the three priorities for the Swedish presidency of the European Union.

The world is planning an earth summit that will be known as Rio plus ten, to be held in South Africa in 2002. That summit will be a major global event in which Scotland should have a role. Engagement with the people of Scotland is an important part of the sustainable development process. In preparing for the summit, the Scottish people should have the chance to set out what they think.

We have therefore asked the Scottish civic forum to lead a major national consultation process. The main aims will be to spread understanding and to debate sustainable development. Everyone who is involved in that process should have a fair say. The Scottish civic forum will reach out to small and large organisations throughout the length and breadth of the country. It will host three major events—in the Highlands, central Scotland and in the south. To ensure that those in the remotest parts of the country can be heard, the BT teledemocracy centre will organise a consultation exercise.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): Will the minister give way?

Mr Galbraith: Of course. I will be delighted to do so.

Fergus Ewing: On the meeting in the Highlands, does the minister feel that an additional 6p per litre on fuel tax and fuel costs in many parts of the remote Highlands is an example of sustainable development? If not, will he bring it to an end?

Mr Galbraith: I always know that I will regret wasting time on letting Fergus Ewing intervene. I am afraid that that is the case again.

Sustainable development is a vast enterprise. No country on the planet has solved even the most primitive problems of sustainable development, but many are making good progress. In Scotland, we are neither the best nor the worst. We have passed some big hurdles. Sustainable development is now a key feature of our approach to government. We are making it a key criterion in our spending decisions. Sustainable development is absolutely central to our planning for the future, which is a central duty for Government.

The floods of last year are an example of the consequences of failing to live sustainably. Climate change and loss of biodiversity are realities. Social injustice, poor education and degraded environments are, equally, evidence of a failure to live according to the principles of sustainable development. Without the foresight that sustainable development encourages, the events of the future will continue to rain down on us, rather than be controlled by us.

I move,

That the Parliament affirms its commitment to sustainable development; recognises the importance of sustainable development to achieving social justice for all peoples, and commends the Scottish Executive for continuing to place the issue central to its policies and programmes, as evidenced in its *Programme for Government: Working together for Scotland*.

15:24

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): It is good to see the Executive—especially Sam Galbraith—bringing the complex issue of sustainability forward for debate. The debate is important; global trends continue to provide evidence that human activity threatens our ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

That, of course, is the goal of sustainability as defined by the Brundtland commission in 1987. Without a dramatic change in the current mindset and behaviour, that goal will remain inaccessible.

I will develop that theme. In the past 50 years,

the world's population has more than doubled to 6 billion, and the world's economic input has increased almost sixfold. That unprecedented growth is altering the face of the earth and the composition of the atmosphere. The air and water are being polluted, waste is accumulating, forests are being destroyed, soil is being eroded, fisheries are being depleted and the ozone layer is being damaged. That threatens the survival of humans and thousands of other living species.

Society is living on its natural capital, not its income. We are acting like a planet that is in liquidation. Humans are conducting an uncontrolled experiment that is unprecedented in scope and scale and which could represent a significant reversal of natural evolution. However, despite the warnings of the world's scientists at the Rio conference in 1992, and the subsequent rhetoric about commitment to addressing environmental concerns, all the earth's living systems have continued to decline.

Some would say that the world's response has been irresponsible and dangerous. The current ideology of growth has captured humanity's imagination to the degree that we continue to believe that more of the same resource-intensive and pollution-creating economic growth is the best way of serving the common good.

Mr Andy Kerr (East Kilbride) (Lab): How does Bruce Crawford reconcile his commitment to sustainable development with his party's policy to build more roads?

Bruce Crawford: Well, actually—*[Interruption.]*—I am not sure about roads, but the sound system is certainly unsustainable.

The SNP's policy is intended to fill in the gaps that the Tories and Labour left. We approach today's debate against that background. We support much of what the Government is trying to achieve. *[Interruption.]* If the minister listened, he might find that I am trying to say good things about him. We recognise that some progress has been made. However, as might be expected, we have some difficulty with the somewhat self-congratulatory nature of the motion, as much work remains to be done and there continue to be concerns about the gaps in the Government's policy and programmes for action.

In March 1999, the advisory group on sustainable development produced a report that recognised that

"Sustainable development is about the wise use of all resources within a framework in which environmental, economic and social factors are integrated".

That group rightly looked forward to a vision of a Scotland in 2030 that involved Scotland's communities, citizens and resources. It considered what needed to be done and produced a 10-point

action plan for the Scottish Parliament.

Because the time for today's debate has been reduced, I will concentrate on only two elements of that plan: monitoring indicators, on which the minister commented, and education. It is good to have at last some response to that 10-point action plan. It is interesting that the response has been produced when we might be close to a UK general election. There is no doubt that the group's most important action point concerned education. It said that the Executive should

"Put sustainable development at the heart of education, and education at the heart of sustainable development".

The SNP has twice attempted to put sustainability at the heart of education policy: first, in April 2000, at stage 2 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Bill, and secondly, as recently as 6 December 2000, when the Education, Culture and Sport Committee discussed a statutory instrument on national priorities in education. Both our reasoned suggestions were rejected.

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): Does Bruce Crawford agree that the new environmental studies syllabus goes some way towards addressing that issue?

Bruce Crawford: I am talking about national priorities, not specifics. It will be most useful if Allan Wilson lets members know, when he sums up, how the Executive intends to ensure that the principles of sustainability are incorporated into national priorities for education.

The greatest emphasis on sustainability must be placed in higher education. Our current thinking remains a significant obstacle to the promise of a just and sustainable future. As Einstein observed,

"The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."

As the primary centres for teaching, research and learning, institutions of higher education are significant leverage points that reflect and inform current social mindsets. We must, in our pursuit of a sustainable future, capitalise on the influential position of higher education, but that will require significant changes. I am disappointed that the minister did not even begin to deal with that touchstone issue.

Much of the population has little idea about where goods come from, where they go or how destructive pollution is to human health. Too many of us believe that natural and physical resources are free and inexhaustible. We need to ensure that the next generation of students is prepared with the analytical skills and practical knowledge to respond effectively and compassionately to the challenges of the world.

Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Bruce Crawford: I will finish this point, as I have given way twice and my time has been cut. I will get back to Mr Muldoon if I have a moment.

There is still an inclination to treat sustainability education just like other specialities, such as sociology or biology. The training of specialists is an inadequate response to the problems that we face. Our students are left with little feeling for interconnectedness and little understanding, outwith the narrow confines of their disciplines, of the workings of natural systems.

Governments, through their institutions of higher education, bear a profound responsibility to increase society's ability to create a just and sustainable future. It is up to the Government to provide the policy direction, the impetus and the framework, but not enough is being done. I hope that the minister will respond positively to the points that I have made in that regard.

The advisory group recognised the need for sustainable aims, objectives, targets and time scales. It said that, without targets, it is impossible to measure progress on sustainable development. Indicators should become as regular a part of public monitoring information as are the unemployment figures. As the minister stated, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions recognises that indicators are a vital part of sustainable development, in order that we can keep track of progress in a way that is clear, comprehensive and useful to a wider audience. I have counted the indicators. There are 144 of them—not 150—spread over 12 pages.

The lack of meaningful and comprehensive indicators has been a serious failing in the Scottish Government's approach, yet that is not for want of promises of action. A year ago, in February 2000—the last time we debated the issue—the then Minister for Transport and the Environment announced that Scotland would have its own set of indicators. In March 2000, in a speech on integrating environmental issues, she said that she expected to report in the early summer of 2000 on indicators of sustainable development in Scotland. In a news release on 9 August, she said that she would publish a consultation document on sustainable Scotland later that month.

That was followed by an answer to a parliamentary question on 9 October, when the minister said that there would be a contract to develop proposals for indicators—that is similar to what we have heard from the minister today. There is a serious gap in the Government's toolkit. We have had an explanation about what is going on, but we want substantial progress. That is why, in relation to the indicators, we have tied the Parliament down to the end of May 2001. Will the minister deliver where the previous minister failed, or we will get more empty rhetoric?

The purpose of our amendment is meant to be positive. It recognises that, while the Government has made progress, much more must be achieved. It is the job of the Opposition to recognise where the Government is getting it right, but it must also point out where the Government is going wrong and where there are significant failings. We will do that job today. Our amendment recognises the reality of the situation on the ground—I hope that it will find wide support throughout the chamber.

I apologise to Bristow Muldoon that I could not let him in.

I move amendment S1M-1694.2, to insert at end:

“however, also recognises that a great deal of work still requires to be undertaken regarding sustainable development in the fields of social inclusion, rural affairs, fishing, education, health, transport and economic development as well as in relation to the wider environmental aspects, and believes in particular that meaningful sustainability monitoring indicators should be produced by the end of May 2001.”

15:33

Mr Murray Tosh (South of Scotland) (Con): A year ago or more, when we previously debated the issue, Sarah Boyack announced that sustainable policies would be at the heart of everything that the Executive stands for and that sustainable development would be at the top of the Executive's agenda. She said that all the issues would be on the table—presumably that means that there would be a transparent approach to the entire debate—and that the three arms of the sustainable development strategy would be economic growth, social justice and the environment. That commanded general agreement at the time.

Today's Executive motion talks about social justice. It is important that we understand that social justice policies include development and, therefore, sustainable development. If we cannot generate wealth and if we do not allow people to share fairly in the consumption of resources, we cannot achieve social justice. We must have development. There has to be a proactive approach to expanding our economy.

I presume that the Executive motion encompasses economic growth and the social justice elements, but it appears that the motion rather overlooks the environment. I recognise that the minister's speech was more balanced than his motion, but the purpose of my amendment is to state the obvious: the environment is quite an important element and arm of the sustainability: debate.

I have no problems in agreeing with a great deal

of what Sam Galbraith said in support of his motion. Clearly, sustainability has been on the Conservatives' agenda and has been growing in importance and significance since it first came to prominence in Rio in 1992. It has worked its way pretty thoroughly through the guidelines and policies that are issued in order to guide planners. My concern is that, to some extent, it has perhaps become stuck there. That is not meant to criticise or downgrade the importance of the planning system; it is meant to say simply that sustainability has to penetrate much further into the fabric of our thinking and of our political life.

There has been some progress in other areas. For example, all 32 Scottish councils have developed local agenda 21 strategies. However, we are entitled to ask whether sustainability is really at the heart of government. The minister's motion cites as evidence "Working together for Scotland: A Programme for Government", so I took a look at that document to see how prominent sustainability is, and I first came across it on the eighth page—roughly the middle. I suppose that one could say that that is where the heart is, but sustainability is not mentioned in the First Minister's preamble. It is not mentioned in the sections on education, enterprise, local government or transport, although I acknowledge that much—if not all—of what Sarah Boyack says on transport is motivated by an interest in sustainability.

So—is sustainability really so prominent? Is it really at the top of the agenda? Has the Government really put the emphasis on sustainability that it ought to put on it? I thought it revealing that Sam Galbraith said that the Government would not fund COSLA any further to develop local agenda 21 strategies. I wonder how he thinks that COSLA will do that. COSLA had a role to play and the local authorities have all developed their strategies, but where does that initiative go without funding? Is it truly viable to tell COSLA, when it is in a state of flux and turmoil, that it must fund that development itself? The sums in question were, relatively speaking, chicken feed, but it was useful pump-priming money to push the agenda forward. It seems that the minister is now asking the Scottish civic forum to do that free of charge.

Although the minister has spoken of the importance of sustainable development to the Executive, when one looks at what the Government has achieved and what it says is on-going work, pretty much all of it is new labels on old bottles. They are not necessarily worthless bottles, but a lot of it is on-going work. The Government is repackaging what it was already doing. One wonders what is really new and where the implementation strategy is.

I am happy to acknowledge that the Executive has, in many respects, favoured development. To some degree, Sam Galbraith and Sarah Boyack deserve congratulations on some of the planning decisions that they have made, which involved difficulties in balancing conservation and environment issues with economic development, but has anything changed qualitatively? Have we moved on?

Members received a briefing note from COSLA this morning, which expresses concerns about Sarah Boyack's commitment to transparency. There is a ministerial group on sustainable Scotland, but its meetings are not reported, so nobody knows what is being said. How transparent is that? COSLA is also concerned that there is no public scrutiny of how the Executive assesses the impact on the environment of its bills and how it carries out environmental audits of proposed legislation.

Mr Galbraith: That is Parliament's job.

Mr Tosh: It is Parliament's job? Well—perhaps it is. However, when the Executive's policy memorandum states its assessment of the environmental implications of a bill, maybe it should offer some information and guidance about that. Let us assume that the Executive will not issue any environmental information until such information is asked for. If that is really the minister's approach to the Parliament and the sustainability debate, I hope that it gains the currency and notoriety that it deserves. If that is his attitude, it is perhaps not entirely surprising that COSLA can issue a briefing that asks for a Scottish sustainability strategy—which it considers does not exist—and for the production of indicators, which it considers to be an essential part of any such strategy.

It seems that it is the minister's wish to be seen to pay some respect to the concept of sustainability. We all accept that Sarah Boyack was genuine when she spoke in the debate in February last year, but it is difficult to see what has moved forward under the new minister. It is difficult to see what his vision is and how we will move the debate forward. It is difficult to see how he will deliver the objectives for which we are surely all waiting.

It will be interesting to see whether, in the course of the debate, we get a clearer idea of, for example, how an effective renewable energy strategy might evolve from the aspirations that we have all endorsed so far, and how a national strategy for waste treatment and real and effective recycling might come from the disaggregated approach of the local area strategies.

The biggest problem in the debate is raising awareness. That does not happen in our

education system and I do not know how thoroughly it happens in the commercial sector and in public life. It is still largely a marginalised topic. If the Executive wants to move the debate forward, it must think about the topic's profile and about awareness of it. That means looking for partners who will determine the agenda and who will try to move it forward. So far, we have not heard how the minister intends to do that. That is why I have lodged my amendment, which calls on the Executive to outline an implementation strategy for achieving the objectives that all members share.

I move amendment S1M-1694.3, to leave out from “, and commends” to end and insert:

“and to passing on a decent inheritance to future generations of Scots; notes the progress reported to date in *Working together for Scotland*, and calls upon the Scottish Executive to consult urgently to produce a transparent and effective implementation strategy for sustainability.”

15:42

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): I commend the speeches made by my two colleagues on the Transport and the Environment Committee, Bruce Crawford and Murray Tosh. My amendment adds something important to the debate—the concept of targets, which were not much mentioned in previous speeches. We need attainable and realistic targets and a genuine commitment to reaching them. My amendment addresses that rather large hole in the Executive's so-called sustainability strategy.

Scotland is close to—if not at—the bottom of the recycling table in Europe; we recycle less than almost any other country in Europe. As a principle, we should start with waste planning, beginning with those things at risk and working backwards. If we do that, we will end up with recycling as the lowest-risk, most economic solution to our disposal problems, along with waste reuse and waste minimisation, all three of which the minister mentioned.

Waste planning should be local; it must be possible to implement local alternatives. The Executive's waste strategy seems to be the opposite of that. Any application for an incinerator should include a sum of, say, £10,000, to be given to bona fide local community groups to assess the environmental statement of the people who have submitted the proposal for the incinerator.

I want briefly to give some figures on incineration compared with recycling. For every tonne of waste, £78 can be generated if the waste is recycled and up to £700 can be generated if it is manufactured into an end-product. Incineration of that amount will produce £26 of electricity. Why do we not have a target? Some time ago, we set a target of 20 per cent for recycling, which we

should have reached this year; we have not got anywhere near it. I believe that the current level is about 6 per cent. In other parts of the world—for instance, at village level in Kent in England—70 per cent recycling is being achieved through intensive local recycling and composting.

The United States has worked forward from 8 per cent recycling eight years ago: New Jersey now has 43 per cent; Pennsylvania has 26 per cent; Washington has 39 per cent; Massachusetts has 34 per cent; and Minnesota has 45 per cent. Scotland has 6 per cent recycling and we do not even have an Executive target.

Dr Winnie Ewing (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): As Kent has been favourably mentioned, will Robin Harper also favourably mention Shetland, which has made great strides forward through internal arrangements?

Robin Harper: I commend Shetland.

I remind the Executive that Dundee, which was one of the leading recyclers, has recently begun to slip back; I ascribe that to lack of support.

Sam Galbraith mentioned biodiversity but, as a quick scan of the documents reveals, the Executive has made no specific commitment on how it is going to protect diversity. Local authorities are producing expensive and wonderful assessments of the biodiversity needs of local areas—I have an example here of one of those documents. Local authorities have identified the issues, but where is the money and commitment from the Executive to help them? I believe that, at long last, the Executive has gathered in the last agenda 21 reports from the 32 local authorities in Scotland, although I do not think that it yet has all the biodiversity action plans. After all that work, where is the Executive's commitment to taking the issue forward?

I support Bruce Crawford's comments on education. In the United States, a recent survey of university students showed that 60 per cent of them would like some environmental education included in their courses, so that every course has an environmental unit attached to it. I do not believe for one minute that we do not have the same pressure in this country and that our students would not also like that. The demand exists, so what is the Executive going to do to meet it?

In Scotland, there is a loose organisation called Education for Sustainable Development, which has 17 member bodies. Why does the Executive appear to be blocking attempts to get environmental education embedded in its legislation? Why does it apparently want to exclude from its policies real commitment to environmental education, especially to outdoor education, which is in almost terminal decline in

Scotland?

I will quote extensively from a letter written by Simon Pepper in December of last year to *The Scotsman*. It states:

“Regulation plays its part—pollution control, development control, mountains of environmental legislation. But these are all brakes, constraining bads, not promoting goods. The key is the knowledge, understanding, attitudes, skills and behaviour of people making the decisions in every context—home, club, business, local authority, agency, and central government.”

The minister paid lip service to that in his speech, but, as the letter states,

“To contribute to a new development culture, we all need to learn. Sustainable development education—at all levels—is vital.

However, in schools we are still educating young people as if this is not an issue; as if the needs of society are unchanged; as if they can go on pursuing development patterns which are unsustainable. Education has to take a new approach, to develop informed citizens of the future, able to make a difference.

The Executive has been under pressure recently to include sustainable development in its national priorities for the formal education sector. They fudged it, claiming to include sustainable development but referring only obliquely to this as something achieved by teaching pupils ‘interdependence with other members of their neighbourhood and society’.

This is a wholly admirable priority but it misses the point of humanity’s dependence on nature and natural processes—the most fundamental of our future needs if we are to have a society at all, let alone a fair, inclusive one. In reinventing the meaning of sustainable development—and his own Government’s commitment to it—to suit the needs of a different political agenda, the Education Minister”

made

“a dangerous mistake.”

I move amendment S1M-1694.1, to leave out from “and commends” to end and insert:

“recognises that conserving and protecting environmental resources is the key to ensuring that the welfare of future generations is not compromised by present day activities and, in order to ensure that sustainable development is placed at the centre of all Scottish Executive policies and programmes, calls upon the Executive (a) to adopt urgently comprehensive indicators of sustainable development and to measure progress against these indicators annually, (b) to set specific targets for a 10% reduction in road traffic by 2010, for 22% of electricity sold to be from wind, hydro and wave renewable energy sources by 2010, for conversion of 20% of agricultural land to organic production by 2010 and for recycling of 30% of municipal waste by 2010, (c) to adopt the recommendations of the Transport and the Environment Committee on telecommunication mast developments, (d) to set up an independent inquiry into sea cage fish farming within two months, (e) to exclude waste-to-energy incineration schemes under the Renewables Obligation (Scotland), (f) to institute bi-monthly meetings of the Ministerial Group on Sustainable Scotland, with publication of its minutes and (g) to carry out an annual environmental audit of its Programme for Government.”

15:50

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): I welcome the chance to debate the environment and how it relates to the Scottish Executive’s social and economic goals. Despite criticism in the chamber today, the Executive has made some encouraging progress in several areas since the partnership agreement was signed. However, it must strive for more progress in other areas, especially in relation to institutional changes and the need to set and achieve targets.

The Scottish Liberal Democrats believe that the Executive has made good progress by securing national park status for two areas of Scotland, after 50 years of MPs at Westminster failing to do so. I hope that the parks will become a positive example of how economic, social and environmental demands can be managed in an integrated way. Local communities have widely welcomed the setting up of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park, which includes part of my constituency. They have especially welcomed the fact that they will be represented on the management boards, which will therefore be able to take account of the communities’ needs in order to make the parks sustainable and to give them a future.

Genuine attention has been given to the implications of climate change. We should welcome the Executive’s commitment to an 18 per cent increase in renewable energy over the next 10 years; in particular, I welcome its commitment to wind and wave power development in my constituency.

It is not enough to say that nothing is being done; real changes are being made. As Mr Harper pointed out, we at least have a Government commitment to tackle Scotland’s appalling record on landfill, with funding to back it up. In my constituency, Argyll and Bute Council is leading the way in sustainable landfill and recycling. Inside the next two years, almost all the waste in Argyll and Bute will be processed through a composting regime at Lochgilphead. Argyll and Bute is doing well and this year has been given £3 million in level-playing-field support to assist that private finance initiative project.

As the minister pointed out, the Scottish Executive has made significant progress on fuel poverty, with better insulation for homes and free central heating for our old-age pensioners.

Although we are making progress in those areas, the Executive needs to up its game on targets and indicators of progress, as various speakers have highlighted. If indicators are good enough for Westminster, they should be good enough for Holyrood. Although I accept that the impact of fiscal measures makes indicators for

some factors inappropriate, there is no such problem in many other areas. The minister should be aware that the former Strathclyde region had a set of indicators for sustainability as far back as 1995. However, I welcome the minister's comments both on the issue and on how the Executive will address the need for setting targets and achieving them.

In summary, I welcome the progress that has been made, but I am aware that that was from a low baseline. Although many of the commitments are the result of European requirements, further steps must be taken to make environmental factors not just added value or optional extras, but core commitments in all policy areas. I do not doubt the commitment of ministers to that, but I would welcome signs that institutional changes are occurring and that the Executive will deliver on the minister's commitments.

15:55

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): I am slightly nervous about speaking, as the last time I spoke on sustainable development I lost a page of my notes. My speech was consequently neither sustained nor developed. I hope that I shall do better today.

I have no doubt that the Executive is committed to promoting sustainable development. What I am concerned about is the fact that that message is not getting across. Ministers are implementing a number of projects and initiatives across a range of policy areas, all of which should be commended. My worry is that the approach is too fragmented and ambiguous. The arguments for sustainable development have already been won, and what is needed from the Government is a greater commitment and clearer leadership in putting its policies into practice.

I am concerned that an unintended consequence of making the so-called WET—waste, energy and travel—issues a Government priority is that sustainable development is pigeon-holed and marginalised as a solely environmental issue. Sustainable development is an ethos; it is an approach that should influence all policies and should be implemented in all sectors and departments. I shall focus on one of those sectors—education.

When the Scottish advisory group on sustainable development was wound up in 1999, it suggested 10 action points for the Scottish Parliament. One was to

“put sustainable development at the heart of education and education at the heart of sustainable development.”

That is a clear message, but it is not the message that pupils, teachers or parents are receiving in schools.

Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP):

What does Mr Macintosh feel was the clear message that he sent out during the stage 2 debate on the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Bill, when he voted for neither the SNP's nor the Green party's amendment to embed sustainable development in the bill?

Mr Macintosh: I lodged my own amendment on sustainable development during the passage of that bill, as I am sure that Robin Harper remembers. I shall come back to that. I agree with much of what Bruce Crawford and Murray Tosh have said.

Setting up the ministerial group on sustainable development was an excellent step. Why is the Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs not on that group? The Deputy Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs answered that question for me by saying that the minister can sit on the group whenever he wants to. However, he is not a permanent member. That is an example of the Executive sending out a mixed message, possibly reflecting the fact that sustainable development is not at the heart of all our thinking.

When we talk about sustainable development, we often think of climate change and protection of the environment. Sustainable development is about such issues—it is about petrol pump protests, floods at Murrayfield and dwindling cod stocks—but it is about much more. It is about tackling poverty and reducing inequality; it is about empowering people to take control of their lives; it is about realising that the decisions that each of us makes affect our lives and futures and the lives of those around us, both near and far. If we are to accept and enjoy a sustainable way of life, we must give young people the knowledge and skills to do so.

We must recognise that the Scottish education system is an obstacle to that. Our conventions and our traditional focus on academic achievement can work against the ethos of sustainable development. In particular, the emphasis that we place on exams and qualifications diminishes the importance of cross-curricular subjects such as sustainable development. One of the most interesting outcomes of the Scottish Qualifications Authority debacle—although we have yet to take advantage of it—was that it demonstrated how displaced our preoccupation with exams and qualifications is. I quote the wise words of my colleague, Peter Peacock:

“The education system is only in part about teaching children to be literate and numerate. An understanding of sustainable development is a vital component of education for citizenship; the realisation that what we do today has an impact upon what we have to live with in the future.”

Modern studies and environmental studies

should be an examinable part of the curriculum, but we need to develop a much broader approach—a whole-school ethos—in which pupils are involved in decision making.

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

Mr Macintosh: To make that happen, the Executive has to provide clear leadership to counter the inertia and conservatism of the system.

I will try to wind up now.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Quickly, please.

Mr Macintosh: I do not doubt that we are heading in the right direction. I can point to two excellent documents that are out for consultation—"Promoting the International Dimension in Scottish Schools" and "Education for Citizenship"—which will promote and foster the sustainable approach. However, in the recent document "5-14 National Curriculum Guidelines", the chapter on sustainable development was missing.

We need to give more support to sustainable development policies. That aim needs to be explicit, coherent and comprehensive and I look forward to work by the Scottish Executive that will help that to happen.

16:00

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): Sam Galbraith's motion is indeed fine and genuine. It is unfortunate that he has left the chamber, because I was going to suggest that, if he becomes a bit more gracious and answers questions when they are asked, he, too, might be described as fine and genuine one day.

The Parliament should affirm its commitment to sustainable development and recognise, as the minister's motion states,

"the importance of sustainable development to achieving social justice".

However, the rightness of Bruce Crawford's amendment cannot be denied. Everyone in the Parliament and beyond must recognise that we have a great deal of work to do, in many fields, on sustainable development. Social inclusion must be at the heart of that. Kenneth Macintosh was right to use the quotations that he did to illustrate the fact that we can become a sustainable society only if we put people at the heart of our society.

Last year, a Scottish Natural Heritage paper spoke of achieving social well-being and equality through sustainable development—that must be the bedrock of any sustainable development policy. That is why I have some concerns about the Housing (Scotland) Bill. The bill gave us a

wonderful opportunity to put sustainable development at the heart of legislation that would be of great importance to our communities. The policy memorandum says that the bill is intended to contribute to high-quality and affordable houses to rent and to purchase, and to improve the quality of Scotland's housing and deliver decent housing options for all. I am afraid, however, that the bill will not achieve that. We have ended up with a watered-down version of those great intentions. The bill deals with social housing, the right to buy and not a lot else. Except for a small increase in the powers of local authorities to make grants for improvements in the private sector and a tiny improvement in the tolerable standard, the bill fails to deliver.

The tolerable standard was introduced as far back as 1969. We need radical changes to any level of tolerable standard in housing if we are to make a difference. I think that 1969 is an appropriate time to look back to. If my memory serves me right, the Scottish Office report on sustainable development suggested a 30-year programme. We can look back at the 1960s, which was 30 years ago, and see the results of the bad housing decisions that were made then and that have resulted in absolutely appalling living conditions for many people in this country. They have also resulted in fuel poverty, which we are debating in the chamber tomorrow. All those issues are sustainable development issues. We have houses in Scotland that people cannot afford to heat and houses that people cannot afford to live in.

By chance, a magazine was delivered to me this morning. It says that, in a two-bedroom flat in Easterhouse that was built in the 1960s, heating, lighting and cooking costs the resident £35 a week. It also points out that, in a two-bedroom house in Easterhouse that has recently been completed to half-decent standards, heating, lighting and cooking costs only £13 a week. I cannot think of a better way to promote sustainable development than for the Scottish Parliament to decide to bite the bullet and get on with creating a housing bill that will truly make a difference to the lives of people in our community and will eradicate fuel poverty. That is not about saying that we will give all pensioners central heating if they agree to the stock transfer proposals.

We have to admit that mistakes were made in the 1960s and agree that we cannot afford to make them again. We have to look forward and set ourselves indicators and targets—one cannot measure one's grand ideas unless one measures their implementation. I urge members to support Bruce Crawford's amendment.

16:05

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): I warmly welcome today's debate. It does not seem a year since we had the first major debate on this subject. I welcome the positive remarks that Sam Galbraith made, particularly on the ministerial group on sustainable Scotland and on its new members. I further welcome the civic forum debate on the matter, which should be useful.

On as vast a subject as sustainable development, it is possible in this debate to mention only a few things. One heartening thing that I wish to mention is a conference on renewable energies that is now taking place in Aberdeen—at least, I hope that it is. I look towards Robin Harper in mentioning that. That conference has brought together experts from industry and universities—people from abroad and from this country—to consider not only renewable energy sources, but how we can develop the appropriate technologies.

The considerable expertise of offshore oil and gas concerns has been particularly interesting, as has the way in which they can apply that expertise to harness renewable energies. I wish to thank members of the cross-party Scottish Parliament renewable energy group—I am not making a particular plug for the group's co-conveners—and especially Rob Forrest of the Scottish renewables forum. The group is trying hard to raise MSPs' awareness about sustainable development issues.

Local area plans have been developed from the document "National Waste Strategy: Scotland". I attended a meeting in Stirling at the weekend. I gather that the area waste plan drawn up for the area—the Forth valley—is the first that has been developed. There are currently 12 of them in Scotland. It was pleasing because, although there is still much apathy—on which I share the sentiments that members have expressed—there are also many enthusiastic people. Many people want to get going with various plans, including plans for composting and recycling.

Although we have to wait until the area plans are in place, we could get going on some of the related issues. In my area, 3,000 people are involved in a composting experiment in Dunblane. There is also the Kippen community composting initiative, and various other schemes are starting up, using the landfill tax money constructively and to good effect.

A few issues arose in the discussions on the area waste plan. The first was the time scale. The process has been very quick. Unfortunately, the plan that has been produced is not terribly clear to people in the community. We have asked that it be taken back and made a lot easier to understand—that must happen before we can expect the

community to participate.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency and its partners have found it difficult to find the baseline assessment data on what happens to waste in a community. They have found out what the council is uplifting, but information on commercial waste is difficult to obtain. The issue becomes complex when specialist waste streams, including those for batteries, tyres and hospital waste, are considered. In the Forth valley area plan, those matters are being left; they will be considered at a later date. I suggest that that is not the way forward. Unless we have a co-ordinated, baseline approach, the Forth valley waste strategy document will not have as good an effect as it could.

There is much public concern about incineration, which, several years ago, was a particular local issue in the central belt. There is no way that the people in my constituency would want an incinerator to be located locally unless we had stringent controls and knew a lot more about dioxins and were assured that there were no dangers from them.

I gather that, if people go in for composting and recycling and collect much more waste before rubbish gets to an incinerator, the incineration process can become much more specialised. I suggest that research into incineration is another urgent need that the Executive and the UK Government should be considering, to ensure that we are incinerating material in the safest and best possible way.

Another big issue that was raised at the meeting is the importance of bringing business on board and forcing it to think much more about reducing packaging so that there is not as much waste in the first place.

Finally, a big message that emerged was the need for much more co-ordination. Obviously, there are good points at central Government level, as Sam Galbraith outlined, but there are also good points at local government level. Local government needs help and resources and needs to have more flexibility. I gather that compulsory competitive tendering is still an obstacle. Audit reports such as "Benchmarking refuse collection" should address the broader, sustainable aspects of the issue rather than just efficiency.

16:10

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): In speaking to the subject of sustainable development, I am reminded of the words of Sir Martin Gilbert, who wrote in his history of the 20th century, "Challenge to Civilisation":

"From fish in the oceans, to trees in the rain forests, the failure of human restraints has begun to lead to irreversible

changes in the ability of the planet to sustain the existing level of well being. In many areas of the globe that well being is itself minimal.”

He goes on to say that

“Damage to the environment and the rapid consumption—as well as the destruction—of the world’s natural resources, adversely affect the affluent, the comfortable, the poor and the destitute alike.”

It follows that not only must development be sustainable but life itself must be sustainable and sustained. With that in mind, I wish to raise one issue. In years to come, conflicts may arise out of competition for water, or possibly because of humanitarian disasters such as flooding and drought. Either way, Scotland may suddenly be faced with requests for the export of water. As we use a little over 1 per cent of Scotland’s waters for our domestic requirements, it appears that there is a huge abundance of water that is surplus to our immediate requirements. If requests are made to Scotland, either in the name of humanity—if thousands are about to die from dehydration—or for commercial reasons, the question is whether we will be able and sufficiently prepared to respond.

If we had not completed the necessary studies and research in depth, we would rightly be condemned for lack of vision and foresight. As it is, we provide water in the form of bottled water, for which demand is growing widely, and, of course, in the form of whisky for export, so why should we not provide water in bulk if and when we are called on to do so? If we do, there will be more than one form of water of life.

Scotland has a huge reservoir of ability, talent and expertise. The minister is well aware of the distinguished work of Professor George Fleming, who is professor of water engineering and environmental management in the department of engineering at the University of Strathclyde. I accept that sustainable water resources in Scotland must address water shortages in east coast and Borders areas and that an integrated water resource strategy must form a blueprint of sustainable water policy, which will involve integrated river basin management.

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): Does what Lord James has just said support the argument for having one water authority rather than three in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The move is welcome and helpful. However, water policy must also embrace water exports, as sustainable change can be supported only if we have a healthy economy. Water exports may represent an important economic opportunity. We have to ensure that the necessary framework is in place to achieve that.

Major developments are taking place in other parts of Europe, for example between Norway and Rotterdam. There is a growing interest in the Arab world in the possibility of receiving bulk water shipments, as its water resources become more and more expensive. A major project is taking place, supported by Buro Happold, in which major flexible floating structures with a huge capacity for water are being tested as a serious move to commercialising water exports.

It should be remembered that, in future years, cars and buses will be highly energy efficient, probably using fuel cells and lightweight construction as part of sustainable transport. Therefore, the need for an integrated, efficient road, rail and water transport network remains a central part of sustainable change if we are to ensure the economic prosperity that supports a sustainable environment.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please wind up.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In conclusion, I appeal to the minister, as a fair-minded man, to put in place the necessary research on the subject. On the basis of averages, there will come a time of emergency when tens of thousands of people may die from dehydration. At that time, I hope that it will not be said that we have been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

16:16

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): It is always illuminating to listen to Lord James Douglas-Hamilton speak. I endorse his recommendation that we consider the export of one of Scotland’s last and greatest assets—Scotland’s water. As history unfolds, that resource may perhaps be found to be more valuable than Scotland’s oil.

The debate concerns the meaning of the phrase sustainable development. What exactly does it mean? The odd thing about it is that all of us, from all parties, can support it. That does not occur every day on every issue.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton reminded us of Sir Martin Gilbert’s fine words. He set out a fine exposition—indeed, a statement of principle. I suggest, however, that that statement of principle has become rather sullied: the ideal has become policy and, from time to time, the policy has, perhaps, become an excuse.

It is very convenient for politicians to be able to argue that we are in favour of sustainable development. It sounds very encouraging, but what does it actually mean? I suggest that sustainable development means what we want it to mean. It prevents us from grappling with the real problems of bureaucracy, of failed policy and

of catharsis on the part of the Executive that must be tackled, especially in the rural communities with which I am concerned.

I have been grappling with some such policies for some time now. I shall give one example. A landfill site has been proposed in Strathnairn. It is opposed by everybody in the community of Strathnairn. I will oppose it with all vigour. Why is the landfill site necessary? Because it is not possible to use the Longman site to a greater extent, because the former convener of Highland Council did not fight that battle, because of opposition from some environmental groups. Perhaps he felt that it was wrong to take on the arguments of those groups, but other communities in the Highlands may now be paying the costs for that failure, which is a failure to address the arguments as they are and the facts as we face them.

In facing the current crisis in fishing, members of our fishing community have the dilemma of deciding whether they should go to fish in pursuance of a so-called conservation policy that says that they must catch immature haddock. Imagine what it is like to be a fisherman when the net comes out of the water full of immature haddock. That is the great conservation policy that has come from the Commission. No wonder fishermen are coming here tomorrow to demonstrate their concerns. They deserve to have their plea for a tie-up scheme considered far more sympathetically than it has been up till now.

The aggregates tax will punish Scotland by imposing a rate of tax per aggregate tonne that is twice as high as that in England. What kind of policy is that? It will lead to the closure of small quarries. When that happens, lorries will have to travel further. There will be more, bigger lorries travelling more miles on our roads. What kind of sustainable policy is that? We have no sympathy at all from the Chancellor of the Exchequer and other members of the Treasury, with whom I have long corresponded on this issue. Not one whit. They refuse to accept that their information is wrong.

You are tapping the microphone, Presiding Officer. I hope I have another 30 seconds.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): That was a 30-second warning.

Fergus Ewing: Finally, I will address the point that the minister, who is now absent, patently failed to deal with. Motorists in the west Highlands, in the north generally and in many other rural areas face the awful situation of trying to sustain life with the necessity of the motor car. They have to pay a penalty of 5p or 6p extra per litre on top of a fuel tax and fuel cost that is already the highest in Europe. I do not think that that is necessary in

the interests of the environment. I do not see tailbacks in Tongue, pollution in Poolewe, gridlock in Gorthleck or cars tailing back from Mallaig to Fort William every morning as they go down the freeway that is otherwise known as the A860—the only single-track trunk route in Britain.

I hope that the Executive will finally stop spouting fine words and start to address real problems, some of which I have touched on briefly.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will give a 30-second warning. We are going to be tight for time if every member who wishes to speak is to get in.

16:20

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): I welcome this debate. I commend the Executive for raising it. I also commend the Executive for what it has done so far and for what it has said.

I am not criticising this particular Executive if I say that all Governments are much better at talking a good game than they are at doing anything, particularly in relation to the environment. Governments are of the Ally McLeod—members may remember him—school of management: lots of good speeches that lead to disaster.

I will make three points. The first may appear to be trivial, but I am all for practising what one preaches. I understand that there is a question over the wood that is to be used in our future home at Holyrood. Bovis Lend Lease, the contractor, recommends that its project managers specify that wood should come from the Forest Stewardship Council scheme, which is the only recognised scheme. I further understand that the worthy ladies and gentlemen in charge of our Parliament building are trying to use sustainable material but, for some reason, they have not committed themselves to supporting that scheme. We should do the right thing as well as say the right thing.

Secondly, one of the defects of democracy is that it is short term—people are worried about winning the next election. While that is understandable—we all have a vested interest in the next election—it is difficult to develop long-term programmes. One way of getting over that—and over the innate business of us v them, which we have regrettably inherited from Westminster and which many of us hoped we would get away from—would be for the minister to get together representatives of all of the six parties in the chamber as well as other relevant people and start work on an agreed Scottish environmental policy. Such a policy should involve real expenditure over a considerable period of time. The parties could not say during the next election campaign, “Oh,

this silly Executive spent £10 million on this when it could have spent £10 million on repairing some schools" or whatever if they were all hooked into that policy. If people were committed to an agreed programme, we might get somewhere in the long term.

We might also get over the NIMBY problem that arises all over the place. One of the bright young men who write for the benefit of the Liberal Democrats and, doubtless, for other parties, told me about a new thing—a BANANA. Other members may know about BANANAs, but it appears that they have outpaced NIMBY. It stands for build absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone. If we had an all-party group, we might get over those problems as well.

Such a group should also consider local government. Those of us who have local government experience will recall being confronted with the dilemma of whether to put a little bit of money into ensuring that the number of teachers did not have to be reduced or into improving recycling. Over and over again, local authorities keep the teachers and do not do the recycling. Local government must get real financial support to be able to work together so that, for example, paper recycling becomes viable.

Thirdly, on the joined-up government argument, recycling and other environmental schemes could produce a great many jobs but, on the face of it, they do not quite pay for themselves and therefore they are not set up. If we could bring together funds for training, development, job creation, environmental proposals and so on, those sorts of schemes could be paid for. We would greatly improve the environment and create thousands and thousands of jobs. However, we do not take that approach because, despite the warm words, we do not have joined-up government.

16:25

Mr Andy Kerr (East Kilbride) (Lab): Donald Gorrie is a hard act to follow and I am not a greengrocer.

We have talked a lot of things down today, but there are many positive aspects to what the Executive is doing—the national parks, the national wave strategy, strategies on beaches and cleaner air, the insulation of 40,000 homes, free central heating and strategic environmental assessments. In addition, working in partnership with our Westminster colleagues, the Executive has cut taxes—in a targeted way—with the 2p cut for ultra-low sulphur petrol, the 3p cut for ultra-low sulphur diesel and the cut in vehicle excise duty for smaller and more environmentally friendly vehicles. There has also been the climate change programme, which is the area on which I would

like to focus in the short time that I have—especially in relation to Scottish hydro schemes.

As members know, the debate on renewables is very active, and rightly so. I sit on the Scottish utilities forum and am the convener of the Transport and the Environment Committee, so I am obviously building up my knowledge and understanding in that area. It is an issue that I would like to develop with the Scottish ministerial team. Something that has concerned me, as a result of meetings that I have had, is the treatment of hydro assets under the climate change levy and under our obligations on renewable energy.

I would like an explanation—perhaps not this afternoon but in writing later—on why our hydro assets are considered in the same way, environmentally, as coal-fired generation. That does not fit with a positive sustainable strategy. We need to re-examine that and take a commonsense approach. It would also be helpful to know whether the UK has decided to adopt the 10MW threshold, which was central to EU directives but which the EU has subsequently dropped.

Because of the geography of Scotland, the cost base of hydro schemes in Scotland is very different from that elsewhere in Europe. We have a large engineering infrastructure that requires to be maintained to get the volume of water necessary to create the load factors that we need to generate electricity economically and effectively. That, arguably, is in stark contrast to the case of some of our European colleagues. Will the Scottish Executive take into account the different approaches that are taken in Scotland and Europe?

The changing economics of the energy market are very important. In that market, wholesale prices have dropped by 20 per cent. That has an impact on economic decisions on the refurbishment of hydro capacity in Scotland. I am very concerned by the fact that the 3p per unit price that applies to other markets and other forms of renewable energy does not apply to investment in and refurbishment of hydro schemes. Scottish and Southern Energy plc has frozen its refurbishment projects. If all that work stops, we will lose a great deal of capacity. SSE reckons that 1,600MW will be lost if we do not continue with a refurbishment programme. That is equivalent to the output of 700 or 800 windmills, which would have an effect on the environment as well.

We must not look the gift horse in the mouth: we have our own hydro and we should treat it more fairly. I look to the Executive to take a softer view of hydro and to take a more sensible economic approach to it. That would be a Scottish solution to Scottish problems and delivering it would be a great benefit to the Parliament.

Many other things could be said in this debate, but I have chosen to focus on one particular aspect. I hope that the minister can respond positively on some of the issues that I have raised.

16:28

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): I would like to follow up on the points on recycling that have been made by others—by Robin Harper in particular. It is a matter of shame that we in Scotland recycle so little, that there is so much waste and that we are so far behind many comparable nations. The statistics show a substantial difference between Scotland and Denmark in terms of what is recycled.

As someone who assiduously gathers in bottles and papers for recycling, I appreciate that the benefits of recycling are arguable, given that I often go to recycle those bottles and papers in a vehicle that uses fossil fuel, perhaps negating any benefit from the recycling. Recycling has to be dealt with strategically. It is not just a matter for individuals. There has to be an overall strategy, and that has to come from the Executive.

The fundamental flaw at present is that we cannot consider recycling unless we consider the whole creation of the product. An absurdity in the devolution settlement is that this Parliament and the Executive are charged with responsibility for dealing with recycling, but responsibility for the definition of product packaging is reserved to Westminster.

Mr Kerr: Does Mr MacAskill recognise that most of the legislation relating to packaging and so on comes from Europe? In which case, what is his argument in respect of Westminster?

Mr MacAskill: The Westminster issue is important. Europe lays down directives that the Westminster Parliament and the Scottish Parliament must follow. It is an absurdity for us to want to have a recycling strategy if we cannot decide on the nature of what is first put into the system. The logical end of Andy Kerr's argument is to give recycling over to Europe. If he is saying that the Scottish Parliament is capable of dealing with recycling, it follows that it is also capable of dealing with the definition of packaging, bearing in mind the parameters that are set down by EU directives. However, at the moment, expecting the Parliament and the Executive to deal with recycling matters without being able to deal with packaging is to try to address the outproduct without being able to consider the inproduct.

My second point relates to balance in the definition of sustainable development. Too often, people see sustainable development as retaining and sustaining; as setting in aspic; as keeping matters frozen. There must be a balance. If some

areas are to experience economic development, regeneration and social justice, decisions will have to be taken that are not environmentally friendly but are necessary.

I recall being in Stornoway at the height of the fuel crisis. Many people have argued that we should have kept the fuel duty escalator so that the price of fossil fuels keeps going up, but areas such as Stornoway are haemorrhaging. When I read the *Stornoway Gazette & West-Coast Advertiser*, I noticed that it was the anniversary of the evacuation of St Kilda. Unless we bear in mind the economic needs of many areas of Scotland, some areas will continue to be depopulated. In some areas, we must ensure that economic development takes priority over environmental protection. It is a matter of balance, which must be dealt with on a local basis, yet taking a national perspective.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I offer my regrets to Elaine Murray, who sat through the debate hoping to speak but was ultimately beaten by the fact that other members overran. We move to the winding-up speeches.

16:32

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): One can tell that members have returned invigorated after the break—some of us with snow on our boots—because we have had an incredibly wide-ranging discussion. Today, we have covered bottled water, immature haddock, dumps, BANANAs, beer, the next election, tailbacks and even the evacuation of St Kilda. By way of summing up, I will break all the rules and make two points.

My first point follows on from what Kenny MacAskill—who has just left us—said about development versus conservation. There has been an on-going problem, not just in the Highlands but all over—I see that Fergus Ewing knows what I am about to say—with Scottish Natural Heritage. It is not that SNH is wrong in what it is trying to do, but that it does not always take local communities, businesses, people, farmers and crofters with it. If members were to attend any planning meeting across Scotland, they would hear councillors making accusations about SNH being heavy handed about the greater spotted something or other. We often read about such things in local papers. We have to tidy up that approach. SNH does good work, but some of its public relations could be better.

My second point concerns tourism. I come from what has been nicknamed MAMBA country. MAMBA stands for miles and miles—I do not know what the B stands for—and the A stands for all. We have something that is key to sustainability—

the Highlands' unique scenery and fauna. This morning, driving down the A9 just north of Kessock bridge, I was blessed with the wonderful sight of a red kite high over the dual carriageway. I live within golf-ball hitting distance of badgers, buzzards, otters and even golden eagles. That is something that we have and that will be there for ever.

The definition of sustainability is about mankind living, working and improving himself, although not at the cost of future generations. Fergus Ewing said that sustainable development is something that we make up as we go along, but I think that my definition is fair. Tourism is a sustainable industry for the Highlands and other parts of Scotland and it will be there for keeps if we manage it correctly. It is all about playing to our strengths.

I apologise to Fergus Ewing, but I must take one small pot shot at him. He has made some play, very adroitly, of the fact that the Scottish Executive and Highlands and Islands Enterprise are paying £20,000 each for a group of senior civil servants from the Nordic countries to attend a conference at Skibo Castle.

In my view, that money is extremely well spent and is very much to the benefit of my constituents. If we are talking about tourism, we are talking about getting people from the Nordic countries and all over the world to come to the Highlands. If Fergus Ewing was going to have a conference and wanted to encourage people to come to the Highlands, would he take them to the shoddiest or the best place? He would take them to the best, and that is Skibo Castle.

If I may, I will comment on what has been said so far.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Apart from the plugs, stick to sustainability, Mr Stone.

Mr Stone: I did not think that you had spotted that Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We listen.

Mr Stone: Bruce Crawford is to be congratulated on mentioning Albert Einstein in the debate. In many ways, we are all singing from the same hymn sheet. The group of ministers will examine ways in which to tally how we are getting on in the coming period. That scotches Bruce Crawford's and Murray Tosh's arguments, well made speeches though they were.

I am not sure whether Murray Tosh is aware of this, but I served on COSLA's LA21 committee. Notwithstanding the fine efforts of COSLA, we were all keenly aware—and COSLA would agree with this—that it is up to local authorities to deliver LA21. Much of our time was spent auditing what was happening in Scotland's 32 local authorities.

While we all sympathise with COSLA's situation, which is pretty grave at this stage, I do not think that Murray Tosh would want to overplay it, although I fancy that he detected that it was a fairly handy weapon with which to beat the minister.

As Andy Kerr said, we are doing well. Our young people are far more aware of environmental issues than my generation was. Look at what we are getting back on to the railways these days. I have one last example: our beaches and how much cleaner they are. When one swam off the beaches of Scotland some years ago, one was only going through the motions. Now, it is quite different. I support the Executive's motion.

16:36

Robin Harper: One of the points that has come out in this debate, to which I would like to pay tribute, is the enormous amount of good work that has been done on LA21 in Scotland by organisations such as Lothian and Edinburgh Environmental Partnership in Edinburgh, Working for Environmental Community Action Now in Fife and the Business and Environment Network in Midlothian and West Lothian. It would be appalling if the backing for those organisations, through the fault of either local authorities or the Executive, withered on the vine, because it is important that we make progress on developing sustainability in Scotland at every possible level.

I will refer briefly to what Sylvia Jackson said about incinerators. I wish to make clear what is happening in the rest of the world. In the United States, 400 proposals for incinerators are being blocked. European countries across the board are turning away from incineration. Even in England there is a policy shift away from incineration as a way of dealing with waste. In terms of investment, encouraging local authorities to take this stop-gap measure to meet European directives on landfill would lock us into a wasteful, polluting and thoroughly unsustainable waste policy for 25 years, stifling any progress that could be made in recycling for a quarter of a century. We would be the least advanced country in Europe in 25 years' time.

I will address a few of the points in my amendment that come under the general heading of targets. The target of 22 per cent of electricity to be derived from renewable energy is restricted in my amendment to what has already been recommended to the Executive by several organisations. The Executive will be considering that at the moment. In fact, we could have an aspirational target that is considerably higher—up to 30 per cent—if we include all other sources of renewable energy.

The organic conversion target of 20 per cent was included simply because, in the not-too-distant future, I hope that the Executive will have a recommendation for the conversion of at least 20 per cent of land in Scotland to organic status.

In the last few minutes I will address a couple of other concerns. If the Executive's response to the Transport and the Environment Committee's telecommunications report is an indicator of future responses to committee reports on environmental matters, we are in for a hard time—years of closing stable doors after horses have bolted, years of wasting committee time, years of too-little-too-late policies, years of Scotland stewing in a smelly environmental backwater. It is intolerable that we should be waiting for action on this matter more than a year after the Transport and the Environment Committee produced its report. I would like to add to the words of many others about that concern. The Executive should address that matter as soon as possible.

It would be intolerable if the same dilatory attitude were to inform Executive inaction in respect of the inquiry into sea cage fish farming. The Executive has been asked by two committees to set up an inquiry with all celerity. I expect a sense of urgency and some acknowledgement that the prospect of the extinction of wild salmon on the west coast is not to be tolerated. We need to have the report in our hands by June this year if we are to be in a position to take any necessary action.

Finally, I ask in my amendment for access to the minutes of the ministerial group on sustainable Scotland. It would be nice for Parliament and the committees to know what is being discussed in that group and to have at least some group minutes. The group should not meet in a sort of private cabinet capacity and once a year reveal something of what might have been discussed.

I commend my amendment. It will take us forward even further than the Conservative and SNP amendments.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Murray Tosh has five minutes to wind up for the Conservatives.

16:41

Mr Tosh: I think that everyone who has participated in the debate has agreed that there has been progress. There might be differences about the scope and direction of that progress, but I think that we agree that some things have been happening.

Many members have referred to good practice in Scotland as a whole or in their local areas. Much agreement has emerged about how we need to proceed in future and about some of the directions

in which we might attempt to travel.

I have watched with fascination the endless flood of notes descending down the gangway all afternoon to the minister. I hope that those notes are all on recycled paper or at least that they will subsequently be recycled. I am sure that the minister will have a great deal to respond to.

Mr Galbraith: They are all recycled.

Mr Tosh: In Sam Galbraith's case, I am sure that most of it is recycled.

Mr Galbraith: Very cutting.

Mr Tosh: I want to pick out one or two of the points that have been made.

I hope that the minister will respond to the point that Robin Harper and George Lyon made about the need for good statistics, for indicators, for targets to be set and measures to be achieved.

Andy Kerr made a useful point about how we assess hydroelectricity. I hope that the minister—listening carefully as he always does when he is not speaking to Jamie Stone—will give Andy Kerr the response for which he asked. It would be useful for us all to have that response, rather than for it to be provided simply to Mr Kerr for his own elucidation. One of the problems when ministers agree to give a member a response is that there is no procedure in place to ensure that all members get the information. Perhaps ministers ought to reflect on that, because a specific point that is raised by a member often has general interest and applicability. I do not think that any harm is done by being open and sharing the information.

Kenneth Macintosh made a good speech. It was sustained and developed this time. He stressed the importance of getting the sustainability agenda into the education system. More needs to be done on that.

I thought that Donald Gorrie was admitting to going bananas at one point, but the purpose of his point was to pursue the need for local government to be centrally involved in the process. That is important. We must not lose sight of it. I do not know what Donald Gorrie would have made of Jamie Stone's somewhat shabby point about local agenda 21, but Robin Harper dealt with that adequately.

Kenny MacAskill completely missed the point about the packaging directives. They are all shaped by European legislation. In a sense, it does not matter whether Westminster, the Scottish Parliament or the Welsh Assembly deals with packaging for us, because we will come out with much the same kind of regulations in the long run.

Recycling is important. Robin Harper spoke about it a great deal, as did Sylvia Jackson, who went through her concerns about incineration. I

think that Fergus Ewing was the only one in the debate who showed a sort of romantic attachment to landfill.

Dr Winnie Ewing: The opposite.

Mr Tosh: No, no. He was specifically concerned that we should still use a landfill site that is not now available. Landfill is no longer the answer. How should we dispose of our waste in the future? My concern about the current direction of the Executive's strategy is that proceeding on the basis of the 12 areas may not create streams of material that are sufficiently substantial to make recycling viable. Incinerating huge quantities of material that may not need to be incinerated may be inherent in the strategy.

Recently, I saw a presentation from Scottish Coal. I will not argue its case, because I cannot evaluate it. However, its argument was that a national or sub-national strategy to deal with waste would generate sufficient volumes of material to make recycling effective enough to reduce incineration and landfill to relatively low levels. I wonder whether the Executive is really committed to the localised approach, because I suspect that a regional approach would be viable in much of central Scotland. That would provide greater volumes of material that we could deal with sustainably.

I am happy to conclude by restating my earlier point. The profile of the issue needs to be raised. The debate has been good, but I am rather sad at the number of members who have not attended. If we are to raise the profile of the issue, the Executive must put sustainable development at the heart of all its strategies and all its work. If it does that, I am sure that it will have the Parliament's whole-hearted support.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Fiona McLeod to speak for the Scottish National Party. You have seven minutes—it would help if you shaved a bit off that.

16:46

Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP): Certainly. Sustainable development applies to debates too. I will follow up Murray Tosh's concluding remarks by saying why the debate is important. We can relate the debate to real lives by considering current events, such as yesterday's weather chaos. Many weather patterns that we suffer nowadays can be attributed to climate change. Furthermore, the introduction of industrial practices into a natural process could be part of the explanation—although it is not entirely to blame—for the spread of foot-and-mouth disease. Just last night, I learned that 70 per cent of food in the United Kingdom is produced on only 20 per cent of farms. Society is turning its back on nature,

and nature is giving us our due.

We must go beyond words and ensure that action is taken. Several members have discussed many of the Government's commitments, so I will not go into great detail on them. The advisory group on sustainable development's 10-point action plan was also mentioned. It was encouraging to hear that—two years after that plan was produced—the Government will finally take up most of those 10 points.

"Making it work together" and "Working together for Scotland" referred to sustainable development. We have heard that the Executive has a commitment to sustainable development and that that is central to its policies, particularly on transport and the environment. That was in "Making it work together", which was published in September 1999. That document preceded the Transport (Scotland) Bill, which the SNP and the Green party tried to amend to embed in it sustainable development in transport. The Executive refused to accept that change.

If the Executive says that it is committed to sustainable development then fails to put those words into practice when it has the opportunity, that tells us that the Executive believes in words rather than action. Today, the minister said that sustainable development would be embedded as a central policy of the Government. I am pleased to hear that, but I hope that that was not another of the minister's technical terms, like those that he used this morning when he gave evidence to the Transport and the Environment Committee. I hope that we get action, rather than embedding Government commitments.

Many members referred to the ministerial working group and asked questions about it. They asked about when it has met, what it has done and when the Parliament will hear about it. It is essential that members become part of that process and hear what is happening. Talking about a ministerial working group on sustainable Scotland but not reporting to Parliament on it shows that the Executive is all talk and no action.

What happened at that ministerial working group in regard to the indicators that we are all waiting for? We have heard how long we have had to wait for those indicators. Today, the minister came close to telling us that we might get 40 indicators and that we might get them some time. We would like to know when we are going to get them and what they will be. We want to know whether the ministerial working group has provided guidance on how business in Scotland should take sustainable development into account in its everyday working practices.

I was surprised that no other member raised the Friends of the Earth Scotland report card, which I

am sure we all received today and which would not make happy reading for the minister. I pick a few issues that have been given unhappy, unsmiley faces. Mixed waste incineration for energy has been discussed, and it is accepted that that is not a sustainable way of producing energy, yet it is still under consideration in the renewables obligation (Scotland) consultation. The SNP will say no to mixed waste incineration as a form of renewable energy.

The FOES report card talks about indicators—almost everyone has raised that issue today. The SNP amendment is there to ensure that we have a timetable, and that we no longer talk about or fantasise about indicators but produce them. That will mean that we get some work done. In government, the SNP would take that further. We would say that we should start with an audit of the environmental practices in this country, at the end of which we would produce a national environment plan, which would include indicators, targets and the dates by which we would achieve those targets. We could easily put “Must do better” at the end of the FOES report card. We must set dates and targets. We have to act now for the future, not in the future when it is too late.

The Tory amendment talks about further consultation. The SNP would say, “We are sorry—we want action, not further consultation.” Murray Tosh talked about the minister repackaging. We do not need more repackaging—we need action and we need it now. I was surprised that the targets in Robin Harper’s amendment were not more ambitious, although he upped the ante on them in his speech. Scotland could be far more ambitious in the targets it sets. On the motion, I am sorry, but no commendation can be given for lots of words and no action. There is no amendment from the Liberals. I presume that, in their sustainable fashion, they will vote for the Government’s motion. However, George Lyon spoke to our amendment, so we could look forward to the support of the Liberals for it in the vote.

16:53

The Deputy Minister for Sport and Culture (Allan Wilson): The debate has shown the enormous challenges that sustainable development presents. It is a topic that, as we have seen, covers a wide range of issues—issues such as social justice—that touch on the individual, the family and everyone on the planet. Climate change is at the forefront of our minds. Sustainable development is a subject that requires continuous effort over many years, and it is therefore a task that depends on a commitment. The Scottish Executive has made that commitment. We made it in the first programme

for government. We continued that commitment in our second programme for government and we are engaged in maximising the opportunities for sustainable development along that long road.

Commitment is crucial, but it has to be followed through with delivery. Delivery of sustainable development means doing things differently; it does not necessarily mean big spending programmes. For example, the new electricity contract for the Scottish Executive and associated bodies is saving us money. We do not have to pay the climate change levy on our electricity supply. Our supplies will not be generating carbon dioxide. By tempering our specification for electricity supplies to include that wider goal, we have maximised sustainable development.

Andy Kerr talked about small-scale hydro schemes. Those will be eligible for funding from the renewables obligation (Scotland) scheme, but there are no longer any suitable locations to build further large-scale hydro plants because of their significant environmental impact. Andy Kerr made a useful suggestion, which will be taken into consideration in the consultation.

Adopting our greening government policy statement will make everyone in the Scottish Executive face strategic development decisions every day. Recycling, reuse and waste reduction are key objectives. Adopting the necessary practices will reduce our waste costs and improve our environment.

I am happy to accept the thrust of Robin Harper’s amendment, which has much in common with the FOES report card that Fiona McLeod referred to. Like Sam Galbraith, I am grateful to Kevin Dunion for his sage and penetrating input to the ministerial group on sustainable Scotland. To answer Kenny MacAskill’s point, that group also includes my good colleague Alasdair Morrison.

The group is making progress on many of the issues raised in Robin Harper’s amendment, and will be discussing the indicators next month. Renewable energy has been tackled in a number of policy areas, including climate change, the waste strategy and energy policy. The group will meet four or five times a year, and work also continues between those meetings. Next month, we will be publishing a new greening government policy and we expect to report on that annually.

Robin Harper made a number of specific points about biodiversity. Scottish Natural Heritage, whose funding we will increase during the lifetime of this session by a sum total of £40 million, and many other local environmental organisations are fully involved in developing biodiversity action. That is a huge task, which is bringing results, but it requires a change in attitude, not just by SNH but by everyone, and that change in attitude does not

depend on money alone.

Kenny MacAskill and Robin Harper both mentioned recycling. As Sam Galbraith said, the strategic waste fund will provide £50.4 million over the next three years to implement area waste plans. The Executive has been talking to big companies such as Boots and Halfords about recycling—that is something that Sylvia Jackson mentioned.

Robin Harper: Will the minister confirm that that £50.4 million is going to be devoted to recycling and not to incineration?

Allan Wilson: The Executive is providing £50.4 million to local authorities over the next three years to help them to implement their area waste plans.

I am glad that Murray Tosh accepts that considerable progress has been made in sustainable development, as set out in our programme for government. He criticised Kenny MacAskill for his speech, but I think that he is guilty of recycling Kenny's amendment from last year's debate on the sustainable development strategy. The Parliament rejected that amendment, and I think that that was a good decision. A bad SNP amendment last year does not become a good Tory amendment this year, even if Murray Tosh moves it much more eloquently than Kenny MacAskill did at the previous debate. We have strong strategies on social exclusion, on transport, on climate change and on waste, all of which are brought together in our programme for government. We do not need another layer of strategy. What is important is action and moving on that.

Murray Tosh accused us of relabelling old bottles, but the Government knows that social justice is dependent on a stable economy and that a stable economy, by its very definition, is a sustainable economy. A market that depends on excessive exploitation of any of the world's resources—people, environment or commodities—has a negative knock-on effect on society. The Government proposals on climate change, the aggregates tax and other changes to fiscal structures will facilitate the natural economic forces to show the real value of sustainability. That is new. As in many other areas of our policy, we have bound together the social and economic benefits to make sustainability a vital part of that equation.

Bruce Crawford: I am glad that the minister has covered so many of the points that were made during the debate. In my speech, I mentioned further education and the need for more interconnectedness so that students can deal with sustainability when they finish their education. Does the minister intend to deal with that point in

his response?

Allan Wilson: If Mr Crawford will give me a chance, I will get on with it.

Murray Tosh raised a specific point about COSLA getting no money and the Scottish civic forum doing it for free. I think that those are separate issues. We supported COSLA to meet the Prime Minister's challenge on the development of local authority agenda 21 plans by the end of 2000, and that task has been accomplished. Scottish civic forum work on Rio plus ten will be paid for. We have allocated £20,000 for that and we are working in partnership with Shell and BP to deliver that. Local authorities will be able to apply to the sustainable action fund for support in implementing local agenda 21 strategies.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton made an interesting contribution. *Scientific American* journal has just published an interesting edition called "Are We Almost Tapped Out?", which shows that his concerns are the subject of considerable scientific study. We look forward to the results.

On Bruce Crawford's point, it is good to see that the SNP recognises the breadth of issues that need to be addressed in sustainable development. It is a huge task for any Government. Sustainable development is not just an environmental issue; it is an issue of breadth of vision and respect for the future. Our programme for government reflects that breadth and I look forward to the SNP supporting us in taking that forward. It is legitimate to ask whether the nats considered the role of education in sustainable development and we are entitled to ask why they have never brought the issue before Parliament.

Fiona McLeod rose—

Allan Wilson: Sustainable development is a major component of the five-to-14 curriculum, but it is not just formal education that is needed.

Members: Give way.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Allan Wilson: We plan to influence all sectors of society with relevant approaches. The major push will be for a public awareness campaign later this year, which many people mentioned.

Globalisation has given us problems to overcome, but it has also provided us with opportunities to see the world in a more positive manner. Interdependency has never been clearer. Reckless exploitation of the planet in one area of the world often has a negative impact on other areas. Careful stewardship and utilisation of the world's abundant resources can have benefits for us all. Fergus Ewing should note that cars in Poolewe produce greenhouse gases too.

A good question is where nationalism fits into an

outward-looking and inclusive view of the world. I contend that the answer is nowhere. Internationalism is surely the answer. While the rest of the 21st century world looks beyond the political constructs of the nation state, nationalism, as a philosophy, stands against the tide of history.

I was interested to hear Bruce Crawford quote Einstein. I am happy to quote Albert Einstein too. [*Laughter.*] Colleagues, wait for it. He said:

"Nationalism is an infantile disease. It is the measles of mankind."

In conclusion, our attitude to sustainable development is strongly centred on people. It used to be difficult to make people understand the consequences of failure to behave sustainably. I believe that the floods of last year changed that. At a stroke, we made the connection between excessive use of energy, generation of greenhouse gases and devastation of people's homes. Today's debate, therefore, has been vital: it is vital that we maintain that commitment and that we understand our role in sustainable development across the world. It is essential that we continue to work together for the prosperity of Scotland.

I commend the motion to Parliament and ask that it reject all the amendments that have been lodged.

Decision Time

17:03

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): There are five questions to put to the chamber as a result of today's business. The first question is, that motion S1M-1697, in the name of Mr Tom McCabe, on the designation of lead committees, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees the following designations of Lead Committee—

The Justice 1 Committee to consider the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 2001 and,

The Justice 1 Committee to consider the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 2001 and,

The Justice 2 Committee to consider the draft Limited Liability Partnerships (Scotland) Regulations 2001.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that amendment S1M-1694.2, in the name of Bruce Crawford, which seeks to amend motion S1M-1694, in the name of Mr Sam Galbraith, on sustainable development, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)

Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 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)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (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)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 27, Against 76, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that amendment S1M-1694.3, in the name of Mr Murray Tosh, which seeks to amend motion S1M-1694, in the name of Mr Sam Galbraith, on sustainable development, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Bruce JP (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 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)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)

Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 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)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 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, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 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)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 17, Against 86, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that amendment S1M-1694.1, in the name of Robin Harper, which seeks to amend motion S1M-1694, in the name of Mr Sam Galbraith, on sustainable development, be agreed to. Are we

agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 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)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 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)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)

Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 3, Against 73, Abstentions 26.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S1M-1694, in the name of Mr Sam Galbraith, on sustainable development, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 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)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)

Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (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)
 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)
 McMahan, 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, John Farquhar (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)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Mrs 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)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 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)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)

MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 61, Against 41, Abstentions 2.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament affirms its commitment to sustainable development; recognises the importance of sustainable development to achieving social justice for all peoples, and commends the Scottish Executive for continuing to place the issue central to its policies and programmes, as evidenced in its *Programme for Government: Working together for Scotland*.

Teaching Centres of Artistic Excellence

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S1M-1251, in the name of Kenneth Gibson, on discrimination against teaching centres of artistic excellence.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the decision of the Department for Education and Employment to introduce Dance and Drama Awards for students to study at institutions in England and Wales; is aware that Scottish students compete on equal terms for places at such institutions with their counterparts from other parts of the United Kingdom and the European Union (EU); is concerned that tuition fees are only paid if students study in England and Wales and regrets that no parallel funding scheme exists for students who wish to study in Scotland; believes that this discrimination against Scottish institutions can only harm them and in the case of Ballet West may force it out of business or to relocate from Taynuilt to outwith Scotland, to the detriment of the local economy and employment; notes that Ballet West attracts students from across the United Kingdom, the EU and as far afield as Guatemala, Japan and Malaysia and outperforms competitor schools from south of the border in ballet competitions and quality of training; is puzzled by the Minister for Children and Education's view that "there is no evidence of significant demand for Dance and Drama training for young people aged 16 and over in Scotland" when 613 applications were received by Ballet West for 23 places; regrets that 34 students withdrew or rejected offers from Ballet West due to lack of funding, compared with only two students doing so at English institutions; notes that the Excellence Fund supports and encourages talented secondary school dancers in Scotland but that the only progression into tertiary training encouraged by the Scottish Executive is in England; is concerned that Scotland will become denuded of teaching centres of artistic excellence and be drained of artistic talent as a result of this discrimination; believes the current position of the Scottish Executive on this issue contradicts its own cultural strategy that has as its key themes "widening opportunities, promoting education, developing and celebrating excellence" and believes that the Scottish Executive should act in order that students from across the UK can choose where to study dance, drama or stage management based on the quality of course offered rather than on whether or not tuition fees will be paid.

17:08

Mr Kenneth Gibson (Glasgow) (SNP): I am pleased to be able to introduce this debate today; I thank all members who signed the motion.

A number of members have asked why the motion is so long—it is the longest motion ever debated in the Parliament. I was concerned that it would not be selected for debate so, in effect, I wrote much of the speech in the motion. However, matters have moved on since then, so forgive me if I elaborate somewhat.

The matter was first brought to my attention by

Mr Robert Eadie, who is a resident of the ward that I used to represent on Glasgow City Council. His daughter, Gillian Barton, is artistic director of Ballet West, a company that was founded in 1991 and, in 1995, began to teach full-time classical ballet courses. Ballet West is situated near Taynuilt, in the shadow of Ben Cruachan. Its reputation as a centre of excellence soon spread far and wide throughout the ballet world; its dancers have won numerous awards.

For example, in 1997, Sara-Maria Barton became the first female dancer from Scotland to win an Adeline Genee award in the 63-year history of the competition and the first female from the UK since 1991. Furthermore, in 1999, Kelly McCole was the only British dancer to reach the final of that competition.

Time prevents me from detailing further the numerous other awards that have been won by dancers from Ballet West or the outstanding teaching that it has brought to the school. Suffice it to say, it has now attracted students and teachers not only from across the UK and Europe but from as far afield as Guatemala, Malaysia and Japan. Indeed, that well-known nationalist Billy Connolly was so impressed by Ballet West after its participation in the film "Mrs Brown" that he agreed to be its patron.

Unfortunately, Ballet West believes that its very existence is threatened by an anomaly that differentiates between dance companies north and south of the border. Historically, local councils across the UK were responsible for funding for dance students. With cuts in local authority funding throughout the 1990s, it soon became apparent that receipt of a grant was determined by postcode instead of individual talent.

On 27 November 1998, dance and drama awards—or DADAs—were established by the Department for Education and Employment. A student who wins a place at an institution offering courses in dance, drama and stage management is required to provide £1,050 for their fees, with the remainder being met by the DADA. Students who receive a DADA can also apply to a fees and maintenance fund to pay the student's proportion of the fees. Furthermore, students from England and Wales may receive up to £3,000 towards living expenses, which is means-tested against parental income.

With the change to central Government funding, the system of accreditation has moved from the independent Council for Dance Education and Training to a scheme involving the Further Education Funding Council inspectorate, industry representatives, the DFEE, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Arts Council of England. Dance schools on the scheme are required to teach new further education

qualifications written and assessed by Trinity College, London.

No Scottish dance school can join the scheme, as education is now a devolved issue. However, the qualifications of Trinity College can be offered and funding for Ballet West provided if ministers give the Scottish Further Education Funding Council guidance to do so.

That is the conundrum. On 31 January, the Executive wrote to Ballet West advising that

"responsibility for ensuring the provision, including the funding, of further education training lies with the Scottish Further Education Funding Council".

However, on 19 February, Ballet West responded:

"The Council cannot provide funding for provision of organisations outwith this list without seeking the agreement of the Scottish Executive".

As that list comprises the organisations that are prioritised by the Executive, I ask the minister to address that issue in his response.

Why is this important? Although dance students from across the UK and European Union are accepted into institutions south of the border on ability, students from Scotland cannot access the fees and maintenance fund. Because of non-accreditation, students at institutions in Scotland, such as Ballet West, receive no funding to pay their fees.

Dance students in Scotland can obtain maintenance grants from their local authority if it is supportive; however, although councils such as Angus, Argyll and Bute and Glasgow are supportive, others are not. As a result, maintenance costs fall on students and their families in a fairly random way, depending on where they live—which is, ironically, why the system south of the border was changed some years ago.

As accreditation does not exist in Scotland, no DADA is available to students at Ballet West. That is an anomaly that the company is keen to have addressed. All fees are currently paid by the families of those who study, which places great strain on such families and limits those who can access ballet training in Scotland by family income, not by talent. For example, the income of 17-year-old Jill Hamilton's family is only £24,000, almost half of which will have to go towards her training and living costs, placing real hardship on a family that simply wish the best for their daughter. Jill's brother and sister must also be considered by the family.

Ironically, although Jill Hamilton is from Appin, which is near Ballet West, she suffers from the double whammy that is imposed by the lack of access to funding for fees and living costs. If she

moved to London to study, all but £1,050 of her fees would be paid; however, her family believe that she would receive poorer tuition. Others do not wish their children to move from Scotland at such a young age. As a result, the potential for a Scottish Billy Elliot is very limited.

As the motion indicates, 34 potential students have had to reject offers to study at Ballet West due to lack of funding, compared with only two who have rejected offers at institutions south of the border. So much for social inclusion.

In launching last year's cultural strategy, the Executive talked about

"widening opportunities, promoting education, developing and promoting excellence".

That is not happening for classical ballet dancing in Scotland.

Unless the situation changes, Ballet West may have to move to England, depriving the fragile economy of Taynuilt of income from the dance school and its students, inflicting job losses on teaching and administrative staff and depriving local schoolchildren of supplementary activities in schools, such as dance classes and public performances. That may also lead to an unnecessary drain of creative artistic talent from Scotland.

The Executive has stated in correspondence to Ballet West that

"there is no widespread evidence of demand for post-16 Dance and Drama training in Scotland."

In fact, demand is strong. It would be stronger if access to funding was comparable to that south of the border and if discrimination was ended.

17:15

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): I point out, for the purposes of the *Official Report*, that I voted erroneously in the previous debate. I offer my apologies to Robin Harper; I was not paying attention when the vote on his amendment was being taken. I hope that that is sufficient to prevent me from getting a doing from the whips.

I shall talk about a related issue. I know that Kenny Gibson has worked hard on the issue of Ballet West, and the school has been in touch with me. There is a severe problem with the support that is provided to young people for dance, drama and music classes. The issue is not so much the payment of tuition fees as the maintenance payments for those young people.

The issue was drawn to my attention by the case of a very talented young woman from Langholm, who won one of the dance and drama awards in Manchester. That enabled her to have her tuition fees paid there. I imagine that a young

person from my constituency would find it easier to go down to Manchester than to go up north. The problem that she faced was in getting her maintenance paid. She was advised that, if she had been a student from England, she would have received a maintenance grant from the college. Because she was a student from Scotland, she had to approach her local authority to apply for a grant. Unfortunately, Dumfries and Galloway Council is one of approximately 50 per cent of local authorities that no longer give discretionary bursaries, as a matter of policy.

Although the young woman had her tuition fees paid, she did not have her living costs paid. During the first year of her course, she attempted to support herself through employment. Her family were on a fairly low income and helped as much as they could, but they found it difficult to support her. The situation became impossible as time went on. In dance and drama courses, students are expected to undertake a lot of rehearsal and practice, and it becomes difficult for them to support themselves by means of employment. Unfortunately, the young lady had to give up her course because she was no longer able to support herself. That is a tragedy. A young Scot with a lot of talent was unable to continue with her course because of the way in which our system works.

Normally, I do not support the withdrawal of funding from local authorities to be held centrally. However, in this instance, as there is such a difference in policies between local authorities, I suggest—I have suggested this to the Executive although, so far, it has not bitten—that the element of grant-aided expenditure that is distributed for discretionary bursaries be held centrally. Young Scots from all over the country should be able to apply for that funding, to ensure that there is no longer postcode provision and that all young, talented Scots have equal access to funding—not just for tuition fees, but to maintain them as they develop their talent to the benefit of our country and our cultural identity. It is important to view the matter in the context of our national cultural strategy, and we must encourage our young people as much as we can.

17:19

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I welcome the debate and congratulate Kenny Gibson on securing it—and on securing a spot or two on the lunchtime and evening news, publicising the problems of Ballet West.

As Kenny Gibson said, he has lodged the largest ever motion in the Scottish Parliament. In this case, size clearly mattered. I hope that it was not a case of bullying through size. The motion has highlighted a bizarre case in which devolution has had an unintended consequence—an

unhelpful one, which it should not be beyond the abilities of ministers and quangocrats to rectify.

Money should follow the student, but when we have a system in which a quango decides which courses will be financially supported, we should look for greater latitude. I hope that we can achieve that consensus this evening.

The question whether there is adequate demand has been asked, and I think that the speech within the motion shows that, with some 613 applications for 23 places, there is demand. Are the current arrangements damaging? Yes—34 students have withdrawn or have declined offers. That is not only damaging to the institution; it is damaging to the students who would have liked to study at that college.

Where lies the cultural strategy now? Such a strategy should be about the pulling together of elements through the joined-up government that we hear so much about. It should involve widening opportunities, promoting education and developing and celebrating excellence. I do not see that coming through in the cultural strategy, however, but I hope that the cultural strategy might play a role in relation to the issue that we are discussing.

Where lies the Scottish Government's much-vaunted social justice? Clearly, there is no social justice for students who find themselves having to pay fees that are in many cases quite large and can be more than £10,000. The minister may pirouette as much as he wants—

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): A horrible thought.

Mr Monteith: It is a horrible thought, but it might be worse if it were me. The minister may pirouette as much as he wants, but until there is some action rather than ministerial letters, many of us will think that more can be done.

I am sure that similar anomalies will crop up. If the Scottish Parliament, the minister and the Scottish Further Education Funding Council can find an acceptable and practical solution for this case, it might give hope to those in other situations who find that they are not receiving their due support.

I support Kenny Gibson's bringing the matter to our attention and look forward to hearing what the member for the area, George Lyon, has to say—given that I am not aware that he has supported the motion—and what the minister has to say with regard to trying to resolve the matter.

17:22

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): I support the motion that was introduced by Kenny Gibson.

Mike Rowell, the administrator of Ballet West,

has been in contact with me since 6 June 2000. I believe that he has written to many MSPs seeking their help and support. I wrote to Mr Galbraith on the issue that we are discussing and have been kept informed of the on-going debate by Mike Rowell.

The original response from the Executive was clear: local authorities had control of the issue and the Executive was taking a hands-off approach. I do not think that that is the right approach. It seems iniquitous that, although dance and drama schemes have been introduced south of the border, Scotland is denying that opportunity to its students. It seems wrong that we do not attempt to resolve the situation.

Two weeks ago, I received a letter from Mr Rowell that said that Allan Wilson—I think—had indicated to him that Ballet West could put its case to the Scottish Further Education Funding Council, which could take a decision on whether to provide funding on a national basis. As a result of the debate, I ask the minister to use his influence to ensure that the Scottish Further Education Funding Council responds to the needs of Ballet West. That will help us ensure that there is equality for dance students in Scotland with dance students south of the border and that they have the opportunity to continue their studies in Scotland instead of having to travel south to seek tuition.

17:24

Dr Winnie Ewing (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I support Kenny Gibson's motion, but I am sad to say that George Lyon did not sign the motion and neither did any Labour members—perhaps they did not notice it, despite its length.

This is a case of disparities. Scottish students are effectively forced to seek to train in England. Schools such as Ballet West cannot attract students from outside Scotland—that represents a loss of inward investment. We have an inability to compete with English schools on equal terms. I dare to mention those disparities—and dare say that the Deputy Minister for Sport and Culture would accuse me of nationalism in doing so. Nationalism is normal in a nation; what is abnormal is people who do not feel proud of their nation and who do not want it to participate directly in internationalism.

I have been made aware of the case of Flora Doig, who attends Ballet West. Her local authority, Aberdeenshire Council, is one of the local authorities that does not recognise the standard that she has attained—perhaps it does not recognise the school and its standards; perhaps it just does not have the money. Flora's whole family felt forced to go into penury because the

alternative, sending the girl to London at the age of 16, did not appeal to them. The family could not afford to go there themselves. There is a problem here.

I suggest to the minister that, if one local authority recognises a ballet school as having an adequate standard for the purposes of funding, all local authorities should be guided by the Executive to recognise it. I urge the minister to give guidance to the SFEFC on the matter.

17:26

Dr Richard Simpson (Ochil) (Lab): I congratulate Kenny Gibson on securing the debate. There is no doubt that the current system gives rise to a waste of talent and, to an extent, an artistic brain drain. There is also no doubt that the funding for performing arts students is not the same in Scotland as it is in England and Wales.

I will broaden the debate out from Ballet West, if I may. In my constituency, young people are able to join Forefront, a local performing arts group. It has an excellent reputation, and I have attended a number of its productions, which are of a very high standard. A number of the young people from that company have gone on to train in England. At one point in the early 1990s, funding was available to help them to do that. However, the local council has latterly been unable to find the funding from its discretionary funds. As a result, talent is being wasted, and that is quite unsatisfactory.

I have spent some time over the past year working with Scottish Youth Dance. It runs some excellent programmes. Its millennium programme, attended by more than 500 young people in Dunblane as well as by the then Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport, Rhona Brankin, was an excellent production. It has also had financial difficulties, however, and has found that, although pupils can be trained at the dance school based at Knightswood Secondary School, which has 70 residential pupils studying classical dance, or can train with Scottish Ballet associates or with other professional dancers at a young age, if they are eager to pursue dance as a career, we leave them high and dry. What does that say about our strategy being joined up?

Highly talented students from Forefront who have been accepted by top training institutions for music and dance in England have had to meet their own tuition and maintenance costs, which are very substantial. What does that say about social inclusion? Some of the pupils are from families from quite poor backgrounds, and money has had to be raised in order to support them.

I will not go into detail on the variation among local authorities that Kenny Gibson referred to, but I acknowledge that that variation exists. In all

fields, I think that we are too small a country to allow such discrimination, which allows one local authority to tell a talented individual, "Yes, go ahead," but another to say "No." We have to take a grip of the situation and change it.

Young talent is undoubtedly being put off by such financial and cultural barriers. We are too small a country to afford to waste that talent, which can lead to the creation and development of a vibrant culture, as is so rightly encouraged by the cultural strategy. However, we need to put the strategy into practical effect.

The students and pupils whom we educate in Scotland face severe barriers as they attempt to reach a professional standard. They are at a serious disadvantage compared with their counterparts in England and Wales. That is being perceived increasingly, and we should do something about it.

There are other issues. My colleagues at Scottish Youth Dance tell me that they have serious problems in finding qualified teachers in Scotland for their programmes. Ballet West says that the nationalities of the dancers on cast lists are varied. We should favour, develop and respond to the internationalism that classically has been part of our culture. The way in which we promote dance, song, music, culture and drama sends a message around the world about the nature of our civilisation. I strongly encourage the minister to look again at this issue and consider whether we can deal with it on a national basis. We should remove the postcode element to funding and provide adequate funds for this relatively small group, to sustain and ensure the development of our vibrant culture.

17:30

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): I am not sure whether I have to declare an interest, in that I once starred in a ballet. It was performed by the staff of a school at the variety show that we put on annually for the pupils' entertainment. The largest and hairiest members of staff did Tchaikovsky's "Valse des Fleurs" with straight faces. Though I say it myself, it was extremely humorous. Having had two new hips since then, I will not repeat the performance.

The specific issue has been well ventilated by Kenny Gibson, who deserves a lot of credit. The wider issue is that there is still residual discrimination against dance and ballet among many people, who think that ballet is an elitist and slightly effete activity. I think that that is quite wrong. They ignore the fact that dance is a basic activity. Over the past few years, modern dance has been the most successful part of the Edinburgh International Festival, drawing in all

sorts of people of all classes and colours from across the world. Dance will be roused to fresh activity by the success of "Billy Elliot". I hope that we can gradually get away from the prejudice against dance.

The issue of how we fund potentially good students has been well covered. The Executive deserves credit for having started to tackle the issue of funding students by getting rid of tuition fees and soon introducing grants for poorer students. However, there are obviously people who are left on the periphery whom we still have to sort out.

One way forward that would retain local control would be for the control of bursaries to lie with the colleges. Obviously, that would have to be monitored in some way by central Scotland. In that way, it would not just be some guy at Victoria Quay, or wherever those people live, who decides who gets and who does not. The college will have investigated most thoroughly the student's circumstances. In many of the less specialised colleges around the country, that happens very successfully. The people who know about the individual's circumstances should be given the power to hand out money to keep them going.

I hope that we will develop not just ballet and modern dance but the Scottish styles of dance—Scottish folk dancing, which is a neglected and lovely activity, and traditional Scottish country dancing. If we thought about it, we would realise that we are quite good at dancing. We should develop those styles of dance.

It is encouraging that so many people are interested in the debate. I hope that the minister will respond to members who have made much better speeches than mine, pushing for the end of the postcode lottery. More power should be given to the colleges and there should be more funding from the centre for what is not an elitist activity. Dance is not just for people who want to be professional dancers. Good local dance activities are good community activities and an antidote to the individualism of gazing at machines and television sets.

17:34

The Deputy Minister for Sport and Culture (Allan Wilson): I welcome the opportunity with which Kenneth Gibson has presented me to respond for the Executive in this debate. It is an appropriate platform on which to recognise the excellence of much of Scotland's artistic teaching and many of its highly talented students.

In reading Mr Gibson's long motion, and to some extent in listening to members this afternoon, those of us who knew no better could assume that the teaching of dance and drama had vanished

from Scotland and had somehow been spirited down south, as students follow the lure of the dance and drama awards scheme. I see Mr Gibson shaking his head, but he knows that that conclusion could not be further from the truth.

I am pleased to tell members that dance and drama tuition is flourishing across Scotland. Within incorporated colleges across the country, students are involved—at both further and higher education levels—with a raft of courses covering many aspects of dance, performance, drama and stage management. In the 1998-99 academic year, 3,932 further education students studied dance and drama-related subjects in Scottish institutions. Many of those will go on to successful professional careers.

Mr Gibson: Why then, on 21 July 2000, did the Scottish Executive write to Ballet West saying that

"there is no widespread evidence of demand for post-16 Dance and Drama training in Scotland"?

That is why the anomalies that have been discussed in the debate have arisen.

Allan Wilson: That point was raised by Mr Monteith; I will respond to it in my concluding remarks.

To suggest, as the motion does, that the Executive's policy discriminates against teaching centres of excellence is to belittle the achievements of acclaimed Scottish institutions such as the University of Glasgow, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and Queen Margaret University College. Those teaching institutions are renowned for their artistic excellence and their alumni number among them some of our greatest talents. Like many other institutions across Scotland that run courses of artistic excellence, those teaching centres of excellence are recognised by the Executive: they are funded accordingly and their students are supported by the Executive through its funding bodies. I do not understand how it can be suggested that the Executive discriminates against teaching centres of excellence for dance and drama.

The basis of the motion seems to arise not from a concern for the wide spectrum of dance and drama tuition available in Scotland, as has been mentioned by others, but from its supporters' concerns for the economic well-being of Ballet West—a specific private sector dance provider—and its 20 or so student places.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I, too, met Mike Rowell at a surgery in Oban. He clearly outlined the situation. Is the minister saying that Ballet West is not an incorporated college? Is he saying that its degrees and diplomas are not validated along the lines of the other colleges that

he mentioned? As I understand it, Ballet West fits all the criteria that normally pertain to funding in further and higher education.

Allan Wilson: I have said nothing of the sort. I am coming to private sector provision now.

I welcome the part that many private sector providers play in the provision of dance training in Scotland. Mary Scanlon will get no ideological argument with me on that. I applaud Ballet West for the excellence of its training and I appreciate its growing reputation in classical ballet training. However, Ballet West, as a private sector provider, must be responsible for its own commercial viability—the market should provide.

Linda Fabiani rose—

Allan Wilson: Let me continue. I am sure that I shall come to Linda Fabiani's point.

I recognise that Ballet West's Scottish students—as Elaine Murray, among others, recognised—remain dependent on their local authorities for funding support. Although we have raised the issue of discretionary bursaries with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, I have no powers to direct councils in such matters and I suspect that Parliament would not welcome any attempts by the Executive to curtail local discretion. I hope that authorities recognise that they have significant additional resources and will look at applications positively.

I also hope that Ballet West—which, by the way, is not incorporated and offers no accredited courses—can continue to be commercially successful and to play its part in providing tuition to students of dance. Indeed, I hope that all private sector providers in Scotland can.

The Executive is committed, as laid down in its cultural strategy, to the pursuit of excellence in all forms of art practice in Scotland, as many have recognised. The Executive recognises the importance of education and training in that strategy. The motion focuses our attention on dance and dance tuition. The Executive recognises the point that was made by Richard Simpson and others that the provision of support to various forms of dance is not, nor should it be, static. Neither is it perfect. Over time, some dance forms become more popular and some become less popular. There are important developments in dance and in our understanding of its role in society. A recent example is the report on community dance that was produced by Her Majesty's inspectorate. The provision of training must be sensitive to those developments. We must ensure that our infrastructure for dance is in keeping with modern requirements.

Linda Fabiani: I intervene because I do not know a lot about this subject and I would

appreciate some clarification from the minister. Is there any establishment for the excellence of ballet, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, that is funded nationally, apart from the Dance School of Scotland, which is based at Knightswood Secondary School? I am talking about 16-year-olds who have shown a wonderful talent, as Richard Simpson said. We should nurture that talent and export it throughout the world to show what Scotland is capable of. Is there anywhere that is funded nationally that pupils over 16 can attend to develop those talents? If there were, those pupils would not have to leave home and go to other countries to study.

Allan Wilson: Linda Fabiani has raised the point that I was steadily making my way towards in concluding our debate.

Brian Monteith, Kenny Gibson and others talked about demand. It is difficult to assess the demand for dance training in Scotland. There is anecdotal evidence from Ballet West on oversubscribed places, but there is no sector-wide information on the demand-resource match. Ten further education students were on the DADA scheme in 1999-2000, although that small number may reflect the highly competitive nature of the scheme rather than a low Scottish demand for places.

I have yet to be convinced that we have a major problem, although I am convinced that a problem exists. As a direct consequence of today's debate—I am departing from my script, which is always dangerous—I will discuss the needs of dance with the Scottish Arts Council. I will mention to my colleague the Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning and Gaelic the representations to the Scottish Further Education Funding Council to which George Lyon, Winnie Ewing and Donald Gorrie, among others, referred. I will also discuss the implications of those representations with the appropriate minister.

Meeting closed at 17:42.

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