

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Thursday 12 September 2002

Session 1

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## Scottish Parliament

*Thursday 12 September 2002*

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 9:30*]

### Scottish Economy

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** Good morning. Both of this morning's debates are heavily oversubscribed, so I am going to make a quick start and appeal to the opening speakers to take less than their allotted time. There is no chance that everybody who has asked to speak in either debate will be able to speak.

The first debate is on motion S1M-3376, in the name of Andrew Wilson, on the performance of the Scottish economy, and two amendments to that motion.

09:30

**Andrew Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Today's debate, as with all Scottish National Party debates on our economy, is about bridging the gap between Scotland's mediocre economic performance and our enormous economic potential. It is a debate that will resonate beyond today, throughout the Scottish general election campaign and on into Scotland's future, as it must if we are to transform our country's long-term underperformance and acceptance of underachievement.

Inevitably, the debate rests upon the key question of whether we have faith in ourselves to show responsibility and self-reliance and to seize the initiative on our standard of living and national success. I know that many in the chamber do not have that faith. They are the doubters and cynics that have dogged Scotland's story for so long. I hope that the Parliament can break through the national self-confidence ceiling, the glass barriers that are breaking us and preventing us from achieving all that we can. Scotland should have confidence because it has all the attributes for success, bar one.

We have an international brand—we are one of barely a dozen countries in the world that means something to almost everyone on earth. We have the reputation for integrity that is so important in the modern, globalised knowledge economy. We have always had great people, but too few of them are getting the opportunities at home that they deserve.

We have a good location, but are inhibited by poor transport links. We have a superb

environment and enormous natural resource strength, but so many countries are more successful than Scotland without having the blessings that we enjoy. We have many great industries that are doing well, despite the odds. Our economy is not overheated and it has the potential for rapid growth on the back of the reservoir of emigrants who could be tempted to come back to Scotland.

We have abundant potential, but we lack the leadership and government to secure the means to achieve that potential. Our established political culture remains wedded to addressing the symptoms of our relative decline, rather than to tackling its root causes head on. Palliatives are provided, rather than solutions to the problem.

The national problem is there for all to see. We will hear many economic facts and figures in today's debate, but our core problem and the core measure of our problem is found in the declining and aging population. The average Scot is expected to die two years earlier than his neighbour in England. In independent Norway, people live an extra three years. In Glasgow, a person can expect to die 10 years earlier than if he or she had, by accident, been born in Dorset. It is those health, wealth and life gaps that we need to transform. The giggling of the Liberal Democrat members shows that they do not know what matters in life.

**Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Andrew Wilson:** I am not interested.

The SNP has been working hard on its initiative to place the Scottish economy at centre stage, as have a host of others throughout the Scottish community. The issue is not about business versus the public services; the truth is that we need a vibrant economy if we are to secure sustainable investment in public services and to reduce dependence—which too many people have—on services.

Despite a few chinks of light from the recent U-turns—I hope that there will be more U-turns to come from the Government today—complacency is rife throughout the Labour establishment and its all too pervasive network of influence. According to *The Herald* of 6 May, the former—and much-missed—Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning said:

"I can't get the growth issue on the agenda."

She went on to add that

"The First Minister does not consider economic growth to be one of his top priorities".

What are we to make of her successor? On the Sunday on which he was appointed, he declared it was “steady as she goes” for the Scottish economy, just as it was heading steadily from flatlining mediocrity into actual recession. He then reacted to that recession by saying that we were still well placed.

Jack McConnell himself said that the economy was getting better, just as the statistics that were being crunched showed that the economy was plunging into the red. In his statement to the Parliament in Aberdeen, the First Minister said that

“the strong and stable economy that our partnership in the United Kingdom brings”—[*Official Report*, 30 May 2002; c 12389.]

would see us through. Stability and strength? The reality is mediocrity and growth that is well behind that of our competitors over a protracted period, which is giving us continuous relative decline and unacceptable widening of the wealth gap, the jobs gap and the life-expectancy gap.

Only a few weeks after Jack McConnell made that speech, we were to learn that the country had entered recession for the first time in two decades: back to the bad old days of the Conservatives. What does recession mean? It means a fall in output in two consecutive quarters. That is a technical point, but if one examines the longer term it means an annualised growth gap between us and the rest of the United Kingdom, an 80 per cent fall in inward investment, and research and development rates that are well behind those in the rest of the UK and Europe.

The manufacturing fallout is felt in chemicals, metallics, engineering and textiles, which are all in recession. The fallout has spread to tourism, agriculture, construction, mining, consumer goods and investment goods, which are all in recession. Business start-ups are down and liquidations are up. New-firm growth has slumped by 80 per cent, according to *Business a.m.* The response of the First Minister and the Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning to all that was to reconvene a sub-committee.

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** Will the member give way?

**Andrew Wilson:** No.

In the job market we are feeling the longer-term pinch from mediocrity. In the past four months, unemployment has risen to third highest in the 12 UK regions and countries. Our rate is much higher than the UK average. If we bridged the gap, there would be 32,000 fewer Scots on the dole than there are at present. For every 175 net new jobs created in the UK since 1995, Scotland has created only one—that is our employment gap. If we had the same employment rate as the rest of the UK, there would be 42,000 more Scots in

employment. Self-employment has fallen by 21,000 in the past four years. In the past three months alone it fell by 6,000, which points to the fact that the problem is long term, deep seated, structural and will not go away.

Behind the headlines—and arguably more important—is the long-term picture. Output in the latest quarter was down, having barely got back to where it was 25 months ago, which represents, in effect, a standstill in the Scottish economy over two years. In the even longer term, our appalling trend rate of growth of barely 2.1 per cent, or 1.9 per cent if one looks further out, is at risk of falling further. That is the real picture, and we must acknowledge it if we are to do anything about it.

How do we transform the picture and deliver consensus for growth? Scotland can do better, but we need our political leaders to build consensus of ambition for Scotland that will promote self-responsibility and self-reliance and end our dependency culture. We must win people over to the argument that building for growth and success is not a zero-sum game. We must take decisions now that will reap rewards in the future, and in the short-term future at that, because the prize that is before us is enormous.

Over the past 10 years, if we had kept pace with growth in Ireland there would be £42 billion more in the Scottish economy. The tax revenues that that would release—with no change in current tax rates—would nearly double the Parliament’s budget. If we had kept pace with even the relatively slow growth of the UK over that period, we would have £3 billion more in our economy and more than £1 billion more for public service investment. If we had managed to reach our goal of doubling our trend rate of growth even over the past 10 years to a level akin to that of Australia—a country that is populated by immigrant Scots—there would be £16 billion more in our economy, which would yield more than £6.5 billion of new money per year for investment. That more than swamps the alleged and nonsensical deficit that Labour politicians parrot—a deficit that itself is evidence of their failure to get the economy moving.

Of course, no Government can deliver economic success, but it can play a huge part in creating the conditions for success or failure. Our plea to everyone here today is to keep an open mind on the issue, in relation both to the limiting of powers that would enable the Parliament to turn the situation round and, more important, to the potential that we could release were all the tools that we need at our disposal.

In the words of the well-respected journalist Alf Young, who is not known for his SNP credentials:

“Under the terms of the Scotland Act the Executive’s economic powers are modestly micro”.

With the best will in the world, the best ministers in the world, the best development agencies and the best chief economists in the world, this Parliament and this Executive cannot deliver, because the truth is that, as things stand, the status quo is unsustainable. It guarantees continued relative decline and it guarantees to box in our potential. This Parliament has fewer economic and financial powers than any other parliament on earth. The UK system of government is out of date, centralised and bureaucratic. Although we have devolved political policy, we have not devolved finances. We need to complete the picture.

All the economic growth in Britain is concentrated in the wealthy epicentre of London and the south-east—it has been like that for decades. In a uniform financial system, the metropolitan centre has an immense advantage. It is the centre of political and business power, finance, the media and transport, and it has the greater volume of wealthy consumers. However, it has broadly the same tax position as Dundee or Glasgow, if we ignore the fact that in Scotland Labour-imposed council taxes are twice as high and business rates are nearly 10 per cent higher. That produces a gravitational pull out of Scotland through which we lose talent, headquarters, skills, business and investment. The quid pro quo has been an alleged fiscal transfer. Even if that were true, it has evidently not worked. We need the power to place ourselves at a competitive advantage; we do not need public subsidies to keep us comfortable in our underperformance and relative decline.

I welcome and embrace many of the initiatives that the Government has promoted on the supply side; many are initiatives for which we have called for many years. Scottish Development International is an excellent idea and we hope that it does well. Technology institutes are an excellent idea and are well worth the risk. Regional selective assistance reform is good and overdue, but utterly marginal. Putting skills and science at the heart of our agenda is correct and we support that.

We all acknowledge that we must compete internationally on the basis of knowledge and skills. A consensus about that has existed at the core for some time. However, we must open our eyes to the fact that all such measures will operate at the margins until we have the financial powers to compete that will underpin those measures. Until then, we run the risk of being the victims of our own success through training people to have transportable skills and losing those people to the brain drain; through starting new ventures only to see them taken over and migrated south and through having the commercial benefits of innovations externalised. That has been Scotland's story for decades and, within the current constraints, nothing will turn that around.

Surely we all now acknowledge the problem of underperformance. Our positive plea to everyone is that they recognise the causes of that problem. We all have a responsibility to play our part in transforming the political culture and in delivering ambitious and imaginative leadership. Now that all of us appear to have opened our eyes to the existence of a problem, we must open our minds to the limits of the existing powers and to the potential to achieve much more with the full powers—the complete toolbox, we might say—of independence.

We should place the imperative for economic transformation at the top of our agenda. We should set ourselves an ambitious target for growth and build consensus throughout the nation to achieve it. After that, we can have a focused, mature and open-minded debate about the policies that we need to get the economy growing.

Our position is clear. On the supply side and the limited powers that are at the disposal of the Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning and the Executive, we stand four-square behind the guts of the strategy for a smart and successful Scotland. We will have constructive suggestions to make, but the strategy has the shape of what we and others have wanted for many years. However, for that strategy to chime and deliver, we must equip ourselves with the power to place Scotland at competitive advantage financially and economically. We need to cut the taxes on growth that hamper our ability to close the wealth, health, jobs and employment gaps that exist between us and the rest of the UK and Europe. We need to set our business rates below UK rates, rather than merely announce a headline that we will stop hitting business, as was promised in February. We need to put our taxes on profit on a trajectory that will allow us to compete with the best, so that we can plug the hole in our economic bucket, provide an environment for growth and for new companies to come to Scotland, and so that we can keep and win the headquarters that we need to bring better jobs, research and development and investment back to this country.

More than anything, we need an open-minded debate that suggests new ways in which to use the powers of full financial independence in order to help to build a bridge between Scotland's performance and Scotland's potential. The opportunities exist—it is up to the Parliament to take a lead.

I move,

That the Parliament notes with great concern the latest government figures on economic growth showing Scotland has entered official recession for the first time in twenty years; recognises that this recession is the latest symptom of economic under-performance in Scotland over a protracted period and that Scotland has the potential to perform much better than it has; resolves that the

performance of the Scottish economy should be of prime importance to the agenda of the Executive, the Parliament and all concerned with the well-being of the people of Scotland and the sustainable financing of public service investments, and therefore calls upon the Scottish Executive to set an ambitious target for improving Scotland's trend rate of growth and contribute to a mature, serious and open-minded debate about the best policy measures to achieve that target, keeping an open mind about both the limits of existing powers and the potential competitive benefits of properly focussed policies with the full powers of independence.

**The Presiding Officer:** I thank the member for keeping his speech under the time limit and I remind members who wish to speak to press their request-to-speak buttons.

09:43

**The Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning (Iain Gray):** The SNP's motion seeks to give the impression that the economy and growth are not a priority for the Executive, but nothing could be further from the truth. Not only do the economy and jobs form one of the Executive's key priorities—along with health, education, crime and transport—but earlier this week, the First Minister could not have made it clearer that a prosperous growing economy is crucial to the delivery of the first-class public services and socially just Scotland that we want. That is a given.

It is also a given that growth is our problem; no one argues about that. The latest gross domestic product figures for Scotland were unwelcome, to say the least. However, in many ways they were not a surprise, given what has happened in the global economy and given the fact that, since 1973, the average growth rate of Scotland's economy, at 1.6 per cent, has lagged behind the 2.1 per cent rate for the UK in the same period. That is a given. Lower growth is not a recent feature of our economy, although it is true that our growth tends to be less volatile than that of the United Kingdom as a whole.

It is not all bad news, however. For example, the financial services sector has grown substantially in recent years and makes a vital contribution to enhancing the performance of the Scottish economy. Growth in that sector in the first quarter of 2002 was 1.8 per cent compared to a fall of 0.9 per cent in the UK as a whole. Therefore, although the service sector continued to grow in Scotland faster than in the UK as a whole in the first quarter of 2002, we know that the fall in manufacturing output—significant causes of which were the global slow-down and the re-structuring of key sectors such as electronics—meant that overall output fell. It is wrong to say that this is a return to the days of the Tories because, despite such difficulties, the labour market in Scotland remains relatively strong. That is important. Employment is

high compared to all European countries and unemployment is low in historical terms.

**Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con):** Will the minister concede that that would have been difficult to achieve without the inheritance of what happened before 1997?

**Iain Gray:** The inheritance was that when the economy faced such difficulties in the years to which Miss Annabel Goldie referred, two or three million people were out of work. Today we have historically high levels of employment in Scotland. They are among the highest of any European Union country. Indeed, only yesterday we saw labour market statistics that show that that position is being maintained and slightly improved.

We are not alone in suffering growth problems. For example, data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development shows that GDP in the year to the first quarter of 2002 showed a fall of 0.7 per cent in Finland and a rise of just 0.2 per cent in Germany and 0.3 per cent in the United States. That compares to a rise of 0.7 per cent for Scotland over the same period. We are not alone in suffering a slow-down in economic activity. However, no one is arguing that such a low figure for growth is acceptable. It does not meet our aspiration for an enterprising and prosperous Scotland in which our people can fulfil their potential. I think that we can agree on that.

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP):** Does the minister accept that the poor growth performance has resulted in part over the past three years from the fact that the higher business rates that are paid as a result of Jack McConnell's departure from the uniform business rate have amounted to £450 million more tax being paid by businesses here than they would have paid under the regime that is used south of the border?

**Iain Gray:** No, I simply do not accept that. If Mr Ewing is willing to wait, I will come to that issue when I refer to the Tory amendment later in my speech.

The challenge will not be met through short-term tactics but through determined implementation of a medium-term strategy. We have three key economic development objectives. First, we must accelerate our rate of economic growth. We also need to close the gap to help areas of lower economic activity in finding new opportunities. There are not only differences between Scotland's economy and that of the rest of the UK; there are significant differences within Scotland, which we must address.

Secondly, we want to provide opportunities for all those who wish to work. That is not just about providing jobs for all, but about closing the gap between those who enjoy high-quality jobs with



high incomes and those who seek work or work only in poor quality and poorly remunerated employment. That is part of the productivity increase and the shift towards higher added value in our economy that we need.

Thirdly, our economic development must be sustainable, not just by improving the environment and by better recycling and waste management—important as those are—but by making productive use of our human resources. We must also avoid, as far as possible, those valuable human resources being out of work and requiring further resources to support them. The requirement for a sharp improvement in our productivity is central to that.

**Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** Will the minister give way?

**Iain Gray:** I need to make some progress, given the time.

The data and methodology vary, but productivity in Scotland is around, or slightly below, the UK average. However, the UK figure is about 35 to 40 per cent lower than that of the United States and about 20 per cent lower than that of France. We must therefore devote our energies and resources towards the critical determinants of our productivity. That is the heart of our economic strategy and in that—now more than ever—we need to hold our nerve. We have the right strategy and the right policies. We must not be diverted from our path by short-term issues, by debates about powers we do not have rather than about those we do, or by arguments over which arbitrary target to set or pursue.

We should pursue three priorities, the first of which is growing businesses. We must encourage entrepreneurship, support new companies and innovation and translate science directly into commercial activity, while creating a climate of innovation that allows new products and processes to be introduced, not only in high-technology industries, but in the manufacturing and financial services sectors, where the companies that are succeeding are fuelling their growth by developing innovative products.

The second priority is to ensure that our companies are connected to global markets and that they can communicate with them either electronically or physically by train and plane.

The third priority is to improve our skills base in relation to the young, those in employment and those out of work, whom we need to reskill.

I stand firmly by “A Smart Successful Scotland: Ambitions for the Enterprise Networks” and I am glad to hear Andrew Wilson support it this morning. I also stand firmly by Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise because they are important to our future.

**Andrew Wilson:** We take it as read that those organisations are terrific and that they have been terrific for some time, but they have yet to deliver. However, when will the minister realise that the wealth gap between Scotland and the rest of the UK and Europe will not be closed until we equip ourselves with the full powers that we need to compete with Ireland, Austria and everywhere else?

**Iain Gray:** I said that I stand firmly by those organisations because they operate on the structural failures in the markets. Such work does not deal with the symptoms but with the fundamental problems.

We have world-class research in our universities, and there are global markets that want it; however, too often that research does not get out there. We have new businesses looking to expand and capital looking for investment, but too often they cannot seem to get together. Above all, we have skills shortages from construction to financial services and we have people who have the potential to do anything if they are given the chance. We need quickly to match the people with the skills shortages. Accelerating that process has to be our key task and, in recent months, we have worked towards that. We have invested £10 million in further education capital for kit to maximise the relevance of skills training, £10 million on infrastructure improvements and £7.5 million on higher education research. We have also set in motion the Scottish co-investment fund to plug the equity gap growth barrier and we have matched that with a £15 million expansion of the business growth scheme. That represents a real investment in growth from within our own strengths and it will bring benefits.

The past few months have also seen the launch of a comprehensive campaign to build a culture of enterprise and entrepreneurship in our future generations. The primary schools enterprise education programme is already under way and will be mainstreamed into secondary schools next. That is investment in the long term and it holds out the prospect of a cultural shift to the kind of modern aspirational country on which future economic success can be based. There has to be a structural shift to address growth.

I acknowledge that Scotland's population is, at best, stagnant and at worst decreasing. Not only must we ensure that our people aim high and act with enterprise and confidence, but that they stay in Scotland to do so. We can have an open debate in relation to that because more has to be done in that regard.

I confess that I had thought that the Scottish National Party would have something new to offer today. Mr Wilson has tried to have Parliament recalled and, on the first day after recess, he

made a point of order demanding this debate. Now he has it, however, we hear nothing new. We have read in the press that the SNP has said that full fiscal freedom is now going to be economic independence. However, that is not news because we always knew that full fiscal freedom was about only two things: the SNP's love of alliteration—

**Andrew Wilson:** Will the member give way?

**Iain Gray:** I think that I must wind up.

**The Presiding Officer:** Yes, you are over time.

**Iain Gray:** And, indeed, the SNP's love of alliteration—[*Laughter.*] Well, I am speaking to two people at once while I try to make a speech.

The call for full fiscal freedom was always about independence because it is a political rather than an economic strategy. Mr Wilson says that he wants to talk Scotland up, but his speech was, in the main, a catalogue of despair.

I will close by addressing the Tories. It is true that investment in infrastructure is important and, who knows, perhaps we will hear more of that later today. However, is that to be accomplished by Murdo Fraser's suggestion that we pay for it by the abolition of all business support and work-based training, or by Brian Monteith's fiscal-autonomy magic fix? Do they not acknowledge that business rate comparisons depend on rateable value as well as rate poundage, and that the United Kingdom has one of the lowest rates of business taxation in Europe? Whatever the answer, David McLetchie said clearly on television a couple of weeks ago that the Tories do not have an economic policy. He was right—the amendment does not add up to an economic policy.

Meanwhile, the Executive will continue to focus on what it can do, is doing and—above all—must do, because we are determined to create a growing, aspirational, highly skilled and prosperous Scotland.

I move amendment S1M-3376.2, to leave out from “notes” to end and insert:

“endorses the Scottish Executive's aim to increase the sustainable growth of the Scottish economy over the long term, using the powers available to the Parliament, thus providing resources for first-class public services and a more socially just and sustainable Scotland; supports the work undertaken to improve the long-term performance of the Scottish economy as set out in the Framework for Economic Development and Smart, Successful Scotland, and notes the progress in implementing measures to help businesses grow, build Scotland's global connections and improve Scotland's skills base.”

09:55

**Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con):** We are in a challenging time for the Scottish economy. Recession has hit us for the first time in 20 years. That the SNP should choose

to debate the economy at this time is a welcome initiative. It is welcome because—I cannot help but notice—the debate is only the second on the economy that the SNP has called since 1999.

**Andrew Wilson:** That is not true.

**Miss Goldie:** If Mr Wilson wants some rather depressing statistics, I will read them out to him, although I would rather not waste the time. The depressing statistics are that the SNP initiated a debate on tourism and the economy, which was led by Mr MacAskill, on 28 March 2001 and it has initiated today's debate.

Perhaps it is surprising that a motion that is so lengthy says so little. Indeed, it reads more like a university debating society motion than a serious attempt to present constructive proposals to address problems in the economy that confront business. I listened to what Mr Wilson said about growth and, of course, growth is important, but business is pleading to be relieved of some of the obvious burdens that repress growth.

Mr Wilson referred to Ireland. I do not know to whom he speaks in Ireland, but I spoke within the last fortnight to two people there. One, who is in the banking sector, said that there are very serious concerns in Ireland about growing inflation, lack of skills and the non-recurrence of substantial European funding. There are real fears that the Irish economy is heading for crisis.

**Andrew Wilson:** Will Annabel Goldie give way?

**Miss Goldie:** I am sorry. I want to make progress.

To suggest that we should at this time emulate Ireland is somewhat disingenuous.

The explanation for the motion is that the SNP is on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, it is under a political imperative to argue a convincing economic case to support independence. Indeed, the motion is taken pretty much word for word from a paper entitled “Economic Policy and Positioning” that Mr Wilson prepared for discussion at his party's national assembly. On the other hand, it is clear that popular support for an independent Scotland is limited and that business community interest in an independent Scotland is minimal. That is part of the dilemma. Perhaps that explains why the SNP's motion has nothing constructive or specific to say about the economy in the devolution settlement. That is a pity, because it is not for want of the business community asking. Mr Wilson's party colleague, Mr Jim Mather, recently confirmed in an article in *Business a.m.* that when he goes round businesses, he is asked repeatedly not to talk about independence but to restrict his comments to the devolved settlement. That presents the SNP with a political paradox and a pressing problem.

Whatever Mr Wilson's views, his colleagues' views clearly centre on a left-wing political agenda that is more interested in spending money than in allowing the economy to generate revenue. Mr Wilson paints an intriguing vision of a tartan Valhalla—a land flowing with Celtic milk and honey—but is completely oblivious to the various proposals, commitments and suggestions that his colleagues have made during the life of the Parliament, all of which involve the expenditure of significant sums of public money.

The reality is that the SNP has no natural interest in, or distinctive understanding of, Scottish business. The SNP has, as is evidenced by its attitude to the private finance initiative and public-private partnerships, a profound suspicion and distrust of the private sector.

**Andrew Wilson:** I will bring Miss Goldie back to reality. Will she reflect on the fact that, despite her statements on growth and business rates, during 16 of the 18 long, painful years of Conservative rule, Scotland had higher business rates than England? Will she also reflect on the fact that, under the Conservatives, the growth gap between Scotland and the rest of the UK was even wider and grew faster than under the current lot?

**Miss Goldie:** I concede that, as everyone knows, under the previous Conservative Government the economy of the United Kingdom—not just of Scotland—experienced a watershed. No responsible politician would deny that. The Conservative Government was realistic enough to address the problem that existed and to turn around the Scottish economy, so that it became a modern economy with all the benefits to which Mr Gray was happy to refer. Without the inheritance of 1997, it would not have been possible for him to do that.

Mr Wilson raised the issue of business rates. I was in business when the uniform business rate was imposed and as one of many hard-pressed business people in Scotland, I regarded it as an answer to a prayer. It is ridiculous to suggest that the absence of the uniform business rate is in any way beneficial to Scottish business.

Before I took Mr Wilson's intervention, I referred to the Scottish National Party's profound suspicion and distrust of the private sector. Despite everything that Mr Wilson said, one would have thought that the SNP motion might pay lip service to some of the concerns that the business community has expressed recently. Mr Wilson says that we should get back to reality. What planet does he dwell on? The business community to which he refers is not the community with which I engage and that I meet. The chairman of the Confederation of British Industry Scotland, Mr Jack Perry, said at the recent CBI dinner:

"We need—  
he is talking about now—

"increased investment in transport—both public transport and the long long overdue completion of our motorway network. Business rates is a classic example of public policy conflicting with a shared business and political agenda of supporting enterprise and growth."

If the business community is looking to the Scottish National Party for succour or support, the SNP motion is about as comforting as the throwing of a lifebelt made of cement would be to a drowning man. The amendment that I have lodged is intended to address the void in the motion. Since the Parliament was established, the Conservatives have been the only party to champion the uniform business rate and improved investment in transport infrastructure. Those two issues can be addressed now.

If the Scottish National Party has nothing to say, the Scottish Executive has no cause for complacency. New Labour at Westminster and at Edinburgh has presided—with its Liberal Democrat colleagues—over recession, poor GDP growth, poor business profitability and higher unemployment in Scotland relative to the rest of the UK. Most recently, it has imposed a tax on jobs, through the national insurance contribution hike. It is very troubling that since 1997 Scottish business has paid an additional £3.3 billion in tax, which amounts to a staggering £11,225 for each enterprise in Scotland. There has also been a steady decline in business start-ups since 1997. If we add to that the abolition of the uniform business rate by Mr McConnell, the neglect of our transport infrastructure and the imposition by the coalition Executive of almost 500 new regulations that affect business, we will have no difficulty in identifying Labour and the Liberal Democrats in Edinburgh as a nightmare proposition for business.

The Scottish National Party has nothing to say that would help. The coalition Executive says repeatedly that it will help, but it does nothing. I have a challenge for the minister. He should not pretend—as has been trailed in today's headlines—that not increasing business rates is a tremendous triumph for the Executive. By the same logic, the Executive would argue that its promise not to use the Parliament's tax-raising powers is a great prize for business. I challenge the Executive to do something meaningful and to announce today in the comprehensive spending review that the uniform business rate will be restored, which would mean a cut in business rates for many businesses. The Executive should also announce that it intends to embark on extensive road and motorway improvements.

Sir David, I move amendment S1M-3376.1, to leave out from "this recession" to end and insert:

"economic growth is the key to raising personal living standards, providing opportunity and security for all and the means by which we improve our public services and quality of life; further recognises that this prosperity can only be created on a sound entrepreneurial base, and therefore calls on the Scottish Executive to increase investment in our transport infrastructure and to return Scotland to a uniform business rate poundage throughout the United Kingdom, these being two essential factors in providing the right framework for the creation of wealth and jobs."

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh):** Sir David is very grateful, and so am I.

10:03

**Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD):** I welcome this debate on the economy and on growth. Andrew Wilson deserves credit for emphasising the need to focus on the Scottish economy. We cannot ignore that, and this morning's debate gives the Parliament an opportunity to address it.

Mr Wilson referred to the residual strength of the Scottish economy, and his motion concentrates on that to some extent. However, it is bizarre to criticise the limitations on the Parliament's powers and in the same breath to criticise ministers for exercising the powers that they have. That is not a consistent position. It will not help us to achieve Mr Wilson's objective: a long-term analysis of the Scottish economy.

Miss Goldie did not explain in her eight-minute speech what the Conservatives would do on any subject relating to the Scottish economy. We had 18 years of cuts in taxes and no investment in our public services or skills. That policy approach was rejected by the people of this country and I am sure that it will be rejected again in future elections here and in the UK.

What is desperately needed is not a fixation on statistics that relate to two quarters of one year, but an analysis of what needs to change in the long term. We need an analysis of the changes in patterns and trends that affect Scotland, and of the difference that Government can make through strategic investment and that Parliament can make in scrutinising the role of Government.

**Fergus Ewing:** Tavish Scott talked about the powers of the Scottish Parliament. Does he agree that we desperately need power over taxation on oil and gas? Does he agree that the recent decision that the Westminster Government took to increase petroleum tax by 10 per cent was disastrous?

**Tavish Scott:** We made clear our position on that decision in London, where we can do something about it, rather than here, where we can do nothing about it.

In establishing areas in which the Liberal Democrats contend that improvement needs to be made, we do not need the sterile argument that

Fergus Ewing has just made about the powers that the Scottish Parliament does not have. If MSPs want to debate macroeconomic policies, they can be elected to the palace of varieties on the Thames.

By holding the Executive to account, the Parliament has an important function in considering growth and productivity issues in Scotland.

**Mr Duncan Hamilton (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Tavish Scott:** I would like to make progress first, but then I will be happy to give way.

First we need to understand what is happening in the wider world, as Iain Gray rightly pointed out, but I noted that Andrew Wilson and Annabel Goldie did not relate their arguments to globalisation and the natural circumstances of the international situation that affects Scotland and the whole global economy. It is impossible to insulate or separate ourselves from the international context, which, dare I say it, includes England as much as it does the United States of America.

A lack of foresight is apparent in that the UK trails the US economic cycle by six to 12 months and Europe follows six to 12 months later. It is therefore imperative to keep an observing eye on what is happening in the USA. The USA has recently revised its GDP numbers to illustrate that it was in recession in the first nine months of 2001. The Federal Reserve has cut interest rates time and time again. No country has more fiscal freedom than the USA, yet it has an impending double-dip recession. There is no global recovery. Jeremy Peat of the Royal Bank of Scotland stated recently in a report that

"serious growth would have to wait for global recovery."

**Andrew Wilson:** The world economy is not in the best of shape, but Tavish Scott should acknowledge reality. America's latest figures show that it has moved out of recession and the forecast for world growth this year is 3 per cent. There is a slow-down and there are problems, but why does Scotland always feel the brunt of those situations? Why cannot we take control and get ourselves out of our position?

**Tavish Scott:** Andrew Wilson made a number of points there, but I am not wholly convinced by his arguments about the economy of the United States. There is more difficulty to be faced and we should be aware of that, rather than insulating ourselves. Jeremy Peat's recent analysis illustrates the worrying figures that there are on output and jobs. He commented eloquently on the problems of too much dependence on the service sector. Much good can be done in our domestic performance in the service sector and tourism.

A downward trend in trading in the technology and telecommunications sectors has had a severe impact. Previous generations of Scottish politicians begged companies in those sectors to come to Scotland as part of an inward investment strategy. That short-term fix, which was the Tory approach throughout the 1980s, was based on the decline of the manufacturing industry. It was not about building our indigenous economic performance from within. Screwdriver plants offering low-skill jobs were never the success story that they were cited to be at the time.

It is vital that our approach is based on improving our entrepreneurial activity and encouraging the growth of businesses. The enterprise networks have an important role to play in that. The enterprise network must also recognise the views of Scottish Engineering, which represents 400 companies. Just the other week, Scottish Engineering said that this is the worst year on record for the electronics sector since records began. We must take a co-ordinated approach to those issues in both the long and medium term.

Through the capital and investment priorities that may be announced later today, the Scottish Executive could consider making changes to infrastructure in the areas of transport, training, skills, the environment and energy. I hope that, in the spending announcement to be made later today, the Minister for Finance and Public Services will concentrate as much on the medium and long-term investment that the Scottish economy needs as he does on the short-term issues that face Government when it makes policy.

There is a deep reservoir of talent in the commercialisation of research, on which the Scottish economy needs to build. We must take and tap into the best of Scotland's intellectual capital, in relation to which I believe two areas are particularly important. The first is the life sciences industry. I had the opportunity to visit Dundee recently, where I talked to a number of companies that are engaged in that area. High-risk and long-term investments, involving a significant amount of money, are being made at an early stage in order to drive forward exciting new advances in life sciences. That hugely important area for the enterprise network does not produce short-term outcomes and, to that extent, it does not attract the attention that it needs. We should support that industry because it involves not only Scottish brawn, but Scottish brain.

The second area is the renewables sector. Scotland lost the opportunity to lead on wind power—Denmark captured the lead in that sector. However, we could take the lead on wave and other renewable energies. Those are important

opportunities for Scotland, and the proposed energy institute could be part of that work. I am frustrated by the lack of drive on renewables, but it is important that the sector is constantly pushed forward, as it is an area of Scottish success.

I conclude with the observation that the strategy, "A Smart, Successful Scotland", is about medium and long-term investment in the future of the Scottish economy, and the same applies to work that is being done on enterprise and education within the education sphere. Those medium and long-term steps are appropriate and strategic—they are not part of an utterly pointless rush at the issues. Mr Gray's amendment also deals with the medium and long term and, on that basis, I commend it to the Parliament.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I cannot possibly call all the members who have requested to speak, but I will get through as many as I can. I ask members to limit their speeches to four minutes.

10:12

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP):** It is absolutely essential for the future of the Scottish economy that we give our businesses a competitive advantage, rather than giving that advantage to our competitors.

The Parliament has limited powers in relation to the economy. It has no power over the taxes on fuel, the oil and gas industry or the whisky industry. Those taxes apply in the UK, and we should ask ourselves whether it is an accident that they are either the highest or among the highest such taxes in Europe. For decades, the Scotch whisky industry has tried to dismantle tax barriers in other countries, such as Japan and India, only to be told by those countries, "You should start by practising what you preach at home by reducing the level of taxation on whisky." No Scottish Government would tax our national drink to such an extent—to do so is a disgrace and an indictment of successive Westminster Governments over the decades.

I will concentrate on what was indubitably, in my opinion, the Executive's worst decision—amidst stiff competition. When the First Minister was merely the Minister for Finance, he decided to scrap the uniform business rate, which was introduced in 1995 by the Conservative Government and which ended the discrimination that Scottish businesses faced of having to pay higher business rates. Annabel Goldie was sparing in her praise for the efforts of the Scottish National Party during the campaign to end that discrimination. However, I think that she would agree that many of us—including Gil Paterson and me—were very active during the 80s and 90s in that campaign.

What Annabel Goldie was slightly coy about in saying that in 1995 the uniform business rate was an answer to her prayers, was that from 1979 until 1995—a period of 16 years, as Andrew Wilson has pointed out—there was no response to the prayer. One can only assume that the Tory deity was somewhat hard of hearing over that period. The calculation carried out by Craig Campbell of the Scottish Council for Development and Industry was that the amount of extra tax paid by Scottish businesses from 1990, when rateable values were harmonised, to 1995 was £1,200 million. That is Tory over-taxation—an average of 20 per cent higher business tax a year under the Tories. We take no lessons from the Conservatives on the need to provide Scottish businesses with a fair deal.

Let us go back to Mr McConnell, who introduced the policy that has resulted in Scottish businesses over the past three years paying business rates 10 per cent higher than in England. The Labour ministers seem to be in a state of denial about that. They try to say that there is no discrimination because, following the revaluation in 2000, rateable values in England rose by 25 per cent and in Scotland they rose by 15 per cent. Somehow that is presented as an answer. However, that is not an answer because rateable values were harmonised in 1990. The departed Henry McLeish and other former Scottish Office ministers have admitted that.

Unless we scrap Jack's tax—named after the First Minister—which imposes a burden of 10 per cent extra a year, the Labour party will reap a sour reward in next year's elections.

10:17

**Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab):** In view of the self-imposed time constraint, I will pass up the opportunity to reflect on some of the depressing untruth and rhetorical flights of fantasy that we have heard this morning. It was suggested that the deficit is—to quote Andrew Wilson—“nonsensical” and that the Parliament guarantees “decline”. Every federal nation in the world was dismissed as economically unsuccessful and it was said that “nothing will turn us around.” That is a point to which I will return.

Let us take the SNP at its word and assume that it is genuinely interested in improving the Scottish economy. Most of the people watching the debate in Scotland want to see our growth performance improve. What is the answer? We got to the answer in the seventh minute of Andrew Wilson's speech: taxes on profits to compete with the best. We heard that that is the key to success. Let us lay aside the fact that we are already in the lowest quartile in Europe, because taxes on profits is the key to success. Therefore, the only question for

people of good will in Scotland is whether that is the right prescription for growth.

In this month's edition of “Scottish Business Insider”, I note that the answer to the question of what is keeping us back is: number 1, skills availability; number 2, regulatory requirements; number 3, cost of materials; number 4, sterling exchange rates; and number 5, technological capability.

All those issues are addressed through “A Smart, Successful Scotland”. There is no mention of the conclusion that the SNP has reached.

**Andrew Wilson:** Will the member give way?

**Ms Alexander:** No. Let me come to the most important point, which was touched on by Annabel Goldie. The SNP may have called only two debates on the economy, but every Opposition debate is about the same thing: “It's no our fault, we cannae do anything about it, because the power resides elsewhere”. It is always somebody else's fault. The SNP's sine qua non is that we cannot stay in the United Kingdom and succeed and that the only way to take responsibility and end the dependency culture is to leave the UK. I want to get rid of the dependency culture and I want our country to grow, but I do not insist that that requires us to walk out of the United Kingdom. The SNP can never concede that it is possible for Scotland to succeed under the current constitutional arrangements. The key to the SNP's economic policy is not what Scottish business says, but to find the silver bullet—not the right silver bullet; that the SNP currently does not have—and to label that the problem. The SNP says, “England took our ball away—that is the problem.”

**Andrew Wilson** *rose—*

**Ms Alexander:** Let me answer the central point, Andrew. I want to get to it, as it is absolutely critical to the debate that will take place in the next six months. You said, Andrew, that the answer to economic success is for us to have the complete toolbox. I have to say that that would be news to every single member nation of the European Union. Not just to the nations that signed up for the European single market, but to all the countries that signed up to the single currency. In those circumstances people say, “I don't want do everything myself because, economically, sometimes having the full toolkit is not the right thing to do.” The logic of the argument in favour of having the full toolkit is that full fiscal freedom is right for Fair Isle.

The real question for us and for people who want to see how we get Scotland to grow again is, “What is the key to getting Scotland growing again?” Let us look at the small nations that the SNP talks about. In Ireland, population growth was

important, as was the role of the EU and getting the fiscal incentives right for the 1980s and early 1990s, before the accession countries arrived. A different set of considerations applied in Norway and in Catalonia. In Finland, the main consideration was technology. If we are serious about growth, we should not be debating how to find a silver bullet, when we are already in the bottom quartile. The SNP has chosen that bullet because it is the only thing that it can find that it thinks that we do not control. The real debate is—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Please close, Ms Alexander.

**Ms Alexander:** The real debate concerns the advantage that this part of Europe has over other parts of Europe. My view of the long-term success of Scotland, as set out in “A Smart, Successful Scotland”, is that the Scots have been innovators, teachers and healers to the world for more than 300 years. We have done that successfully from within the position of the union and we can succeed on that basis again. That is where growth and success will come from.

10:22

**Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** I thank the Deputy Presiding Officer for bringing that rant to an end.

I will begin by explaining to the minister some of the events that took place at the London Stock Exchange at the beginning of this year, when a number of flotations took place. Owing to global economic conditions, out of the handful of flotations that were successful, two involved Scottish companies: the Wood Group and Venture. The companies had those successes in common and also the fact that they are successful oil and gas businesses, started by Scots in the north-east of Scotland and with company bases in the north-east of Scotland.

Instead of rewarding that success story, a decision was taken elsewhere—outwith Scotland, which is the home of the oil and gas industry—in London. The decision that was taken undermined the success of that industry. Scotland does not have that many successful economic stories at the current time, but the oil and gas industry is one.

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** Does Mr Lochhead recall that, when he and I were in Norway some days ago, one of the stories that we heard loud and clear was that the taxation regime on the oil and gas sector is far worse than that of the United Kingdom? Mr Lochhead and his party go on about how wonderful Norway is, but perhaps they should think twice about that.

**Richard Lochhead:** I was going to mention that

all of the Scottish companies that I spoke to at the various stands at the exhibitions we attended complained about the 10 per cent oil and gas tax that was introduced by the Westminster Government and the impact that that tax is having.

One of the companies that I spoke to was quoted in an article yesterday. The chairman of Paladin Resources, one of the independents, which is managed by Scots, said that the 10 per cent tax is

“ill-conceived” as it led to fiscal uncertainty, which would erode stability vital for the industry and investors in a mature hydrocarbon province”.

He went on to say that the tax would

“make it more difficult for new entrants to secure finance and would also accelerate the demise of the North Sea.”

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

**Richard Lochhead:** No. The debate is about trying to persuade ministers that they need the powers to help Scottish industries to develop and take Scotland forward. To do so would allow us to create the wealth to invest in Scotland’s social services. That is what is important and that is what we are trying to get across to ministers today.

The 10 per cent tax is extremely important. It was not a decision that was taken by the Scottish Parliament, despite the fact that the Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning is supposed to be responsible for promoting enterprise in Scotland.

He should be banging on doors in London and trying to persuade UK ministers, who are taking such anti-Scottish decisions, to help him to promote enterprise in Scotland. The 10 per cent tax is already having a devastating impact. It has not even been introduced yet and has already dented confidence in the North sea. Heaven knows what will happen when it is actually introduced.

In his opening remarks, the minister said that he wanted to promote Scottish manufacturing and engineering. In the quarter before the oil and gas tax was announced, orders in the oil and gas sectors were up by 38 in Scotland. However, since the tax came on to the agenda, they have fallen by 23 in the last quarter. That is a direct impact of the tax.

**Elaine Thomson:** Will the member give way?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member is in his final minute.

**Richard Lochhead:** We are seeing a resource flight from the North sea. Because it is more profitable to work in other parts of the world, people and equipment are leaving Scotland and going elsewhere. The minister said that we must

create a skills base in Scotland. However, I should inform him that, because the tax is slowing down exploration in the North sea, people, particularly those on the rigs, are going to work in countries such as Mexico and India. We need those skills to boost the Scottish economy, but the young people who are going into the industry are finding it more attractive to work elsewhere.

This issue is a perfect example of why the Parliament needs more powers. We need to help the Scottish economy and secure our future. Although the oil and gas industry is essentially Scottish, decisions are being taken in London. That is where civil service jobs and the headquarters of some oil companies are based and where taxation decisions are being made. Although the minister must secure more powers to help the Parliament to deliver for Scotland, in the meantime he should use what influence he has to fight the Scottish case. Indeed, he should go down to London and try to help the Scottish economy by getting the oil and gas tax removed.

10:26

**Alex Fergusson (South of Scotland) (Con):**

When debating SNP motions, I often find that I can agree with approximately two thirds of it. Their preambles are usually quite acceptable, sometimes reasonable and occasionally sensible. However, their conclusions are only occasionally acceptable, and are rarely reasonable or sensible. This motion proves no exception to that rule.

As soon as the motion begins to talk about "targets" and

"mature, serious and open-minded debate",

it begins to lose touch with economic reality. After all, targets and debates are only words. Because actions speak so much louder than words, the debate needs largely to focus on the actions of the Scottish Executive.

We have all seen the figures and the headlines. Indeed, one of the starkest headlines appeared in last Monday's *Business a.m.* It read:

"Growth in Scottish company start-ups down by 80%".

The article explained that, with start-up growth down from 10.2 per cent to 1.7 per cent, we could face a fall in the number of companies created in Scotland next year. Although that is a terrifying prospect, it is also a stark and probably accurate pointer to an economy in decline. Nowhere is that situation shown more clearly than in rural Scotland, and particularly in the South of Scotland region that I represent. Incidentally, that area is now suffering depopulation as a direct result of Scottish Executive policies.

According to the Executive's amendment, the answers to those very real problems lie in

"providing resources for first-class public services and a more socially just and sustainable Scotland",

supporting

"the work undertaken to improve"

our "long-term performance" and noting

"the progress in implementing measures to help businesses grow".

However, the answers do not lie there. Quite simply, in rural Scotland at least, they lie with the need to make meaningful and rapid improvements to two aspects of infrastructure and, as Annabel Goldie so ably argued, with a return to a level playing field on business rates.

During its recent round of evidence-gathering meetings throughout Scotland, the Rural Development Committee found that, alongside planning restrictions, one of the most strongly perceived barriers to rural development was the roads infrastructure. Nothing would do more for business development and new start-ups than for the Executive to recognise that fact and to take some practical action to do something about it. I suspect that, instead, we will be fed the usual mealy-mouthed soft soap about the Executive's investment in a properly integrated sustainable rural public transport system. Although I concede that that investment has done something for rural employment by creating the need for more bus drivers, it has done nothing to get more passengers on to those buses. Although I hope that the announcement that will be made later today will prove me wrong, I am not optimistic.

I have said many times before that we simply cannot replace the car in rural Scotland. It is time that the Executive realised that and implemented a comprehensive road improvement programme not only to allow people to access the workplace more easily but, more important, to help rural businesses to get their primary or processed products to the marketplace.

**Fergus Ewing:** Will the member give way?

**Alex Fergusson:** I am sorry—I am in my last minute.

The information technology infrastructure is in much need of attention and access to it is paramount in diversifying rural Scotland's industrial base. Last year, when I mentioned the lack of access to IT in rural Scotland, Jim Wallace suggested that I must be living on a different planet if I could not recognise the significant benefits of the pathfinder project in the south of Scotland. If he were here, I would say to him that I do not because there are none. Successful small and medium enterprises are having to move from rural Scotland to more urban areas in order to access better IT facilities.



I contend that the Executive's policies are failing because they are the wrong policies. They will continue to fail until ministers realise that they must differentiate between rural and urban policies. Despite the failure of those policies, however, I can think of no policy that would cause business confidence and start-ups to collapse more quickly than that called for in the SNP motion this morning. The thought of an SNP-led Executive four years ago caused several companies to move their headquarters south of the border in total panic. Independence—the SNP's answer to everything—is the answer to nothing. I am sure that on 2 May next year, we will discover that the vast majority of people in Scotland will decisively reject it once again.

If the Parliament is serious about taking proactive measures to improve Scotland's economy, it will follow my example and support Annabel Goldie's amendment.

10:31

**Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab):** Our Executive is committed to the creation of a strong, diverse and thriving economy. We have enjoyed the benefits of working in partnership with Westminster, which has achieved economic growth and, important for May, a reduction in unemployment, coupled with a strong labour market.

As usual, the SNP is selective in its choice of statistics to score political points at the expense of business and investor confidence. That is an important point. The SNP has picked on negative statistics over a short period. Nobody says that we have not faced problems, but we have managed to maintain our share of total UK inward investment. Scotland's performance in the period in question reflects well in the post-11 September era, when foreign investment saw a dramatic fall worldwide, allied to the severe contraction of the electronics sector and output throughout the world.

Earlier this week, Jack McConnell spoke to the Institute of Directors. He made clear the Executive's commitment to a strong economy that creates jobs and prosperity. In his speech, he outlined our key economic objectives. The minister has repeated them this morning. Acceleration of our rate of economic growth is a key task, as is improving opportunities for all who wish to work. I hold that very dear. Improving the skills of our work force is a top priority of the Executive—and, indeed, for the Parliament and the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee.

An important point about which we have not heard much from the SNP is that our economic development must be sustainable. Closing the gap—not only within Scotland but within regions

such as my own—is very important. I believe that we can all sign up to the objectives. In "A Smart, Successful Scotland", we have the correct strategy to accelerate our economy and create opportunities for all. However, we must ensure a correct balance between central strategy and local flexibility and innovation.

In my constituency, we recently experienced the withdrawal of a large multinational company—Alcan. However, I am encouraged by the Executive's commitment to the development of indigenous business and I congratulate the work force, the trade unions, Fife Council, Scottish Enterprise Fife and the minister and his team for their support in seeking a local solution.

Business creation is vital. We have seen 12,100 new companies in the past year—a new high. A total of £40 million has been invested in supporting small businesses throughout Scotland, through the co-investment scheme that seeks to utilise the expertise of private sector fund managers in the venture capital process, and through the extended business growth fund and additional grant support within the investor readiness programme. A total of £11 million has been awarded to Scotland's most innovative firms through the SMART: Scotland award—the small firms merit award for research and technology—and £33 million has gone to the proof of concept fund, which aims to turn innovation into new businesses and to give a competitive edge to existing firms. All those ideas have been successful.

The industrial development renewal report for the year ended 31 March showed that projects in Scotland benefited to the tune of more than £100 million, thanks to grants administered by the Executive. Labour is clear in its belief that a strong, vibrant business economy can generate growth and promote social well-being. Unlike Conservative members, I think that that is important.

I hope that, later today, we will hear about innovative projects to help training infrastructure. I agree with Tavish Scott that it is not just a question of short-term fixes; we must consider a medium and long-term strategy. We must remain firmly focused on building for long-term economic strength. I believe that the Executive's policies to increase competitiveness and boost productivity are the way forward. We want an economy that achieves the correct balance, supporting business and enterprise while promoting social and regional development.

10:36

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** The first thing to understand is that the Lib-Lab Executive is neither smart nor successful. For 39 years since

the rate of growth was first recorded in 1963, the Scottish economy has grown at a rate consistently below that of the UK economy. There is consistently a 28 per cent gap between performance in Scotland and performance in the rest of the UK. If we compare the performance of the Scottish economy with that of the south-east of England, we see that the gap is not 28 per cent but nearer to 75 per cent. If we had had anything like the growth level of the south-east of England, Scotland would indeed—

**George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD):** Will Alex Neil accept an intervention?

**Alex Neil:** Unfortunately, I do not have time, because of the stupid four-minute rule.

Iain Gray's amendment mentions the long term, but we have been through the long term for the past 40 years. The same speeches were made in Westminster over those 40 years, during which we have had 16 years of Labour Government and 24 years of Tory Government. It did not matter which party was in power; the result was the same. The Scottish economy has been in continual relative decline.

**Mr Stone:** Come the day of a Liberal Government.

**Alex Neil:** The Liberals will never get another shot. They have had 80 years to rest.

The potential wealth of Scotland in natural resources probably makes us the richest country per head in the whole of Europe. As Jim Sillars used to say, Scotland is the only country to get poorer and poorer as the oil flowed faster and faster.

The coalition parties try to ridicule the case for independence, but they should consider what a London-based accountancy company said only two weeks ago. It said that we in Scotland should at present have interest rates of 2 per cent less than that set by the Bank of England, because of the state of our economy. Wendy Alexander should note that that London-based accountancy group admits that we have a set of economic circumstances in Scotland that are different from those in the south-east of England. In my view, the Bank of England should be renamed the Bank for England, because it has done nothing for Scotland.

**Ms Alexander** *rose*—

**George Lyon** *rose*—

**Brian Fitzpatrick (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)** *rose*—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member cannot take interventions; he is in the final minute of his speech.

**Alex Neil:** I did not mean to tempt everybody up at the same time.

Of course, we are all united on the need for a science and skills strategy. The SNP manifesto in 1999 envisaged VisitScotland and Scottish Development International. We envisaged making Scotland the science capital of Europe. I know those manifesto commitments word for word because it was I who wrote them into the manifesto. We stand four-square behind that strategy, but as long as interest rates and fiscal policy are controlled in London we can have as many strategies as we like up here and it will not matter a toss. I said toss, not tosh, Presiding Officer.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I still know what it means, though.

**Alex Neil:** A 1 per cent difference in interest rates would wipe out Scottish Enterprise's budget at a stroke. That budget is worth about 0.5 per cent of gross domestic product in Scotland. A 1 per cent increase in interest rates would more than make up for Scottish Enterprise's budget. That is the scale. That is the difference. That is the vision. That is why we need control of our own economy in an independent Scotland.

10:41

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** It is great when we hear the i-word—independence—spoken here, because that shovels thousands of votes in any direction other than the SNP. I felt sorry for Bruce Crawford and my SNP opponent, Rob Gibson, when they were trailing around Dounreay and Thurso the other day, trying to drum up votes. All that Alex Neil says plays into our court. If they chapped at people's doors and asked, "Do you want independence? Do you want to say cheerio to England? Do you want to say goodbye to the Queen, the Black Watch, the Royal Navy and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority?" the answer would be, "No, thanks." That is why Caithness will never vote SNP. I dare say that Inverness will also vote out Fergus Ewing, who will be no more the Perry Mason of the Parliament. The more the nats talk about independence, the better it is for the rest of us, because it does not work.

What would happen to the local economy of Caithness if we went independent and the UKAEA was not there to pump millions of pounds into it? Instead of the likes of Bruce Crawford selling the whole thing short by saying, "The AEA is secretive and won't tell us what it is doing"—which is the gist of the press release that he unwisely issued before he visited Dounreay—we should be standing squarely with the authority. It is at the

cutting edge of decommissioning and is the state of the art of taking apart nuclear facilities. Instead of being miserable about it, we should view it as a chance of being the best not only in Britain, but in the world, and of getting back in industry. If the nats wonder why the votes are not there when the fat lady sings and the black boxes are opened, perhaps they should know that.

We should be playing to our strengths and looking to the future, building on what we have got, not whingeing about London or the UK and blaming somebody else. We should be developing and maximising our environment, the country's tourism potential and our skills. In her good speech, Wendy Alexander was right to make that point. We should get in there and back our industries.

I shall conclude my remarks there. It was perhaps a bit naughty of me to have a go at the nats, but it is fun.

10:43

**Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab):** Having heard that today's debate was going to be about the Scottish economy and knowing the number of times that Andrew Wilson appeared in the media over the summer talking about recalling Parliament to debate the economy, I hoped that we might have a bit of fresh thinking from SNP members. However, what we got was their usual ploy of talking Scotland down and—surprise, surprise—the revelation that the SNP believes that independence is the answer to all our problems. That is probably one of the biggest revelations that we could have expected in the debate.

We have also heard from SNP members that the SNP wants to cut business rates, reduce taxation on profits, reduce duty on whisky and reduce tax on the oil industry. However, in other debates on the health service, education and transport, they ask us to increase the level of expenditure to levels comparable to those in Scandinavia. Where does the balance lie? What level of personal taxation do they propose?

**Andrew Wilson:** Will the member give way?

**Bristow Muldoon:** I will decline. In the course of his 12-minute diatribe, Andrew Wilson refused to give way to any other member. If he wants to engage in a proper debate, he should give way when he is speaking.

**Andrew Wilson:** Who asked me to give way?

**Bristow Muldoon:** Three members asked him, including my colleague Rhona Brankin and one of the Liberal Democrat members.

The obvious conclusion to be reached from Mr Neil's speech is that the SNP is against joining the

single European currency. If the SNP does not want Scotland to remain part of a single currency in which interest rates are decided at a UK level, how could it want us to be part of a single currency in which interest rates are decided at a European level? The SNP leadership may disagree with that idea, and it is clear that the party is split on the matter.

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** Does Bristow Muldoon agree that West Lothian, which he represents, could be a cockpit for development, but that our problem lies in the need for infrastructure? Does he agree that transport, infrastructure and skills are crucial if we are to grow the economy not just in West Lothian but elsewhere? Will he get to the point and argue the case for his constituents instead of knocking people in the Parliament?

**Bristow Muldoon:** I was going to turn to West Lothian later in my speech, but I will do so now. The Scottish economy—specifically electronics—has recently experienced problems as a result of both local and global factors, and one of the worst-hit areas has undoubtedly been West Lothian, with the closures of the Motorola and NEC Semiconductors plants. The story of West Lothian also gives us a degree of encouragement about the future of the Scottish economy. In spite of those major closures and of the fact that thousands of people in West Lothian have been through the trauma of redundancy in recent years, unemployment in Livingston stands at only 4 per cent.

The SNP wants to create the picture of a Scottish economy in the same state as in the early 1980s. As Ms Hyslop probably knows, unemployment in West Lothian was in excess of 20 per cent then. Ms Hyslop might also wish to know that, in the most recent report of the Committee of Scottish Clearing Bankers, Livingston had the fourth-highest rate of business start-ups in Scotland. There is an underlying strength to the economy both in West Lothian and in Scotland as a whole. That strength has been delivered by the actions of the UK Government and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, which have given Scotland the lowest level of unemployment for three decades, the lowest interest rates for decades and the lowest inflation rates for decades. We should welcome those statistics. That underlying stability was never seen in the 18 years of Tory misrule in the UK.

What are we doing to improve the economy in Scotland? We are investing in the transport infrastructure, as evidenced in the transport delivery report, which was launched by my colleague Wendy Alexander. I expect that we will hear more later today when Andy Kerr makes his spending announcements, which will be translated

by Iain Gray into further investment in the transport infrastructure.

We are investing in the skills of the people of Scotland through the success of the modern apprenticeships programme and the record number of people in further and higher education. The only alternative that SNP members have to that platform of policies is independence. They have the simplistic innocence of children who still believe in Santa Claus delivering Christmas presents. Independence is their only answer. We are living in uncertain times in a global context, but the stable economic circumstances that we have put in place at UK and Scottish levels will deliver an improved growth rate in the Scottish economy in years to come.

10:48

**George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD):** Like my colleague Tavish Scott and others, I welcome the chance to debate this serious issue. All parties in the Parliament share concern about the fact that Scotland's economy has officially dipped into recession for the first time in 20 years. But let us face it: given the economic background of collapsing output around the world, a nine-month recession in the American economy—and no guarantee that the United States, the main engine of growth in the world economy over the past 10 years, is coming out of recession—and months of falling output in the euro zone and the G7 countries, it is hardly surprising that Scotland has not escaped the fallout from world events.

Given Scotland's narrow economic base and an industrial policy over the past 20 to 30 years that has been based on using huge financial inducements to lure big, multinational companies to set up screwdriver operations, some might argue that we have got away lightly with only two quarters of negative growth.

I suggest to SNP members, especially Andrew Wilson, who called for this serious debate, that no degree of fiscal autonomy could have prevented the current situation. To suggest otherwise detracts from the real debate around how we tackle Scotland's record of relatively poor economic performance. The issue should indeed be top of the political agenda, and I agree with Andrew Wilson that all parties must engage in a mature, serious and open-minded debate on how we tackle it. However, Andrew Wilson and his colleagues did not contribute in any serious way to a mature debate on how we should deal with the issue. There are no quick fixes and the suggestion that constitutional change is the answer to all our problems is irrelevant.

**Richard Lochhead:** Will the member take an intervention?

**George Lyon:** Presiding Officer, could you add the time on?

**Richard Lochhead:** George Lyon will appreciate that agriculture plays a crucial role in the Scottish economy. He recently complained that Margaret Beckett makes anti-Scottish decisions when she is in Europe. Does that not show the case for a change in constitutional arrangements so that we can take good economic decisions for Scotland in Europe and elsewhere?

**George Lyon:** Thankfully, Scotland has a very good Minister for Environment and Rural Development who champions our cause in Europe. Indeed, nine months ago the Scottish fishermen said as much during the debate on the common fisheries policy. I remember Richard Lochhead praising Mr Finnie for his good work.

There are no quick fixes and anyone who suggests that there are is misleading the Scottish public. The first key issue that must be tackled is the widening of our economic base. Our reliance on the electronics industry as one of our main employers has been shown to leave us in a very weak position as soon as there is a downturn in that sector.

The need to improve and develop our skills base has been mentioned by many speakers in the debate. Growing indigenous businesses seems to be crucial for the future. It is no surprise that two or three years ago, Ireland realigned its economic development agencies to go down the same road. Ireland knew when its days of relying on inducing big screwdriver operations into the country were coming to an end. It is also crucial that we commercialise knowledge that is produced in our universities. We have an excellent research base and we must learn how to use it to grow jobs and companies.

Above all, if we are going to enjoy economic success, it is a fundamental requirement that we value enterprise and the people who take risks to create jobs and wealth. The Parliament has to take a strong lead in championing enterprise risk and success in the private sector. Too often, the message coming out of the Parliament—especially from the SNP—denigrates private enterprise and the profit motive. That does not help to encourage those in private enterprise who want to create wealth and jobs. The Parliament should be a business-friendly Parliament. We must work harder to ensure that that happens.

Addressing Scotland's fundamental problems will take time, but through the strategy of "A Smart, Successful Scotland", the Executive has started down the right road. However, I re-emphasise that there are no quick fixes.

Despite calling for a mature debate on the economy, the SNP offered nothing but platitudes,

soundbites and the usual argument that constitutional change is the answer to every ill that confronts Scotland. Andrew Wilson even went so far as to link the longevity of the Norwegian people to their country's independence. That is not a solution; it is an irrelevance, and I will support the amendment in the name of Iain Gray.

10:53

**David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con):** As I wind up this morning's debate for the Conservatives, there is a strong sense of déjà vu. On the two previous occasions in the past year when the Conservatives instigated a debate on the economy, the Executive said how important the issue was—but of course parliamentary time is far too valuable for the Executive to bring forward a debate on the economy.

The difference today is that last week Mr McConnell announced that the economy was his top, top priority ahead of all of his other top priorities. Of course, that was because the sustained criticism of the Scottish Executive's handling of the economy and Scotland's economic performance had moved from the business pages to the front pages of the newspapers. The immediate knee-jerk media defence response had to be adopted. Mr McConnell was deployed to talk to business and, in the Sunday press, officials trailed a pro-business outcome to the spending review. Business will be the top priority until next week, when the next top priority will hit the front pages of the papers and the full weight of the Scottish Executive counter-spin machine can be deployed on that subject.

Scotland's economy is a long-term issue for the future and it requires sustained and focused attention. However, undermining Scotland's economy is relatively straightforward. It is not done, as the Executive often suggests, by debating the issue or by highlighting Executive inadequacies and the failings of agencies such as Scottish Enterprise; it is done by the stroke of Mr McConnell's pen. As Minister for Finance, he effectively scrapped the uniform business rate that the Conservative Government introduced. Now, rather than put up his hands and admit the mistake and the damage, we get the usual weasel words on business rates. No one knows what they mean, but it looks as though the best that we will get is an assurance that business rates will not rise. In the hour or so that Mr Kerr has before making his statement, and if it is not already the rabbit in his hat, I ask him to adopt the one policy that business says time and again would make the most difference—the reintroduction of a uniform business rate in Scotland.

**Andrew Wilson:** The member's ambitions are limited. Does he acknowledge the fact that, during

the Conservative era, growth in the UK was a third faster than it was in Scotland? How does he explain that?

**David Mundell:** I recognise the importance of growth and I welcome the fact that we are debating it. I will return to that issue, but at this point I wish to examine transport.

We are told in the media that there is a spending bonanza round the corner for transport. All I can say is that it is about time. In the five and a half years that Labour has been in power in Scotland, it has systematically cut transport budgets. It has needlessly delayed key projects that are vital to Scotland's economy, from the M77 extension—for which not a sod has been cut—to the M74 extension to the equally vital M74 south between Gretna and Carlisle. Those projects have been delayed by the UK Government for no good reason.

How can it have taken as long as this to realise the damage that the Executive has done with its anti-car dogma, which has been so detrimental to our economy? It is not as if the money that has supposedly gone into public transport is producing improved services—just ask rail commuters from Fife or even Glasgow—nor is it as if all rural transport issues have been resolved, as the much-lamented Miss Alexander once claimed. On the subject of Miss Alexander, it was good to hear some Latin in the chamber for once. The reality is that, over the past five and a half years, our transport infrastructure has declined and public transport has got worse, yet today we are all supposed to be grateful for Mr Kerr's largesse in finally beginning to produce the investment in Scotland's infrastructure that is so badly needed. However, if that investment is to be effective, it must be sustained and focused.

The SNP instigated this debate and, as I indicated, I am grateful for that, but however well intentioned Andrew Wilson is—I note his contribution to the Scottish economy; he is keeping *Business a.m.* going by filling half its pages—he continues to fail to deliver what Mr Swinney said, when he unveiled his talking independence campaign, would be

"the most sophisticated economic presentation on independence ever devised."

We are still waiting.

Scotland's economy is in trouble. The statistics are legion, but independence is not the answer. The Scottish Executive can, within the devolved powers, do a great deal and it should begin that process today by announcing the reintroduction of uniform business rates. I support Miss Goldie's amendment.

10:58

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning (Lewis Macdonald):** As Iain Gray said, we welcome the opportunity to demonstrate that economic growth and jobs remain two of our top priorities, along with transport, health and education. Economic growth is at the heart of our economic and social strategy. Fundamental to our prosperity is a buoyant and dynamic economy. I welcome the SNP's ringing endorsement of our economic framework strategy and "A Smart, Successful Scotland: Ambitions for the Enterprise Networks", which aim to achieve our objectives.

Andrew Wilson spoke of other areas of consensus on economic policy. There is a clear understanding and wide agreement that our future economic success and prosperity depend on raising our game. For too long, our growth rate has failed to match the UK average. That is true and, as has been said, it has been true for almost 30 years, but it is not the whole story. Take this week's report on business start-ups, which was quoted during the debate. Yes, the percentage increase in the business birth rate was lower than in the previous year, as the report states, but the total number of start-ups was the largest ever recorded in Scotland, at 12,100 in 2001-02.

We have heard much about business rates and the perception that an unfair additional burden is placed on Scottish business. To talk about poundage without dealing with rateable values is to miss half the picture. The rise in rateable values at the most recent revaluation was 15 per cent, compared with 25 per cent south of the border. That is what determines the rates that businesses pay.

**Fergus Ewing:** What would the minister say to Neil Menzies of the Chemical Industries Association, who revealed that two pipelines that cross the border have the same rateable value but attract 10 per cent more in rates on the Scottish side?

**Lewis Macdonald:** Of course business has concerns about such issues and of course we listen to those concerns. It is inevitable that the impact on some industries, including the chemical industry, is different. We are listening to those concerns and we will reflect on them and propose policies in response to them.

We have set out clearly our expectations and aspirations for the Scottish economy and the big picture from which all our detailed economic policies follow, whether pan-Scotland or more locally. Those policies are being implemented.

The vision that was set out in "The Way Forward: Framework for Economic Development in Scotland" when it was published two years ago

was to raise Scottish people's quality of life through increasing economic opportunities for all on a socially and environmentally sustainable basis. That vision still holds.

Stimulating actions to secure economic growth and sustainable development is central to our economic vision. To put it another way, we want to restore and accelerate economic growth, but we are also fundamentally concerned about the quality of economic growth. Growth must be socially just and sustainable by embracing all the people of Scotland. That is why it is important that such solid progress has been made on employment and unemployment in recent years. The labour market remains relatively strong, with a high level of employment and a low level of unemployment historically and in a European context. As Iain Gray said, yesterday's figures confirmed that the employment rate in Scotland continues to grow.

**Andrew Wilson:** I am delighted that the minister accepts that a growth, employment, wealth and life expectancy gap exists. Which of his measures—if any—will close that gap, and by when?

**Lewis Macdonald:** Our challenge is to take every opportunity to boost our sustainable growth rate and to close the gap in economic growth. That is why we have set out a strategy. Some of the strategy for addressing economic growth lies with the UK Government at a macroeconomic level. It must be noted that the UK Government's prudent handling of the macroeconomy in the past five years has provided the stable economic environment in which we can make progress. Andrew Wilson seems surprised that our economic position is stable, but he need cast his mind back only five or six years to appreciate what the Scottish economy's position would be without that stable environment.

We must build on the platform of a stable UK economy and we must do that principally and centrally by enhancing productivity. That is the most critical element in stimulating economic growth and in closing the gap. Improved productivity is the key source of international competitiveness. By raising productivity and improving our competitiveness, we can raise the level of employment and raise living standards.

**Richard Lochhead:** The minister refers to productivity. Does he agree with the oil and gas industry's view that the new tax will reduce productivity in the North sea? If so, what will he do about that?

**Lewis Macdonald:** I enjoyed Richard Lochhead's speech, in which he said that Scotland should have control of oil taxation in order to invest more in our social services, but in the same breath demanded that oil taxes be cut. That did

not show much coherent vision. The Executive has a coherent vision. To overcome the growth deficit, we need policies that will stimulate increased productivity. That is why the strategy in "A Smart, Successful Scotland" is important and why it is important that the SNP warmly endorses and supports that strategy.

Clearly, the priorities of growing businesses, improving learning and skills and growing global connections are the way for us to move forward. We must embrace learning at all levels and promote a culture of enterprise and a can-do approach that will support those important structural changes. However, we do not underestimate the size of that task. We recognise that it cannot be achieved overnight. To pretend that the performance of our economy can be transformed overnight or by constitutional change is simply disingenuous. As Wendy Alexander described so eloquently, the SNP's prescription for full fiscal freedom is based entirely on its political rejection of the United Kingdom.

We do not pretend that we can determine the strength of the Scottish economy on our own. We will seek to generate the conditions to encourage growth and enterprise. We will do that in partnership with the UK Government and all the other actors in the economy who see the need for a productivity-based growth strategy for the years ahead.

11:06

**Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP):** Later this morning, the chamber and the press gallery will be full for a ministerial announcement on how an extra £100 million that we are to receive from the UK Treasury will be spent. Does anyone really believe that a few extra million pounds spent here or there will make any significant difference in solving our deep-seated social and economic problems? I suggest that the priorities of our devolved system of government are seriously askew when it takes the main Opposition party to stimulate a debate on Scotland's economy when that economy has moved into recession for the first time in 20 years. The problem lies, of course, with the nature of the financial arrangements whereby the Scottish Parliament has little or no power to raise the money that it spends.

There is no link to the real economy, apart perhaps from business rates. Even in that case, a peculiar perversity is built into the system. Economic logic dictates that rate cuts should be the order of the day to boost business growth. However, that will be countered by the Executive's reluctance to forgo revenue that it cannot make up by raising taxes elsewhere. Those arrangements are plainly unsustainable in the long run and the

question of powers will have to be addressed whether the Executive parties like it or not.

**Iain Gray:** I welcome a certain note of realism in the debate on business rates, because the cost of the measure that the Tory amendment calls for would be somewhere between £150 million and £200 million, which would mean less resources for spending. Mr Ingram implies that the SNP solution to that would be to raise other taxation. I am interested to know which other taxes would be raised to reduce the business rate or which public services would be cut to pay for that change.

**Mr Ingram:** It is the same old story. The whole point about stimulating an economy is that that increases economic activity and the tax base. Taxes can be lowered and there can be a bigger tax-revenue take for the Exchequer.

In the past, Labour was not so shy about talking about extra powers for the Scottish Parliament. Do members remember Scottish Labour Action, which included Jack McConnell and Wendy Alexander? That group wanted the Scottish Parliament to have the power to collect all Scottish taxes and, indeed, it wanted 20 per cent of oil revenues to be distributed by the Parliament. We do not even have that power.

Perhaps the perversity of the system that we have explains why the ruling coalition has until now turned a blind eye to our underperforming economy. It seems to have tumbled somewhat belatedly to the fact that "It's the economy, stupid." All our aspirations for a prosperous, socially just Scotland are predicated on our sustaining economic growth. Any Scottish Government worth its salt needs to create conditions in which our best and brightest—those with get-up-and-go—do not have to leave Scotland to pursue careers and lifestyles that they want for themselves and their families.

**Bristow Muldoon:** Will the member give way?

**Mr Ingram:** No, sorry.

Perhaps the Executive has finally also woken up to the reality of the Barnett squeeze. The Treasury handouts, also known as funding consequential, are beginning to look meagre compared with public spending increases in the rest of the UK. Depopulation is beginning to bite. I also believe that, as David Mundell suggested, the Executive has been forced to change tack by political pressure, not least from Andrew Wilson and Jim Mather, who is in the public gallery today. They have been ramming home the truth about Scotland's economic decline and the need for the Parliament to assume fully independent financial powers to fulfil its fabulous economic potential.

The Scottish public seem to be convinced by our arguments, with the opinion polls showing 70 per

cent support for financial independence. They do not seem to share the unionists' disdain for constitutional change. As Andrew Wilson outlined, Scotland has all the attributes for economic success: an international brand recognised the world over; a priceless reputation for integrity and reliability; top-quality people; a superb environment; and abundant natural resources. However, we have lacked the policies that would bring those attributes into play. Unfortunately, what we have heard today and what the First Minister said in his speech to the Institute of Directors on Tuesday show that the Executive is as stubborn and misguided as ever in the development of its policy.

Bill Jamieson, the director of an Edinburgh-based independent think-tank, said:

"In so far as there is any coherent economic policy in Scotland, it is one of piecemeal and reactive submersion in micro-policy activity, with problem avoidance and denial at the macro level."

The First Minister and his colleagues will have to change their tune on the so-called benefits of the macroeconomic policy that is pursued by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in London.

**Rhona Brankin:** Will the member give way?

**Mr Ingram:** No.

As we have heard again today, the Executive stresses the importance of stability without twiggling to the fact that it is possible to have a stable economy that is dead in the water. Interest rates might be low, but they are not low enough to prevent the Scottish economy from going into recession. Low inflation in the south-east of England can turn into stagnation or deflation in Scotland. The chancellor's policies are designed to manage the main economic engine of the UK, which is the south-east of England and London in particular. More of the same policies, uniformly applied across the UK, will simply maintain the Scottish economy's competitive disadvantage and do nothing to stop the wealth gap between Scotland and England continuing to grow.

It is about time that the penny dropped that maintaining a level playing field across the UK or competing internationally requires greater incentives in Scotland for businesses to start up and expand, a different tax regime that will promote research and development and different patterns of public expenditure. More needs to be spent on transport and communications infrastructure and on the promotion of Scotland abroad.

Our aspirations must be for a high-productivity, high-wage economy that can compete internationally and that will stop our brain drain. It is desperate that, on graduation, 37 per cent of all graduates from Scottish universities leave Scotland.

Our core problem is that Scotland lacks the political and financial powers to turn around our poor economic performance. That is the fundamental structural weakness of the Scottish economy. Our message to the Executive is that it must face the facts and respond positively to that analysis or face the consequences. Our arguments will only grow in strength as the Executive fails to take them on board.



## Acute Services Review (Glasgow)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S1M-3375, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on the acute services review, and one amendment to that motion. As we prepare to start, the indication is that many more members wish to speak in the open part of the debate than we will be able to accommodate. We will do our best. I ask all members to stick as closely as possible to the advised speaking limits.

11:15

**Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP):** The debate is not and should not be party political. It is about the future of the national health service in Glasgow. There has been remarkable cross-party consensus in Glasgow on the issue over the past three years. For the sake of the thousands of people in Glasgow who look to the Parliament to listen and act, I sincerely hope that that unity can be maintained in the debate.

Glasgow's hospitals desperately need investment. With that investment must come modernisation. Health care today is not delivered as it was when the Victoria infirmary was built. Any plans for future hospital provision must reflect that.

Those of us who oppose the proposals that were put forward by the Greater Glasgow NHS Board and endorsed by the Minister for Health and Community Care are not neanderthals who are wedded to the old ways of doing things. We welcome the proposed £700 million that is earmarked for investment in Glasgow's hospitals and want the modernisation programme to start as quickly as possible. However, it is absolutely essential that we get that right. The proposals will affect not only our generation or the next; the hospitals that get the go-ahead now will serve the people of Glasgow for decades to come.

The health board's current plans are fundamentally flawed. In my view—and in that of the thousands in Glasgow who have made their views known again and again over a period of years—they are unacceptable. Three aspects of the acute services plan do not command any public confidence. The first is the proposal to centralise all in-patient services for the north and east of the city at Glasgow royal infirmary and remove all in-patient services from Stobhill hospital. Stobhill will become an ambulatory care—or day—hospital.

My colleague Fiona McLeod will cover the Stobhill issues in more detail later in the debate. It is worth noting that 43,000 people in the catchment area of that hospital signed a petition demanding that in-patient services be retained

there. Their concerns are both practical and principled. They do not believe that Glasgow royal infirmary can cope with the increase in acute admissions that will result from the removal of in-patient beds from Stobhill. Stobhill regularly admits patients who cannot be admitted to Glasgow royal infirmary because of a shortage of beds. It is reasonable for the public to ask how Glasgow royal infirmary will cope with increased demand when it so often struggles to cope now.

Those who oppose the downgrading of Stobhill also raise a point of principle—local access to health services. I will return to that principle later, because the tension between local access to health care and the specialisation of clinical services is central to the debate.

The second bone of contention that arises from the acute services review is the proposal to close the Victoria infirmary, replace it with a day hospital and centralise all in-patient services at the Southern general hospital for the 350,000 people who live in south Glasgow. If that proposal goes ahead, the Southern general, with around 1,500 beds, will become the biggest hospital in the United Kingdom.

Concerns have been expressed about the sheer size of a redeveloped Southern general, but the real problem is with its location. For years, people in south Glasgow have argued that, if there is to be only one in-patient hospital for the whole area, it must be in a central location. The health board went through the motions of considering building a brand new hospital at Cowglen, but at no time was that a realistic option. The health board decided on day one of the acute services review that it wanted the Southern general to be the site of the in-patient hospital in south Glasgow. From then on, the process was skewed to achieving that end. The sham that masqueraded as a consultation exercise has left people in Glasgow feeling alienated from a decision-making process that impacts profoundly on their lives but does not listen to a word that they say.

It is important to put on record the fact that the Southern general is an excellent hospital. It serves patients in Govan and the surrounding areas extremely well. It has tremendous expertise in a number of areas. Recently I visited its spinal injuries unit, which treats patients from all over Scotland. The specialist care that it provides is second to none. However, the Southern general is entirely unacceptable as the site for the only in-patient hospital serving south Glasgow.

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** Is the member suggesting that the Southern general should close and that the care that it provides should be transferred to a new site? The board's view is based on the fact that the Southern is not an old hospital, but one in which huge investment

has been made. The debate is about choosing where investment should be made.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I am not suggesting that the Southern general should close. In a moment I will address the point that the member makes.

The Southern general is on the absolute periphery of the proposed catchment area. For people living in areas such as Rutherglen, Shawlands, Pollokshaws and Castlemilk it is totally inaccessible. There are no bus or rail links. From parts of Ken Macintosh's Eastwood constituency, it can take up to an hour to get to the hospital by car at certain times of the day. The Southern general is at the mouth of the Clyde tunnel, which means that access will frequently be impeded by traffic congestion. It is situated right next door to a sewage works—hardly the right environment for sick or recuperating patients.

What is the alternative? I will now address the point that Johann Lamont makes. Some people would prefer a new hospital in a central location. I, along with others, support a two-hospital option, with in-patient services being retained at a rebuilt Victoria infirmary.

Earlier, I mentioned the tension between local accessibility and clinical specialisation. The health board—and, no doubt, the ministers responsible for health—argues that keeping in-patient services at Stobhill and at the Victoria would stand in the way of greater specialisation of services. I recognise the benefits of greater clinical specialisation, but I dispute the claim that specialisation can be achieved only by the centralisation of hospital services. By integrating clinical services between different hospitals within managed clinical networks, we can have the benefits of specialisation without losing local accessibility to hospitals. New technology makes the solution that I propose more possible.

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab):** Will the member give way?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I want to make some progress. If I have time, I will take an intervention from the member later.

The Scottish Executive press release that announced approval of the health board's plans cited

"difficulties in transferring information like lab results and x-rays between sites"

as an argument for centralising services. That beggars belief. Surely by the end of the 10 years that it will take to complete investment in Glasgow's hospitals we will have mastered electronic transfer of X-rays and lab results.

In short, I do not accept that the only way forward for Glasgow is to centralise in-patient

services. I know that there are others—even in the chamber—who disagree. That is one reason why my motion calls for an independent review of the health board's proposals.

**Pauline McNeill:** I share some of Nicola Sturgeon's concerns and am pleased that she does not regard the issue as party political. I hope that we will have a chance to debate it properly.

The member appeared to indicate that she supports the retention of five in-patient sites in Glasgow—which is the status quo. Will she elaborate on that and clarify her position?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I said that I favour a two-hospital option for the south of Glasgow. I have called for an independent review because I believe that there are issues that still need to be considered. Some issues on which the people of Glasgow have expressed views have not yet been considered. My basic point is that we cannot go ahead now with proposals that the vast majority of people in Glasgow—including Glasgow MSPs—regard as unacceptable.

The Executive amendment refers to the retention of "named services" at Stobhill and the Victoria over the next five years. Perhaps this morning the minister will outline exactly what services he has in mind. Whatever those are, promising to keep services at the two hospitals for five years does not address people's concerns. After that period, the proposals that are so unacceptable to so many people now will go ahead, even if public opposition remains. What comfort is there in that?

My third reason for opposing the health board's plans is that they entail the reduction of accident and emergency departments from five to two. A city of the size and complexity of Glasgow should not be served by only two accident and emergency departments. Since 1991, the number of people treated in accident and emergency departments has increased steadily year on year. As we saw only a couple of weeks ago, waiting times are increasing. However, Greater Glasgow NHS Board believes that the 175,000 people who are seen every year in A and E at Stobhill, the Victoria and the Western infirmary can now safely be seen at the GRI and the Southern general. It believes that it is okay for people who live in the north-west of the city to have to travel through the Clyde tunnel on a journey that can take more than an hour at peak times or when Rangers Football Club is playing at home.

The Executive's amendment promises a review in two years' time, even though most people in Glasgow know that the proposals are wrong. What confidence can anyone have in that review? It is all very well to say that the review will include staff, patients and community groups, but the decision

will be taken by the same health board that, over the past three years, has not listened to a word that any of those groups have had to say, despite the appearance of consultation.

The Executive's amendment offers nothing to allay the fears of the people in Glasgow, and I am sure that every Glasgow MSP knows that in their heart. The people of Glasgow believe that the proposals are unacceptable. They have said so repeatedly, but the health board and the Minister for Health and Community Care have ignored them. Today they are asking Parliament to listen. I ask all MSPs, regardless of their party or position, to follow their conscience, put Glasgow first and support the motion in my name.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the proposed £700 million investment in the modernisation of Glasgow's hospitals; considers, however, that the plan by Greater Glasgow NHS Board for the re-structuring of acute services in Glasgow is unacceptable in its current form; is particularly concerned about the proposed number and location of in-patient hospitals and the reduction of accident and emergency departments from five to two, and calls upon the Minister for Health and Community Care to suspend his approval of the board's plan and to establish an independent expert group to conduct, within six months, an impartial review of the plan, with a view to identifying proposals which command greater public acceptance and which can be implemented within a rapid timeframe.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I invite Malcolm Chisholm to speak to and move amendment S1M-3375.1. He has seven minutes to speak.

11:26

**The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm):** During the nine months for which I have been the Minister for Health and Community Care, I have devoted a great deal of thought to the matters before us today. I have discussed them many times with MSPs of all parties and others in Glasgow, including local campaigners at Stobhill and in the south-east health forum.

I recognise the strength of feeling around particular services in particular hospitals, but I have to take a view about what is right for greater Glasgow as a whole. My conclusion, which is shared by many but by no means all in Glasgow, is that we should press ahead with the necessary and long overdue process of modernisation and investment while at the same time setting in place a continuing process of monitoring and review.

I remind members that the investment is £700 million—the largest ever in the history of the health service in Glasgow—and it comes on top of the £75 million that I announced earlier this year for the new Beatson.

The status quo is not an option, but the SNP motion before us today asks us to freeze the

status quo for another half year or so. It sounded from Nicola Sturgeon's speech as though she wants to freeze it forever. The motion asks us to consider yet again the issue of three in-patient sites, when groups as diverse as the area medical committee and the Greater Glasgow Health Council tell us that three hospitals will be best for improving the quality of care.

Increased specialisation has clinical benefits for patients and such specialisation requires larger clinical teams and fewer in-patient sites. It will also mean more one-stop access and more consultant-delivered care, including, crucially, consultants on the floor of accident and emergency departments 24 hours a day.

However, it is not just three in-patient sites that are proposed but £120 million of investment in a new Victoria and a new Stobhill, which will carry out 85 per cent of current activity. There will be local access in every case where that is best, but there will be a better environment for a redesigned, more patient-friendly service. The hospitals will carry out all out-patient services, radiology and one-stop diagnosis, medical day care, day surgery, ophthalmology, renal dialysis, elderly day care, cardiac rehabilitation, dental services, treatment of minor injuries, medical oncology and so on.

I want to do everything to accelerate the development of those ambulatory care and diagnostic—ACAD—units with the full involvement of local people at every stage. However, even with that acceleration, the plan is long term and it must be flexible enough to take account of changing service demands and developing medical practice. That is why I support a continuing process of monitoring and review that creates a check at every stage to ensure that service moves are wise.

**Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab):** I welcome the minister's commitment that services will be retained for five years, but we have heard many times that services will be retained at particular facilities. Will the minister assure me that no services will be removed from Stobhill hospital during the five-year period and that the Auditor General for Scotland will conduct an independent review during and after the period?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I will describe the role of Audit Scotland in a minute. My amendment states that local people must have a role in continuing monitoring and review at Stobhill and Victoria hospitals and that any changes over the next five years will have to be monitored by them.

I think that Paul Martin will accept that changes that were made for clinical safety reasons would be acceptable to local people. I give him my assurance that in no other circumstances should

the services that Greater Glasgow NHS Board has already named be moved in the next five years.

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Will the minister give way?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I do not have time to take another intervention at present.

I continue with the theme of monitoring and review. Greater Glasgow NHS Board is already committed to an annual review mechanism that will allow the board to see whether the key assumptions that underpin the strategy are valid each year or whether material changes are occurring that might require an overhaul of the planned strategy. I hope that members will welcome the role that Audit Scotland will play as an external independent auditor in that process.

Over and above the local monitoring that I described to Paul Martin, I also support a strong role for patient and community groups in the review of accident and emergency services, which I propose should take place in two years' time.

**Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab):** Will the minister give way?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** If I have time, I will take an intervention from Bill Butler, but I must continue for a moment.

The decision about whether there should be two or three accident and emergency departments was the hardest for Glasgow and the most difficult for me. It is right that the assumptions that underpinned that decision should be looked at again when we are a bit nearer any changes to accident and emergency services. However, in the overall context of new developments in emergency care, the proposal to have two accident and emergency departments is reasonable. I will describe those developments after I take a brief intervention from Bill Butler.

**Bill Butler:** I am grateful to the minister for giving way. I agree with Ms Sturgeon and with others who have said that people are concerned about the reduction in the number of accident and emergency departments to two. I believe that we should have three departments. The amendment in the minister's name says that the review will take place in two years. Will the minister accept the outcome of the review if it says that there should be three accident and emergency departments?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I am certainly open-minded about that. As I said, that decision was the most difficult to take. Obviously, I would have to listen carefully if a review process produced the outcome suggested by Bill Butler. That is why we have set in place that further check.

**Nicola Sturgeon** indicated disagreement.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I am answering the point raised by Bill Butler.

I would certainly pay close heed to a review that said that there should be three accident and emergency departments. There will be no changes to accident and emergency services in the next two years. That is why it is far more important to have the review at a more appropriate time that is closer to the introduction of the proposed changes.

I will have to curtail my comments on new developments in emergency care. In the Glasgow proposals, emergency care is separated into different elements. The 90,000 people who attend accident and emergency departments with minor injuries will be dealt with in dedicated minor injuries units that will have shorter waiting times. There will be three new rapid access services for general practitioners to make emergency referrals to hospital, which will streamline arrangements for managing tens of thousands of patients. The new proposals will allow patients who have already been assessed by a GP to bypass accident and emergency departments entirely and get faster access to appropriate specialist teams.

**Janis Hughes (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab):** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I am afraid that I am out of time as far as taking interventions is concerned. I have a lot to cover and I think that I have about one minute left.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You have about half a minute left.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I will have to curtail a lot of my material.

Under the proposals for Glasgow, we will have two accident and emergency departments, three acute receiving units, five minor injuries units and one children's accident and emergency department. That is the full picture of emergency care, but it is often not described.

Changes in the way in which ambulance services are delivered are also fundamental to the proposed configuration. I will have to cut my comments drastically, but I point out that by 2005, the number of paramedics working on front-line ambulances in Glasgow will almost double from the current 78 to 147, with a paramedic in each front-line ambulance crew.

I refer in passing to the work that has been commissioned to assess the broader transport implications of the proposals for staff, patients and visitors, about which members have asked questions. The results of that work will be available by mid-October. Local people will have to be involved in the necessary changes to transport arrangements.

More generally, I have made it clear to Greater Glasgow NHS Board that I expect local people and local representatives to be fully involved in the detailed planning that will be required to turn all these proposals into reality. This is not the end of the debate, but it is time to move on and make change happen. Glasgow cannot wait any longer.

I move amendment S1M-3375.1, to leave out from "considers" to end and insert:

"accepts that the status quo is not an option and that improvements and modernisation must be progressed as soon as possible in order to enhance the quality of care; recognises that this is a long-term plan which must be flexible enough to take account of changing service demands and developing medical practice; supports an on-going monitoring and review process that includes external independent audit by Audit Scotland on an annual basis; endorses a commitment to keep named services at Stobhill and Victoria over the next five years and to have this locally monitored; gives high priority to the acceleration of ambulatory care and diagnostics developments in consultation with local communities; recognises the particular concern over the number of accident and emergency departments and supports a review of this in two years time that involves staff, patient and community groups, Glasgow Health Council and the Scottish Royal Colleges, and welcomes current developments in the Scottish Ambulance Service which will include the near doubling of paramedics in Glasgow by 2005 and one paramedic in the crew of each front-line ambulance."

11:34

**Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con):** I intimate that, because of time strictures, I will not take interventions, which is unusual for me. I do not think that the content of my speech is such that it would provoke interventions.

It goes without saying that the proposals in the review are quite unacceptable. Let me make it clear that I am not of the view that Glasgow's health services could remain preserved in aspic in perpetuity. I suspect that anyone who has had any input into the discussions and consultations that have taken place shares my view.

Of course there will have to be changes and we welcome the additional resources that are being put in, but that is hardly the issue. Let me be equally clear that the proposals create as many problems as they resolve, particularly in relation to services south of the river. To suggest that there could be that level of centralisation without a reduction in service is naive. In particular, to suggest that the only accident and emergency provision for the south side of Glasgow should be on the extremity of the hospital's catchment area is plain daft. The problem is that it is also potentially very dangerous.

It is clear that a reduction in emergency services, so that they are available on only two sites, is unacceptable and is causing considerable public alarm. I am particularly concerned about the

lack of confidence in the basis of the decision making. The consultative process should have been transparent, but it was not. Some information that was provided has been found to be inaccurate and that is worrying.

There is alarm and bitterness about the way in which the consultation process has been run. It has been a sham. As Nicola Sturgeon said, in regard to the south side of the city, it is apparent that the Southern general option had been pencilled in in biro from the inception. The so-called consultation exercise was cosmetic. I have little doubt that those who were involved were determined to drive through that option. All through the process we have been bedevilled by lack of information and wrong information. We have received scant or wrong information on bed numbers, the availability of land for a possible new build at Cowglen, transport studies and costs. That is unacceptable.

The purpose of the SNP motion is to ensure that the review that is carried out is totally independent. Someone must consider the issue with a fresh mind and a clear eye. It is necessary to demonstrate that those decisions, which could affect the lives of people in Glasgow for the next 50 years, are taken on the basis of correct facts. There may be disagreement—it is inevitable—about the number of emergency units that there should be. Three would have to be regarded as an absolute minimum.

We must look into all the aspects more deeply and widely. Is the Cowglen option viable? Could a revamped Victoria hospital be built on the Queen's Park recreational ground site? Are ACADs a good idea where there is no emergency facility nearby to cope with the inevitable mishap that will occur from time to time? Are the figures for Stobhill and the royal infirmary accurate? Has the desirability of transferring the Stobhill patients to the royal been considered with the appropriate intensity? We need to know accurate bed requirements. As John Young will say, we must consider demographic changes.

It is the unanimous view of the Glasgow MSPs who have been involved in the issue that Greater Glasgow NHS Board's plans are wrong—wrongheaded to the point of being dangerous. It is disappointing that despite the considerable representations that have been made to him, the Minister for Health and Community Care feels unable to support the MSPs and the vast majority of the Glasgow public. He is even prepared to fly in the face of considerable medical opinion. That is a very dangerous thing to do. I pay tribute to MSPs of all parties—and those who are independent—and their efforts to achieve a review of the situation. There has been a mature and measured debate.

A failure to support the amendment calling for an independent review would be inexplicable. The proposals have the potential to be immensely damaging to the people of Glasgow. Any Glasgow member who fails to resist them would be complicit in causing that damage. The issue must be considered again in a detached manner if public confidence is to be restored. Even at this, the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, I ask the Minister for Health and Community Care, for the benefit of the people of Glasgow, to consider the review in more detail and allow an independent review to take place. [Applause.]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order. I must ask members of the public in the visitors gallery to desist from applauding. This is not a public meeting, but a meeting of the Parliament. We want to proceed as smoothly as we can.

11:40

**Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** I am the first Glasgow member of the Executive parties to speak in the debate. I thank Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP for allowing its time to be used for this debate.

The future of hospital services in greater Glasgow has been the most difficult issue that I have had to face since I entered the Parliament in 1999. At that time, at my instigation, a number of MSPs formed a cross-party group to deal with the matter, in particular how it would affect Rutherglen and Cambuslang in the south-east of Glasgow. Since that time we have had scores of meetings of all kinds on the subject.

Matters have been clouded by a background of years of poor decisions and no decisions on Glasgow's deteriorating Victorian hospital estate. They have also been clouded by the strongly founded belief that the health board's consultation, although it devoured forests of paper and mega litres of hot air, was at heart a charade, designed to obtain a pre-ordained outcome. Other members have echoed that point.

The legacy of that is a significant democratic deficit in support for the administration and planning of our national health service and our hospitals. Campaign groups have done a signal service in articulating concerns and analysing the proposals. However, today's debate is essentially about whether to proceed with modernising Glasgow's hospitals, in greater collaboration with local communities, or whether to throw matters back into uncertainty.

I was attracted by the idea of an independent expert review. I suggested such a review at several stages of the process because it would be a way of having external appraisal not only of the procedures, but of the merits of those complex

decisions. It would also help to tackle the democratic deficit that I mentioned.

At the end of the day, I am inclined to the view that the independent expert review would delay the process not by six months but by two years or more. There are no other worked-up proposals to hand and any significant changes would require renewed and extensive consultation and would be likely to produce a different balance of public forces against it. A major window of opportunity in funding terms would also be lost.

A review would harm and not help our shared objective of moving as rapidly as possible to a position where modern and attractive facilities are in place. I am not attracted by the suggestion of managed clinical networks as a way around the dilemma, as they would go against the grain of the comments that have been made repeatedly about the difficulties of split-site working and all that sort of thing.

In *The Herald* today, Dr Roger Hughes, chairman of the area medical committee, lays out the reasons for the concentration of in-patient services, which are increasing specialisation; major pressures on medical manpower because of the long-overdue working time directive requirements; and the increasing national shortage of doctors and nurses, of which we are all aware. It is for those reasons that all parties accepted the need for a single south side hospital until, nine tenths of the way through the process, the consensus ultimately fell apart because of unhappiness over the chosen site.

I remain of the view that the choice of the Southern general hospital as the main south side centre was wrong. The hospital is located at the extreme tip of the south side and is subject to unpleasant smells from the Shieldhall sewage works. The location will be a building site for some years.

The nub of the matter is the fear of the loss of one of Glasgow's busiest accident and emergency departments at the Vicky. The Executive has gone some distance to meet those fears by promising a review of A and E in two years' time. I seek the minister's assurance that, building on what he has said to us already, no irrevocable decision will be taken before that time or before alternatives are in place so far as accident and emergency provision across Glasgow is concerned.

I have never been against the ACAD unit. I consider the view of the friends of the Victoria infirmary committee on that matter to be more realistic than the view of some members of the south-east health forum. The five-year commitment to the Vicky and to Stobhill, monitored by local groups, is long overdue and it must be given the financial backing to make it

work. The paramedic commitment is also vital, and I say that against the background whereby no one spoke to the ambulance service before formulating the proposals in the first place. Will the minister put his head absolutely on the block on those two vital matters?

The current plans envisage that the board will not be able to afford the revenue consequences of these long-overdue plans for at least 10 years. That is not acceptable for a community that has long been proven to have the greatest health needs in the UK and which has an established historic underfunding on health in respect of the Arbutnott formula. It is vital that the minister looks closely at the figures and considers the injection of say £100 million free capital to ensure that Glasgow hospitals can join the rest of the civilised world. He has to do that on a much quicker time scale—the present plans are leisurely, to say the least.

This is a serious debate, not an occasion for party point scoring. We must consider the issues realistically and urgently. As the minister pointed out, greater Glasgow cannot wait much longer. Although I am moving towards the Executive's position, I have not made up my mind which way to vote. I require significant assurances from the minister on the questions that I have raised, which I am sure will be followed by other questions from my colleagues.

11:45

**Gordon Jackson (Glasgow Govan) (Lab):** I welcome aspects of the Executive's amendment. Of course the status quo is not an option, and we must make progress sooner rather than later. I welcome on-going auditing; the commitment to retain services; the review of accident and emergency provision; and of course the massive investment in my constituency. However—and it is a big however—I also agree with the motion that the present plan for acute services is unacceptable. I am particularly concerned about the proposed number and location of in-patient hospitals.

The present proposal is to establish a massive hospital on the site of the Southern general hospital. However, it is a mistake to focus all the south side of Glasgow's acute services in that one location. The experts tell us that the best solution for the south side of the city is to concentrate everything in one site. That might or might not be the case. Perhaps we want one hospital. Perhaps it would be better to retain the Southern general at roughly the existing level and rebuild a facility at the same sort of level near the Victoria infirmary. I have an open mind on that issue. I tend to favour the two-hospital option, but I might be wrong about that. However, having closely examined the

evidence and the arguments, I am extremely unhappy at the recommendation to build a massive hospital on the Southern general site. I agree with Nicola Sturgeon that location is important.

I do not have the time to elaborate the reasons for that. We could talk all day about transport; the complexity of creating such a hospital on top of an existing working hospital; the fact that we have really no experience of managing such a project on such a scale; the accident and emergency implications; and other problems. Although there is a host of such reasons, the bottom line is simple: the present proposal is not right. It would be better to pause for a comparatively short time and reconsider the issue in a fresh and impartial way. Obviously, I very much want the investment—after all, I am talking about my constituency—and we need to make progress. However, it would be better to take a little time to reflect on the matter and get it right.

I know that we have had a consultation process. Indeed, that is part of the problem. The people of the south side of Glasgow feel that that process has been a sham, and they are not far wrong about that. It is increasingly clear that the health trust and its predecessor have had a very definite agenda and have always intended to reach the conclusion that has been reached. Having examined the matter over the past three and a half years, I have found that there has been no openness of thinking.

The people of the south side want a genuine opportunity to make a very compelling and impressive case. They believe that if they were given such an opportunity, the proposals would be seen for the mistake they are. They might or might not be right that that would change minds, but at the very least there should be a willingness to carry out that review.

This is not about narrow parochialism or about trying to save a local facility. The Vicky itself is past its sell-by date. Instead, this is about the future long-term health care of the people whom I represent. I do not want us, 10 or 20 years down the line, to say that we made a mistake. It is better to pause now.

11:50

**Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP):** I reiterate the point made by Nicola Sturgeon about political point scoring, but not by the SNP.

We are talking about delivering the best possible health service for Glasgow and the people of Glasgow. We know modernisation is needed and we welcome the £700 million, but we do not believe that two accident and emergency hospitals are sufficient for Glasgow.

Much has been said about the consultation process. Greater Glasgow NHS Board spent hundreds of thousands of pounds on the so-called consultation process. It hired the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Hampden football ground and another football ground and it produced a video. What did we get from that process? We got the original proposals and a quotation from a document dated August 2000, which says:

"Our aim is to create two adult Accident and Emergency Departments/Trauma Centres—at the GRI and on the Southside."

Hundreds of thousands of pounds were involved as well as hundreds of members of the public. Doctors, clinicians and nurses gave of their time. People have said that the consultation was a sham and I agree with them: it was a deliberate sham to present proposals that were presented originally in 1999-2000. We have not advanced one iota.

Transport links have been mentioned today. Gordon Jackson said that the hospitals were difficult to get to. I refer to the west end and the north of the city. I presume that some members have tried to get through the Clyde tunnel and city centre at peak times or at weekends. Believe me, even at off-peak times, the roads are congested and the tunnel is often closed or only one lane is open. We cannot afford to deal with people's lives under such conditions.

Two accident and emergency hospitals for Glasgow are not sufficient. That is why I support the motion.

The Glasgow royal infirmary is already under great pressure, as we all know. During the consultation process, doubts were raised about whether the GRI could cope with the projected number of patients it would receive. The consultants and nurses told the health board that they did not think they could cope. A letter that I received from west Glasgow hospitals says:

"The Health Board and Trust have yet to provide any sensible reasons for this plan or indeed any evidence that it is workable. Despite the lack of evidence neither the Board nor the Trust have ever seriously considered a proper option appraisal between one or two sites for North Glasgow."

That says it all. Hundreds of people have given of their time, as I said before, for the consultation process. What about the ACADs? It is insufficient to have an ACAD unit that is not attached to a hospital. The public know that and we agree with them.

As I said, the SNP motion is not about political point scoring. The amendment, however,

"endorses a commitment to keep named services at Stobhill and Victoria over the next five years"

and

"recognises the particular concern over the number of accident and emergency departments and supports a review of this in two years time".

There has been no political point scoring from this side, but there certainly has been from the minister's side. The amendment is a cop-out and would lead to the worst possible scenario, with Glasgow left in limbo for five years—and perhaps for a further five years after that. This is all about saving Lord Watson's skin and the Lib-Lab coalition in Glasgow. I am glad that I have said that. This is a cop-out. If any Glasgow MSP votes for the amendment, they will have to answer to the people of Glasgow.

I remind the minister that, if we close down hospitals in two years' time, and if we remove commitment, we will not get those hospitals back. Please, members, support the motion and get rid of the amendment.

11:53

**Brian Fitzpatrick (Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Lab)):** Because of time constraints, I suspect that my senior colleague, Paul Martin, may not get to speak. Since my election, having the co-operation and solidarity of Paul Martin and other colleagues has been a help to me in serving my constituents.

I welcome the £700 million of much-needed investment in greater Glasgow's hospitals. I will say that figure again—£700 million. I acknowledge and welcome the £75 million on top of that for the Beatson clinic. Malcolm Chisholm knows that I take a particular interest in that.

The sum of money is colossal by any reckoning. It reflects the need for sustained rising investment in our NHS—including investment in our acute hospitals. Of that money, £60 million is destined for Stobhill. I repeat, £60 million. Paul Martin will not mind my saying that he has never seen £60 million spent on his constituency, never mind on the hospital. The same would go for my constituency. That monetary investment reflects our guarantee of a long-term future for Stobhill hospital.

I recently attended a meeting at Stobhill hospital to hear theatre and support staff reporting uncertainty and concern about their future. Those are the very people who make the hospital tick. I want the minister urgently to interrogate the measures that are being taken and that are to be taken to inform and to involve staff, patients and local communities about the future secured for them at that hospital.

**Mary Scanlon:** Will Mr Fitzpatrick accept an intervention?

**Brian Fitzpatrick:** I am sorry, but I do not have time. I agree with Alex Neil that a four-minute time limit is daft.



I want the minister to be specific about what is being done and what will be done to make early progress on the ACAD unit at Stobhill hospital, and I do not just mean ditching the daft abbreviations. Stobhill's ACAD unit is not the health board's baby. The proposals for an ACAD unit at Stobhill came from the medical and support staff at Stobhill. The ACAD unit enjoys near unanimous support across the north of the city. I know that a different position obtains in the south of Glasgow, and I am sure that people in the south of the city will make their case. However, I strongly urge the minister to ensure not only that we get a green light for our ACAD unit, but that we get a kick start for the works. Since I was elected, I have sat through many meetings where we seem to go round in circle after circle about the ACAD unit. Please let us get round to the hospital with the builders and let us do so as soon as is practicable.

We need to speed up investigations for patients, we need to cut waiting times and improve treatments, and we need to do as much as possible in one single attendance, continuing the move towards day care. Those are things that I hope we all agree on and want to see. Delay fuels uncertainty and stalls progress.

I hope that the Parliament will also consider the nine-month consultation that was undertaken by the board. There were lots of meetings and I attended nearly all of them, but I do not feel that there was true public participation. We need to ensure that NHS boards properly reflect the views of staff and patients. I welcome the independent monitoring and review guarantees that were conceded today by the minister. Paul Martin and I have been pushing hard to get oversight from outside the board over what we know will be a long haul. I take it that the amendment means that the Auditor General would report annually, publicly and to the Parliament.

I welcome the prospect of getting the ACAD unit on site with in-patient beds at Stobhill. I do not want to mislead the minister, so I shall be explicit. I will use the presence of the ACAD unit at Stobhill to continue to make the case for in-patient provision at Stobhill. As has been mentioned, we know the position in relation to rising emergency admissions and in relation to transfers into Stobhill from the royal infirmary. I also want assurances from the minister that he will insist on flexibility from the board on accident and emergency services. On the commitment to retention of services, local monitoring will be absolutely crucial, as Paul Martin said. It needs to be independent and to be seen to be independent. The minister knows that in any hospital there is a critical mass of services that can be upset by removing one or another.

We have a wide range of excellent services at Stobhill, including general surgery, general medicine, the day surgery unit and, I hope, the coming ACAD unit. There is a range of first-rate specialties at the hospital, and it is a highly attractive site for other specialties that are looking for a location. I shall be coming back to the minister on that point.

11:58

**Mr Kenneth Gibson (Glasgow) (SNP):** I am pleased to speak in a debate on an issue that has for many years caused great concern and frustration to many in the Greater Glasgow NHS Board area. I begin by paying tribute to my Conservative, Liberal and Labour colleagues in the unofficial cross-party group, which was formed in 1999 to address the provision of hospital services in south Glasgow, for their hard work and dedication to the issue over the past three years.

I would like to ask for a point of clarification from Bill Aitken, who made an absolutely excellent speech today. He urged that we vote for the amendment. Did he mean to say the motion?

**Bill Aitken:** I am so used to having to vote for amendments that I did, in fact, erroneously state that. However, Mr Gibson can rest assured that the Conservatives will be supporting Ms Sturgeon's motion.

**Mr Gibson:** I thank Bill Aitken for that clarification.

Last Saturday, I attended the annual forum of Glasgow's community councils. Many of the 140 delegates were angry and frustrated that consultation is devalued by the frequent refusal of the council, the health board or even the Scottish Executive to take any notice of the views—often passionately held and well researched—of community groups, staff and members of the public. The acute services review is a prime example of that.

In the Glasgow *Evening Times* last Tuesday, under the heading "90 minutes to save hospitals", the minister's spokesperson stated:

"The process has been discussed in Glasgow for 20 years and the proposals were based on extensive public consultation."

Does anybody really believe that? On 17 January 2001, in response to the debate on acute service provision in greater Glasgow, Malcolm Chisholm, then the Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care, said:

"The reviews offer an opportunity to assess strategically and objectively how the location of services balances local access with the scope and delivery of specialist services."—[*Official Report*, 17 January 2001; Vol 10, c 323.]

That has not happened. It is clear that Greater Glasgow NHS Board has paid not a blind bit of notice to the views of the public, community councils, health forums and the like. Certainly there has been no objectivity on the part of the health board.

Bar some minor tinkering around the edges, the proposals that have been submitted by the minister for approval are the same as those that were made a decade ago. As a result, confidence in the health board has been lost. On 13 August, the Glasgow health service forum south-east unanimously passed a vote of no confidence in a health board that it believes has treated the people of south-east Glasgow with contempt.

Unfortunately, the minister has swallowed the health board line and supported plans that Gordon Jackson MSP described at that meeting as “an absurdity”. Although, on Tuesday, the minister appeared unwilling to reconsider, his amendment is more flexible—but what guarantees can he offer that, this time, the consultation will be genuine? Will people throughout Glasgow be given ownership of the process and be offered real choices, or will they be confronted with the take-it-or-leave-it attitude that has recently prevailed?

As we all know, the carrot of a new hospital at Cowglen was previously dangled by the health board—as, it now seems, a sop to those who were opposed to centralisation at the Southern general site, which was intended to kibosh the prospects of establishing a new Victoria infirmary. We now know that Cowglen was not a serious proposal, as the health board did not even get the basics right. It overestimated the site size by an incredible 36 acres and took more than two years to find that out. Specialisation is important, but why not have complementary services? Not all services have to be provided at one site: there can be complementary services at two locations. This time, we must get it right.

Nicola Sturgeon’s motion recommends that an impartial review be carried out within six months. That is a sensible suggestion that we all can and should rally round. We must get it right, not just for this generation, but for future generations. A review would mean that correct decisions can be made sooner rather than later and that much-needed improvements to acute services can be made at an early date. The minister’s amendment would prolong the agony; it is, regrettably, a fudge. I therefore urge all members to support the motion.

12:02

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** I acknowledge the strong feelings that exist on all sides in this matter. It is important to recognise that serious people on all sides have taken

different views and come to different conclusions. There is no monopoly of concern for the health of the people of Glasgow, either here or elsewhere. It is therefore not helpful to imply that those who seek to modernise the national health service or the national health service board do so out of malevolence or a reluctance to recognise the problems that the motion suggests. We all take a serious position, having considered the issues. I do not believe that any member will vote out of cowardice; they will vote because they are convinced one way or another by the arguments.

We must also acknowledge the fact that the proposed investment is massive and that the potential impact of it, if it is properly directed, would be a huge difference in the lives of ordinary people. The question is how we spend that investment. Like many things in life, there is no black-and-white answer to that, only varying shades of grey. The conundrum in the south side is as follows.

It is agreed that the best medical care can be provided by having one centre of excellence in the south side. If someone is ill, the key factor in their survival is the immediate, effective attention of paramedics. The next priority is getting them to a centre of excellence as quickly as possible. Logically, there should be one centre of excellence in the south side to provide such care, but that centre is not in the centre of the south side—and nor is the Victoria infirmary. Furthermore, the development of a new hospital in the south side would eradicate the significant investment that has already been made in the south side. It would therefore be a waste of investment.

That hospital provision for Glaswegians is probably as good as that for people anywhere else in Scotland weighs heavily with me; local access to a hospital in Glasgow is better than the access my relatives in Tiree have. Local access is, of course, relative.

Nevertheless, the health statistics for Glasgow remain shocking. We are the sickest, unhealthiest people in Britain. Sadly, the sickest and most ill Glaswegians will, in all likelihood, be living in the shadow of a local acute hospital. While geography, transport and access are all important, we recognise that Glasgow’s health problems cannot be solved through bricks and mortar alone.

If this debate is about choices, my choice is for money to be used to change the poor diet of many of our children and to drive care and good health into our communities, where health workers can reach out to families and address the inequality that develops in the early stages of life. I want to maximise efficient, effective service in hospitals. It is logical that the more we spend on buildings, the less money will go into delivery of the service. We need to consider transport links to hospitals and

within hospitals and to listen carefully to what people say about them.

The acute services review has generated serious debate. The key themes voiced by people who talk to me about the national health service are the time it takes to be seen, how they are treated by those with whom they come into contact and the extent to which they are kept informed about their health care. My recent involvement with the health service raised concerns not about the hospital supplying the treatment but about the ability of those providing the service to deal with us with any compassion. We have to invest in staff and systems as well as in buildings so that people are not frustrated or insulted by the treatment they receive and so that their health needs are met speedily and properly.

I support the Executive's position because it moves matters forward. I am encouraged to see that it has written reviews into the process at every stage. As the service's needs and the demands on it change, the systems must change too. For too long the health service has done things because that is how they have always been done and it has not addressed people's health needs in their communities. I seek an assurance from the minister that any commitment to moving forward to address health inequality in Glasgow will be matched by a capacity continually to reflect on and review what is actually being delivered locally.

12:07

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP):** Brian Fitzpatrick mentioned ambulatory care and diagnostic units. I remind him that the surgical sub-committee of the area medical committee for Glasgow was completely opposed to isolated ACAD units. It is worth bearing that in mind in any discussion on this subject.

I wish to quote from another sub-committee, which has made quite a telling statement. Accident and emergency consultants on the accident and emergency sub-committee of the area medical committee for Glasgow submitted evidence to Greater Glasgow NHS Board in June. They stated:

"A more recent concern about the two A&E model is that the city's acute medical receiving workload will not fit into two and a half medical units safely. All five of the receiving sites are struggling to accommodate medical admissions at present and failure to process these patients in a timely matter leads to A&E exit block or trolley waits. There has been consistent advice that planning three balanced A&E departments for the city represents the lowest risk strategy. Running a service from two very large departments is theoretically feasible, but runs a high risk, in terms of medical emergency overload, of leading to catastrophic system failure. It also remains our firm view that the safest hospital front door is an A&E department."

I repeat that that statement comes from accident and emergency consultants.

Greater Glasgow NHS Board's proposal runs a high risk. A high risk for whom? The risk is faced not by the board but by the citizens of Glasgow who, as Johann Lamont has just described, live in the sickest, unhealthiest city in Britain. Although politicians cannot agree a strategy for replacing the Greater Glasgow NHS Board's proposal, we can agree that the current plan is unacceptable. What we are asking for is not some time-delayed idea that we can somehow fumble and fiddle until we come up with a plan that is accepted by everybody; we are looking for a six-month time-limited review.

The board has lost the confidence of the people of Glasgow. Let us be clear about that. It has failed to consult properly. It has failed to deal with the problem of transport to the south side accident and emergency hospital and with the worries about standalone ACAD units. It has failed to deal with the loss of in-patient services at Stobhill, which is an environment that the medical profession recognises as a model environment for recuperation. That is a failure of the board that will be compounded if the politicians are not prepared to recognise it.

It is rare—even unique—for me to applaud the likes of Bill Aitken and Gordon Jackson for speeches they have made in the chamber, but we have a rare situation. We have an opportunity for the members of Parliament for Glasgow to seize on an issue that means so much to the people of Glasgow. It is a cross-party issue. It is about ditching party priorities and putting Glasgow first. That is why the proposal cannot be accepted today. Let us have the six-month time-limited review and let us make sure that we do not subject the citizens of Glasgow to any more high risks.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** For the record, the following members were present throughout the debate but were not called because of time constraints: Dorothy-Grace Elder, Paul Martin, Pauline McNeill, Janis Hughes, Kenny Macintosh and Mary Scanlon.

**Dorothy-Grace Elder (Glasgow) (Ind):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. We are deciding the future of Glasgow hospitals for the next 100 years. Many Glasgow and west coast MSPs have not managed to speak. Can I move that we extend the debate for another 20 minutes at least? We do not need our lunch as much as we need to debate this issue.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Although I am sympathetic to the view you have expressed, there is significant business to deal with this morning and we must make progress.

12:12

**Mrs Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD):** I am well aware that I am not a Glasgow MSP and I

have a lot of sympathy with the point that Dorothy-Grace Elder has raised. I say that before I speak with a great lack of knowledge in comparison with many of my colleagues who have already spoken today.

We have had an important and very good debate this morning. The issue is complex, not only in terms of Glasgow's hospitals but in terms of the services available to people across the west of Scotland. It also echoes concerns raised by patients and others across Scotland, as well as those raised in my constituency when we lost our accident and emergency department at the Western general hospital under the Conservative Government in 1991.

One of the most important things that has been touched on today is the point made by Johann Lamont: that Glasgow's and Scotland's health problems are about much more than brick and mortar and hospital buildings. We can live in the shadow of the most wonderful hospital in the world, but if we do not address the fundamental health problems that come from poor diet, smoking and poverty, we will not gain any ground on dealing with Glasgow's and Scotland's health problems.

The balancing of accessibility to health services against clinical specialisation has been at the heart of the debate. The clinicians will often say that what is required is a critical mass. I will mention Lothian in passing. Today, I am again being told that we cannot open our accident and emergency department because the colleges will not allow Lothian NHS Board to provide major accident and emergency cover because the training will not be accredited. Time and again, clinicians are backing the centralisation of services.

I have a certain amount of sympathy with both sides of the argument. Clinical standards boards, guidelines and key shortages of personnel are all pushing us towards centralisation of services, but when we centralise services we have to ensure that patients' needs are taken into account. If patients and paramedics will be caught in traffic jams and therefore unable to get to the unit in time, we have to take that on board.

The most important thing that the Minister for Health and Community Care agreed to today is a review of accident and emergency provision after two years. However—and the Health and Community Care Committee will address this when it questions representatives of Greater Glasgow NHS Board next week—there is a perception, if not a strong belief, on the part of members of all parties in the chamber that Greater Glasgow NHS Board has not listened to the people of Glasgow and that the consultation exercise has been a sham. Time and again, the

Health and Community Care Committee has heard that view expressed. We have heard it about Fife, Glasgow and Tayside. That is not good enough. We have to get to grips with the fact that consultation exercises in the NHS in Scotland are a sham. We must get to grips with that not only in Glasgow, but throughout Scotland.

12:15

**John Young (West of Scotland) (Con):** Mike Watson is the author of a book called "Rags to Riches". If he votes the wrong way later today, come 2003 his second volume could be entitled "Riches to Rags". I urge Mike Watson to bring honour into politics and to vote the way his thousands of electors want him to vote.

Malcolm Chisholm and his predecessor, Susan Deacon, faced considerable difficulties in meeting the representatives of Greater Glasgow NHS Board, who had a plan that they wished to implement: neither had intimate knowledge of the localities. We, our constituents and delegations made representations but, as others have said, were ignored. In my 39 years as a councillor and MSP, I have never known a consultation to be swept aside in that manner.

Neither Malcolm Chisholm nor Susan Deacon were told that no major new hospital had been built south of the River Clyde since 1890—112 years ago—when the Victoria infirmary was built. The health board started to sabotage the Victoria infirmary several years ago. In addition, prior to any decision being taken, building started at the Southern general hospital, which is in a packed, inaccessible location next to a sewage works, and the original structures of which were built in the 1880s. For the large population in south-east Glasgow and the large population from East Renfrewshire that is in the catchment area of the Victoria—

**Johann Lamont:** Will the member give way?

**John Young:** No, time does not allow me to do that.

As Nicola Sturgeon and others said, for people in the south-east of Glasgow, bus journeys to the Southern general could take up to two hours and require a change of buses. Nicola also mentioned the population of 350,000 people in that area.

For two years the health board conned us by talking about a brand new hospital at Cowglen. That turned out to be a smokescreen. In fact, it was more than that—it was an utter betrayal. The board also banned MSPs from meeting staff on NHS property on several occasions. Will that glorious health board include helicopter pads at the Southern general and the Victoria infirmary ACAD unit? Incidentally, the Victoria infirmary

ACAD unit will be built on the site where Stan Laurel went to school. One can draw one's own conclusions. I understand that ACADs originated in California and were for the poor who could not afford medical insurance.

In April 2000, Greater Glasgow Health Board had five main aims. First, it sought modern facilities for a better patient experience, whatever that means. That was a joke. Secondly, it aimed to create large specialist teams of doctors for continuous availability. How? Thirdly—and this is the cardinal insult for many people in Glasgow, in particular those in the south-east—it aimed to maintain local area access for as many people as possible. Fourthly, it aimed to create a pattern of hospitals that made sense across Glasgow as a whole. That was a sick joke. The fifth aim was to lever in major capital investment in a way that was affordable.

In my opinion, 51 per cent of health board members should be elected by the electorate.

Before I finish, I will take an intervention, if the MSP is willing to take—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** No, you must not solicit interventions. We are running out of time anyway.

**John Young:** I am advised that Brian Fitzpatrick previously indicated that he would resign if Stobhill hospital were closed. Is that correct?

**Brian Fitzpatrick** *rose—*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You may respond if you are brief.

**Brian Fitzpatrick:** I am happy to deal with that question. John Young must not misrepresent the position in relation to the future of Stobhill hospital. It will remain open. The real argument, as anyone who knows anything about the issues knows, is about in-patient beds at Stobhill. John Young must not mislead people by saying that Stobhill is closing. A sum of £60 million does not represent a closed hospital. John Young is being ridiculous.

12:19

**The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Frank McAveety):** Like many, I am disappointed that the debate has not had as much time as many members would have liked. That was the result of the main Opposition party's choice to hold two debates this morning.

Anyone who speaks or purports to speak for the people of Glasgow has a responsibility to say not only what they disagree with, but what they agree with. The world is simple for any member who knows what they oppose but does not argue and fight for what they support. Many folk claim that they know what they support, but the debate has lacked clarity.

**Nicola Sturgeon** *rose—*

**Ben Wallace (North-East Scotland) (Con):** Will the minister give way?

**Mr McAveety:** No, because I have five minutes to describe the key issues for the Executive in the acute services review.

No members who have spoken—particularly those of us who care passionately about the city of Glasgow and who live there and will continue to live there for the foreseeable future—want anything other than the best hospital services. It is insufficient to cry alarm or to say that any reconfiguration of acute services will result in some of the more alarming claims that have been made and which have been repeated by some members today.

In the past two or three years, many folk have said that we need to move to three in-patient sites. Unfortunately, some people seem to have argued for four or five, depending on the dance they wanted to do for the public. The issue is whether we want to address longer term in-patient development.

Members have identified issues that relate to the present locations of services. The ministerial health team has listened to them. We want to work on monitoring and bed planning with communities, which have been fractured by some of the consultation processes in the past couple of years. We must rebuild trust. Along with Malcolm Chisholm and Mary Mulligan, I give a commitment to work with communities.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Will the minister give way?

**Mr McAveety:** I do not want to hear from Nicola Sturgeon, because her views on the issue in the past two or three years have been inconsistent.

**Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** Will the minister give way?

**Ben Wallace** *rose—*

**Mr McAveety:** The three points that I will stress are clear. Do we accept that we need three in-patient sites with more clinical support? I think that we do. Do we need to take people with us on that journey? Of course we do.

**Tommy Sheridan:** You have not.

**Mr McAveety:** I am sorry, Mr Sheridan. Nothing that anyone who is involved in democratic politics could provide would make Mr Sheridan happy, so let us not mess about in the debate.

**Tommy Sheridan:** Rise to the debate.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Order.

**Tommy Sheridan:** Show your level. Rise to the debate.

**Mr McAveety:** I am trying to. I would love to finish my points. [*Interruption.*] I will take Ken Macintosh's intervention.

**Mr Macintosh:** I thank the minister for taking my intervention and I thank the Presiding Officer for acknowledging the deep frustration of the constituency MSPs who could not speak in the debate.

I welcome the commitment to local consultation, but will the minister describe one Greater Glasgow NHS Board proposal that has been affected by the views of residents? Has one change been made to the plan that was proposed two years ago because of the views of residents on the south side of Glasgow?

**Mr McAveety:** The debate is about the Executive's position on the acute services review. [MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] Presiding Officer, I would like to make my points clearly without being heckled. It would be helpful to have protection from that.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** On you go—that is my judgment.

**Mr McAveety:** The health team has listened. Ken Macintosh asked what has changed. We gave a commitment this morning to hold a review in the next two years of the board's accident and emergency recommendation. Those who are—rightly—concerned about some of the implications of that recommendation have a responsibility to submit views to try to address those concerns. In addition, we have given a commitment to consider sustaining services in present hospital locations, depending on clinical observation and judgment.

The fundamental issue is that we will work with the health board and patients to address how such services are sustained in the next five years, which will deal with many of the concerns that have been raised.

Two facts have been missing from the debate. The capital investment figure is more than £700 million.

**Tommy Sheridan:** Look at the motion.

**Mr McAveety:** I am sorry, Mr Sheridan, but such a level of investment has not been delivered for Glasgow's health services for decades. The people with whom Mr Sheridan has aligned himself—the Tories—underinvested in Glasgow's health service for a long time.

**Tommy Sheridan:** Look at the motion.

**Pauline McNeill:** Will the minister give way?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Mr McAveety:** I am trying to rise to the level of the debate.

**Tommy Sheridan:** You are failing.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Mr McAveety:** I would be happy to have a debate, but I am hearing a monologue instead.

The fundamental issue is how we move forward for the future of Glaswegians. We also have the issue of the £130 million investment differential between the single-site options for Cowglen and the Southern general. That substantial amount of money could deliver two more ACADs to the city of Glasgow. However, more important is the revenue implication, which no Opposition member identified. There would be £10 million a year, which would be a substantial investment for staffing. It would certainly result in 500 more nursing staff and 160 more consultants. We must consider those issues in our deliberations.

**Pauline McNeill:** Every member who spoke in the debate welcomed the investment of which the minister speaks. I ask him to address the special role that Glasgow has always played and which has never been recognised: I mean the special service that Glasgow delivers well outwith its boundaries to health boards such as Argyll and Clyde NHS Board and Lanarkshire NHS Board. It is about time that the service that is delivered outside Glasgow's boundaries is recognised and reflected in funding.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You are over your time, Mr McAveety, but I will allow you a further two minutes.

**Mr McAveety:** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

We are in place to have developed a regional planning framework that will address many of the issues Pauline McNeill raises. The funds will follow the location to provide people with a regional or national service. That point identifies a key challenge facing the health board and anyone making decisions on future health provision: the Southern general already provides much of that regional and national provision. That was one of the calculations that were factored into the assessment by the Greater Glasgow NHS Board.

The important aspect to stress is that representations were made about accident and emergency issues. We have considered them and plan to have a review over the next two years to address those points.

Robert Brown addressed the issue of capital investment and revenue streams. We will be happy to have a dialogue with Robert Brown to address that issue. It is not just about whether there is capital over a shorter period, but whether capital can be drawn down for staff, for their

support and for investment in the time for which we would ideally aim. We are certainly happy to discuss that issue.

The fact is that there will still be five sites in Glasgow that will meet much of the health need of communities there. That fact was not brought out in the debate by many Opposition members. The two ACADs will service 85 to 90 per cent of the service needs that are presently provided for those communities or needed by them. That is in partnership with the modernisation of primary care investment and the commitment to invest in the acute services. This is about trying to get a total package that addresses the long-term future health needs of the people of Glasgow.

No one said that that would be easy or that it would not require painful decisions, but any suggestion that a delay of six months will make decisions easier is only trying to prevent inevitable decisions. We believe that we need to crack on. We also need to address many of the sensible concerns that were raised by members who did rise to the debate, Mr Sheridan. We are happy to address those points.

12:28

**Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP):** The debate has been interesting. Every MSP who spoke welcomed, as does the motion, the £700 million investment in Glasgow's health services. Every MSP who spoke asked pertinent questions about whether the Greater Glasgow NHS Board review meets the needs and aspirations of the people of Glasgow. Did we get any answers? Well, Frank McAveety summed it up when he almost refused to take interventions from his back benchers. The Executive has not listened to MSPs and does not appear to listen to its ministers. The Executive has also refused to listen to the 43,000 people who signed the "save Stobhill" petition. It is about time that that ended. The Executive must listen.

I would like to pick up on one of Mr McAveety's opening comments. If the Executive is serious about listening, perhaps it will give time to the debate during its time in Parliament. I am sorry that so many of the members with local and constituency interests in the issue were unable to get into the debate. I am especially sorry that Paul Martin, a doughty fighter for Stobhill, was unable to take part.

**Paul Martin:** The SNP had three hours available for debate this day but decided to split the time between different debates. Was three hours available for this debate? I want a yes or no answer.

**Fiona McLeod:** As every member is aware, the SNP has three hours for debate each month while

Labour controls every other hour. Paul Martin is a member of the Labour party, which has accepted the review. The matter should have been debated in Executive time.

The Executive's amendment gives

"a commitment to keep named services at Stobhill and Victoria over the next five years".

I was going to ask the minister to name those services but he told us that the services have already been named by Greater Glasgow NHS Board in its health improvement plans. If there is no change there, what is the point of mentioning it in the amendment?

For the minister's benefit, I will name the services that Stobhill has already lost and which it will not be able to hang onto for five years: in-patient orthopaedics, in-patient renal medicine, vascular surgery, respiratory function services and laboratory services for bacteriology and pathology. Three weeks ago, we learned that Stobhill is to lose medical illustration. What is going to be left at the end of the five-year period?

This is a piece of masterly spin but it will not be believed by anybody in the greater Glasgow area. I hope that Glasgow's Labour MSPs will not accept that spin and, when they come to vote later today, will listen to their constituents rather than accept the whip. While all this spinning is going on, staff morale at Stobhill is plummeting. Stobhill is finding it difficult to attract junior consultants. The minister has offered a five-year moratorium, but what is a five-year career path for a junior consultant? Nurses are leaving Stobhill and others are not applying for vacant posts in the hospital.

Robert Brown mentioned managed clinical networks, which are important in relation to Stobhill. Managed clinical networks can work, as has been clinically proven, and Stobhill makes them work. The hospital should get the chance to keep showing that they work.

On the issue of the end of the accident and emergency review in two years' time, in reply to Bill Butler the minister said that he has an open mind on whether there should be three accident and emergency sites rather than two. If the minister has an open mind now and will have an open mind in two years' time, why has he accepted Greater Glasgow NHS Board's proposal to have only two accident and emergency sites?

**Dorothy-Grace Elder:** Fiona McLeod mentioned the whips. As a total of 250,000 Glaswegians and people from the west of Scotland have opposed the plans—including the 43,000 who oppose the Stobhill plan—does Fiona McLeod agree that some members are more frightened of their whips than they are of the will of the Glasgow people and that they are putting themselves in a difficult position?

**Fiona McLeod:** I have already said that I believe that, today, we should be voting for our constituents and I hope that every MSP will do so.

The minister has already heard that my constituents from Milngavie and Bearsden are going to get stuck in the Clyde tunnel. When a constituent of mine who can go into anaphylactic shock if she cannot get to a hospital gets stuck in the Clyde tunnel, will the minister tell her that that is all right because it does not happen often? How will the minister tell my constituents from Kirkintilloch and Bishopbriggs that, on the way to Glasgow royal infirmary, they will be stuck in a traffic jam and that, upon arrival, they will be unable to park, thereby adding another hour to their journey to accident and emergency? Will the minister make freely accessible the transport study that we have been told has been done for the Southern general hospital?

This is all fantasy, like the standalone ACAD unit, which is a fantasy and a fig leaf. The minister talks about building an ACAD unit at Stobhill and at the Victoria infirmary. There are no standalone ACADs in the United Kingdom, so where is the long-term future for hospitals in having standalone ACADs?

Brian Fitzpatrick said that he wants the ACAD unit at Stobhill to be built soon. I alert all members to the fact that, to build the ACAD unit at Stobhill as currently configured, we would have to start demolishing wards 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 4a and 4b. That would be the beginning of the end of Stobhill hospital. That is not acceptable.

The minister should stop kidding around. He should start listening. He should listen to MSPs and to the people of Glasgow. I also say to all Glasgow and West of Scotland MSPs that we should stop kidding around and ensure that we vote for what our constituents have clearly told us they want—the SNP motion.

**Mr Gibson:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Yesterday, a number of members from the other political parties said that the SNP should have chosen to use its time today to debate Iraq. This morning, they said that we should have chosen to use all the time for the debate on the economy and then they said that we should have devoted it all to the acute services review. Given the overwhelming view of the other political parties that the SNP should have more time to debate the subjects that they avoid, will you consider giving us more than three hours debating time a month?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That is not a point of order.

## Business Motion

12:36

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S1M-3381, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out the business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Wednesday 18 September 2002

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Stage 1 Debate on Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Financial Resolution in respect of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 19 September 2002

9.30 am Stage 1 Debate on Debt Arrangement and Attachment (Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Financial Resolution in respect of the Debt Arrangement and Attachment (Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Business Motion

2.30 pm Question Time

3.10 pm First Minister's Question Time

3.30 pm Executive Debate on the Role of Culture in the Educational Development of Young People

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 25 September 2002

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Education, Culture and Sport Committee Debate on the Committee's Report on proposed Commissioner for Children and Young People Bill

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 26 September 2002

9.30 am Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business



<i>followed by</i>	Business Motion
2.30 pm	Question Time
3.10 pm	First Minister's Question Time
3.30 pm	Executive Business
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business

and (b) that the Justice 1 Committee reports to the Justice 2 Committee by 20 September 2002 on the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Fees) (Scotland) Order 2002 (SSI 2002/389) and the Births, Deaths, Marriages and Divorces (Fees) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2002 (SSI 2002/390).—[*Euan Robson.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** No member has asked to speak against the motion.

*Motion agreed to.*

## Spending Review 2002

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh):** The next item of business is a statement by Andy Kerr on the spending review 2002. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions.

12:38

**The Minister for Finance and Public Services (Mr Andy Kerr):** I am pleased to present our spending plans, which focus resources on achieving growth and opportunity in Scotland for the next 20 years. This budget—the budget of our Labour-Liberal Democrat partnership—is a budget for the long term. The spending plans will cover the total resources available to us over the next three years, which will rise to £25 billion. That is an annual average real-terms increase of 4.6 per cent. Over the next three years, we will invest over £70 billion in Scotland.

I want the focus of the debate to be on what those plans will deliver and the impact that they will have on growth and on opportunity, but I suspect that I need to take a few minutes to put the record straight on what I am announcing today. I am not reannouncing increases to our budget; I am setting out our plans for using that budget. Those plans are published today. A copy for each member is available in the Scottish Parliament information centre.

The outcome of the United Kingdom spending review in July confirmed the resources that are available to us over the next three years, taking into account the impact of SR2000, the increases to the health budget announced in April and increases that flow from SR2002. The announcement in July set out how much those increases are compared to this financial year. From the baseline of 2002-03, the increases are £1.5 billion more next year, rising to £2.6 billion the following year and yet again rising to over £4 billion in the last year of the three-year settlement.

I am sorry if that sounded like an introduction to Government finance, but I am afraid that some of our colleagues in the Opposition need that introduction, as they have never been in government and, I have to say, are never likely to be in government.

Today's announcement is about our spending plans, which cover the resources that are available to us and reflect the significant increases to our budget that result from increases in public expenditure across the UK.

The increases in our spending are significant and present a major opportunity in our drive to

build a better Scotland. This is a budget for growth and opportunity. Growth will be secured by investing in Scotland's infrastructure to ensure that we have more competitive businesses and better public services; by prioritising investment in skills and enterprise to open up opportunities and create the foundation for Scotland's future; by investing in our children and Scotland's young people to give them the best start in life, more choices and the opportunity and confidence to build their future; and by taking action to improve radically the quality of life in communities across Scotland.

We are concerned less with how we divide up what we have and much more with how we use all that we have to secure growth and prosperity for Scotland. We want growth that will promote and sustain improvement in the daily quality of life in towns, cities and villages across Scotland, and that will protect the environment of our land and improve the environment of our streets. That is what devolution is about. This announcement is about how devolution delivers. We seek real debate about the real choices that we need to make about how we use the resources that we have to generate more resources, to improve lives and to build a better Scotland.

The level of investment that I outline today is made possible by the sound economic management of the UK Government. Devolution—our partnership with the United Kingdom—guarantees Scotland a fair share of UK resources. The agreed formula delivers for each person in Scotland—pound for pound, person for person—the same increases as in England. Those come as of right.

Over the first six years of devolution, resources for Scotland will have grown by more than 25 per cent. The nationalists, with their constitutional wrangling and drive for separation and divorce from the UK, could never match those resources. The Conservatives would neither raise those resources nor use them for the good of Scotland's people.

In every speech that I have made in this chamber as Minister for Finance and Public Services, I have said that the money that we spend is the people's money—money raised from business and hard-working families. Every day they try to get the best out of the money that is available to them. In the same way, we must ensure that every pound of their money that we spend brings direct benefit and produces the right results.

Today we are setting out a new approach. There will be written agreements for delivery. We will set out and publish targets, and we will harness expertise. That approach is part of our drive to secure best value and improved performance across the public sector.

My job as Minister for Finance and Public Services is not finished today. My job is to secure best value from every pound of public money. The proposals that we set out today confirm our commitment to delivering on the promises that we have made.

The scaremongers said that we would not be able to afford our ambitious agenda. We can. We were told that there would not be enough money to deliver on student support, to modernise the teaching profession or to provide free personal care. There is. The plans that we set out today confirm the funding for our key policy commitments. However, they go further—much further. They will provide resources to unlock the potential of Scotland's people, to give support when it is needed, and to offer life choices and chances at every stage. This is a budget for every man, woman and child in Scotland.

Building on the free nursery place that is available to every three and four-year-old, we will deliver the largest ever school-building programme to start a step change in the quality of our schools. There will be a £1.15 billion investment package to build or refurbish 300 schools across Scotland by 2008-09, benefiting more than 80,000 children. We will deliver an improvement in the quality of school life—additional resources to increase the nutritional value of school meals, to tackle behaviour issues and to improve the school environment. We will deliver healthy and active children through new resources for the active primary schools programme. We will implement the next phase of the 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching agreement, meeting our commitments in full.

We are also investing in opportunities for our young people. By 2005-06 we will invest an additional £300 million per year in their opportunities and futures. Over the next three years there will be a new £40 million package of investment in vocational training and enterprise education in our schools. We will increase the number of modern apprenticeships to more than 25,000.

The pilot of education maintenance allowances has been one of the most successful ever. Members have asked when it will be extended. Today I confirm that there will be new money to extend the education maintenance allowance scheme across Scotland. That will ensure that every young person can continue to learn and improve their prospects and it will benefit directly around 40,000 young people in Scotland.

We will invest £40 million over the next three years in integrated children's services and an additional £110 million in early years intervention. That will deliver an integrated package of support from local authorities, voluntary organisations and health services to at least 15,000 vulnerable

children under the age of five. Resources for sure start Scotland will increase by more than 150 per cent by year 3. There will be resources for outreach facilities, family centres, nurseries and playgroups, childminding and support for parents.

Along with thousands of pensioners throughout Scotland, we are looking forward to the introduction of free off-peak travel for pensioners in only 19 days' time. We are delivering on our commitments to improve the lives of our older citizens, not least our commitment to free personal care, which is benefiting 75,000 older people in Scotland.

I am delighted to announce that we will make additional investment in the central heating programme, which will benefit the over-80s and improve an additional 4,000 homes.

We are using Scotland's resources for all Scotland. For our rural communities, we will deliver additional support for our forestry strategy and our fishing industry. Our investment in infrastructure and public services will bring direct benefits for rural communities.

Our cities are central to the quality of life and well-being of Scotland. We are committed to ensuring that our cities are able to exploit fully their economic potential. Our spending plans will benefit cities through investment in the infrastructure and transport priorities that are required to support successful and dynamic city regions. There will be resources to tackle the economic, social and environmental blight of vacant and derelict land and we will invest further in public housing.

Investing in Scotland's health is an investment in Scotland's future; it is one of our key priorities. This budget delivers for health. There will be record levels of investment, which, as we have said, will rise by the end of the spending review period to more than £8 billion. That will deliver much needed improvements directly to front-line services. It will improve the treatment of coronary heart disease, strokes, cancer and mental illness. It will provide 1,000 community places for people leaving hospital; it will train more nurses and midwives; and it will increase the number of national health service consultants.

As I said earlier, the spending plans are targeted to make a difference now and for a lifetime. We are making a major investment in our national health service. Our commitment also extends to making a major investment in the national health of Scotland. We will use this step change in health expenditure to deliver a step change in health improvement. Our objective is to deliver a 20 per cent reduction in the number of deaths from cancer and a 50 per cent reduction in the number of deaths from strokes and heart disease.

We will double the money that we spend on health improvement, injecting more than £170 million into our new health improvement plan. That will be different from what has gone before. New resources will be ploughed into new initiatives and new approaches. Investment now will deliver benefits over a lifetime that are fundamental to a good quality of life.

Also fundamental to a good quality of life is freedom from the fear of crime. We will continue to invest in the fight against crime. We will invest £270 million over three years to maintain the front-line police effort and we will make policing more effective by investing £25 million in a modern communication system.

We have made good progress because, overall, crime is going down and detection rates are going up. However, we need to do more to tackle violent crime and drugs and to make our streets safer. We are matching our investment in front-line police services with significant new investment to improve our prosecution and court services—detecting crime, catching criminals and speeding up prosecution and punishment.

We will invest an additional £33 million over the next three years to deliver our agenda on youth crime. There will be action on youth courts and secure accommodation and there will be investment to secure a reduction in the number of persistent young offenders. We will invest an additional £30 million over the next three years to tackle the scourge of antisocial behaviour.

We will create more opportunities for people of all ages to take part in sport, which will encourage a more active lifestyle and improve the quality of people's lives. We will double our spending on sport over the spending review period, with money for school sport and a major new sporting facility.

Our commitment to improving the quality of life means taking decisive action on the environment. For too long, we have consigned most of our waste to landfill and our position at the bottom of the recycling league tables is unacceptable. Our firm commitment, which we will achieve, is to change that situation, but, in doing so, we need significant investment and a change of culture. As part of our commitment to sustainable development and environmental justice, we have provided for an unprecedented increase in spending on waste management. We will invest an additional £170 million to implement our national waste strategy over the next three years.

We will do even more to improve the quality of everyday life. We recently provided additional resources to make a major impact on the local environment, and communities throughout the country warmly welcomed those additional resources. Local authorities responded to the

opportunity magnificently—our partnership with them proved itself in action. We were asked whether that investment would continue or whether it was just a one-off. I confirm today that over the next three years we will invest an additional £180 million in the quality of life programme. Our three-year commitment is to make our streets safer and cleaner, to reclaim our parks and open spaces and to tackle vandalism, graffiti and dog fouling. We will improve the quality of life for our people and our communities. Many people may not consider those issues as matters of high politics, but they matter in the daily lives of people in our communities, whose priorities are our priorities.

We know that the strength and growth of the Scottish economy are central to achieving our ambitions for Scotland, which means investing in skills and increasing access to opportunities for learning. We are making that investment. We will invest an additional £120 million for further education over the next three years. In higher education alone, we will invest an additional £60 million over the next three years for science and research.

We are supporting all our key industries. Over the next three years, we will provide an additional £23 million for the tourism industry, which employs nearly 200,000 people in Scotland. That money will include investment in a new major events strategy to make Scotland one of the top events destinations in the world.

An effective transport system is central to a thriving economy and strong communities. We will increase the level of investment in transport to over £1 billion per annum by 2005-06. With that massive investment, we will let a new 15-year Scottish passenger rail franchise and deliver our top-priority rail projects. We will invest in new rail lines across the country, including the development of connections to Glasgow and Edinburgh airports. We will begin construction of the final part of the M74 into Glasgow and deliver public transport improvements across central Scotland, easing congestion and promoting more sustainable transport. We will begin preparation on the A8 and A80 motorway upgrades, which will complete the motorway network in central Scotland. We will continue to improve the existing trunk road network and tackle the congestion problems in Aberdeen.

Over the next three years, we will see massive investment in Scotland's infrastructure—in transport, schools, hospitals, housing, the water industry, waste and prisons. That investment will not only improve services but create opportunities and support thousands of jobs. Scottish business will benefit from our investment in skills and learning, science and research and modern transport links.

There has been much debate about business rates. Let me be clear that, since devolution, we have frozen rates at the 1995 level in real terms and kept the rates burden at the same level as in England. That is a good deal for business in Scotland, but we want to do even better. For next year, we will freeze the business rate poundage at the current level, which will reduce rates by £35 million a year in real terms. For the rest of the spending review period, we will stick to our commitment to limit rate increases to the rate of inflation, with, as I have said previously, the obvious caveat that there are no dramatic changes in our economic circumstances. Therefore, the rates responsibility for Scottish business for the next three years will be lower in real terms than it is today, and lower than it has been since the early 1990s. We are using the levers of government to create the conditions for growth and the opportunities for enterprise.

The proposals that I have outlined will create a healthier Scotland, a wealthier Scotland, a safer Scotland and a growing Scotland in which there is opportunity for all. We believe in better public services, not constitutional wrangling; stability in devolution, not risk from separation; and investment in growth, schools and hospitals, not tax increases to fund divorce. The results that will count will be the growth in Scotland's economy and ambition. I commend these plans to the Parliament.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The minister will now take questions on the issues raised in his statement.

**Alasdair Morgan (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP):** I thank the minister for his statement. I welcome any increase in expenditure if it delivers real benefits for the people of Scotland. I also welcome his climbdown in ceasing to claim that all the money that he is spending is new money from the spending review.

Will the minister confirm that he accepts that the SNP was right this weekend when we said that of the £1.5 billion increase for 2003-04, £1 billion had already been announced by the minister's predecessor's predecessor—now the First Minister—in the previous spending review in 2000 and already included in the budget and that another £224 million was already announced in the Scottish budget statement in April as coming from the health consequential of this year's UK budget? Could the minister get the people who brief on his behalf to cease the practice of counting, double counting and triple counting, which results in announcements—no doubt welcome to the minister—such as those in Sunday's papers, that £8.3 billion extra would be his to dish out today? That figure bears no relation to any reality and demeans not only the minister's office, but the whole political process.

Finally, given that the Labour manifesto for the 1997 election said that

"The level of public spending is no longer the best measure of the effectiveness of government",

will the minister tell us when we are going to hear less about figures, which get larger as they get less credible, and more about real results on the ground? The Labour party has been in power for five years. The minister claims that he is spending record sums, yet the reality on the ground is a failure to deliver. When will the Government deliver?

**Mr Kerr:** That was the full checklist of SNP whingeing. That shows its inability to welcome new resources for Scotland and to recognise that our spending statements focus on the purpose of the money. The SNP simply talks about the delivery of big numbers.

I want to point out to the SNP—I am slightly confused as to what its policy is these days—that this is a spending review. We spend the money. That is the purpose of a spending review. Yes, it happens every two years and yes, it is a three-year spending review. Oh my goodness, in year 3 there is an overlap. Are SNP members really surprised about that? Do they understand the basics of economic management? *[Interruption.]*

The SNP compares the Executive and its work to a fiddle and a diddle and all that Enron nonsense. John Swinney is surrounded by people who spend Scotland's money hand over fist every week.

**Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):** Answer the question.

**Mr Kerr:** He cannot stop me, because he said at the start of his leadership that he would cost all—*[Interruption.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Mr Kerr:** I will finish on this point. It started with fiscal autonomy, and it became full fiscal freedom, then independent financial control, then financial independence, then economic independence—*[Interruption.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Mr Kerr:** It is still financial independence. I think that it is a lot of rubbish.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I ask members to calm down and let members ask their questions. We cannot have any answers unless we have the questions.

**Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con):** I hope that Mr Kerr keeps taking the tablets.

What we heard today was very interesting. At the beginning of the statement we were told about money that was coming from the wonders and the wonderful performance of the UK Government. Then the minister slipped in a minor acknowledgement that all the money comes from the working people. The statement is a failed opportunity. There is so much to spend, but the minister spreads it around without any detailed targets. For example, the minister talks about police—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Davidson, are you working towards a question?

**Mr Davidson:** I am working towards a question.

As I said, the minister mentioned the police, but we still have no answer about how many new officers will appear on the beat. The Conservatives will not be like the SNP. There are things in the statement that we welcome such as free personal care, which has been a Conservative policy for some time.

I want to ask another question.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Davidson, you have been on your feet for a minute and a half. Please come to your question.

**Mr Davidson:** The minister mentioned youth crime. What does he mean by that? Are both Executive parties agreed on the policy? How much of the figure of £1 billion for public transport infrastructure will come from tolls and congestion charges? Why is it that the business rate that he has tinkered with cannot be reduced to the same poundage that applies in England?

**Mr Kerr:** I am surprised. When Mr Davidson takes the opportunity to read our document "Building a Better Scotland: Spending Proposals 2003-2006", he will find out what the money buys. He will see objectives and targets and also the regime that the Executive is putting in place to ensure that the money is spent wisely. As I have said every time I have spoken on the subject, I recognise where the money comes from; it comes from the businesses and people of Scotland. It is our absolute commitment to ensure that that money is spent wisely.

We support record numbers of police in Scotland and a record health spend. We are doubling our investment in health improvement. Throughout the spending review statement, we have announced new commitment after new commitment about how we will make Scotland a better place. The spending review is about skills, transport, opportunity and growth. The Executive is focused on that. We see the value of a thriving business community. That is the other side of the same coin with which the Executive spends on our communities and the quality of life. Without one

side, one does not get the other, which is why we are absolutely focused on opportunity and growth.

I have tried to work out what the question was that Mr Davidson asked when he made his earlier comments, but I have failed to do so. We can perhaps deal with those matters in a later debate.

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** I want to ask a constructive question after the whinge from the nationalists. I am surprised that such a well-qualified man as David Davidson, who has had so many interesting careers, could not even get a question out.

We welcome the statement on health promotion. The minister mentioned expenditure on sport. If a joined-up approach is not taken between the health services, education and social work, the minister's laudable aims could be derailed. I seek an assurance that a joined-up approach will be taken. Will the minister ensure that the various services work together?

**Mr Kerr:** Absolutely right. Our drive to work in partnership at local level—through community planning and local government working with health boards at a local level—is making a substantial difference across Scotland in how public services are delivered.

On health improvement, I refer members to today's figures and the work done by a professor on obesity. I am aware of the trap that we will get into in Scotland's health with regard to those issues. We know that we must do better on health improvement and changing the culture in which we do it. That cannot be achieved by a local authority, health board or voluntary organisation; it will be achieved by people working together in partnership.

Running through our spending review document, members will see the cross-cutting initiatives that we have taken. They will also see an assurance that the spending agreements that I have made with individual ministers mean that the money will be spent in the right areas. That will ensure that initiatives on health, education, crime, transport and jobs can be joined together to make Scotland a better place.

**Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab):** Like Jamie Stone, I warmly welcome the doubling of expenditure on health improvement. I also welcome the resources that are being put into waste recycling, which is an issue that the minister and I have championed in the past.

Will the minister confirm that growth is central to the realisation of our ambitions for Scotland? Can he give us further information on how the spending review will help Scotland's businesses to grow?

**Mr Kerr:** Absolutely right. We are committed to economic growth and the creation of opportunities

in our communities. We should also not forget some of the achievements of devolution to date, including modern apprenticeships—now up to 20,000—spin-out companies around Scotland, the use of regional selective assistance and the work that we have done in partnership with business.

We want to increase that opportunity and growth, which is why we have extended the education maintenance allowances that will change the lives of young people. This morning, I visited a hospital in Edinburgh to see the work done there in respect of modern apprenticeships. I saw the sheer value that young people get out of modern apprenticeships and the changes and difference that those apprenticeships make to the lives of young people through good-quality training in a safe, secure environment. Modern apprenticeships provide the people for the jobs, which is much required in our health facilities. That is the dual benefit of modern apprenticeships. The business community is crying out for well-trained young people and we are providing them through that scheme.

The funding that we are making available for science in the universities and for higher education and further education in general will combine to ensure that we get the desired results from working in partnership with business. We are having lengthy and on-going discussions with the business community about how, on the education side, we provide a trained and skilled work force and how, on the transport side, we allow our people and businesses to move around Scotland. Our major focus is on providing opportunity and ensuring growth, and I think that we have achieved that in this spending review.

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** The minister has described the budget as a budget for growth. Will he estimate its impact on the growth rate of the Scottish economy over each of the next three years? Moreover, how much of the additional money for further education will be earmarked to deal with the cash crisis in a number of our colleges?

**Mr Kerr:** We have not worked through the final figures on job growth. However, I can tell the chamber that 7,000 jobs are coming on board as a result of the housing stock transfer. Furthermore, more jobs will be created through the public-private partnerships for schools in Scotland. Half the civil engineering contractors are involved in the water industry in Scotland and are providing much-valued work, jobs and training. Our investment in Scotland's infrastructure will ensure that we provide opportunities not just for construction jobs but for the growth of wealth.

As for further and higher education, we are investing in infrastructure and skills to ensure that we establish the vital link between universities and

the business community that business keeps telling us about. We will maintain and develop that link for the benefit of the Scottish economy.

**Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab):** I welcome the minister's statement, which is very good news for Scotland. I am delighted that he has announced the development of a rail link to Glasgow airport—and, to be fair, to Edinburgh airport. He will be aware that there has been overwhelming support in Glasgow and west central Scotland for such a link. Will he say a little more about the timetable that the Executive envisages for the development of that vital piece of transport infrastructure?

**Mr Kerr:** All major infrastructure projects require a lot of preparatory work. However, we have secured the required resources within the spending review to deal with whatever comes our way as far as that development and our many other infrastructure projects throughout Scotland are concerned.

Bill Butler mentioned Glasgow and Edinburgh, and details of our investment in those great cities and others in Scotland will become clear over the coming weeks through the cities review. We seek to ensure that cities play a pivotal cultural role in the Scottish economy and a vital part in providing employment in city regions. Through the cities review and the initiatives that I have outlined in the spending review, cities will once again become a key focus for the Executive. We will ensure that they survive, develop and thrive.

**Brian Adam (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** The minister referred to tackling congestion in another Scottish city—Aberdeen. Will he confirm that he is prepared to make a commitment to fund the modern transport system that has been asked for? Will that investment include full funding for the western peripheral route and, if so, when will that happen?

**Mr Kerr:** As Brian Adam and I know, the north-east Scotland transport partnership and other bodies in Aberdeen have been carrying out a lot of work on the issues. We should let those studies and that work be carried out. It is not for ministers—nor for SNP members, who will never become ministers—to make commitments outwith the confines either of such professional studies or of work with communities on planning processes.

**Brian Adam:** Will there be new money?

**Mr Kerr:** We have set aside new money to deal with the findings of the studies that NESTRANS and others in Aberdeen have carried out and that money will be used to ease congestion and invest in other initiatives in Aberdeen such as park-and-ride schemes. By making those investments, we will tackle the congestion problem. Once the studies are concluded and the information on

roads becomes available, the Executive will deal with matters as and when they arise.

**Elaine Thomson (Aberdeen North) (Lab):** I welcome the minister's statement. Whether we are talking about investment to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour or investment in better opportunities for Scotland's young people, the spending review addresses the real priorities of many people across Scotland.

As people in Aberdeen are also concerned about transport issues, I welcome the minister's commitment to tackling congestion in the city. Will the minister assure the people of Aberdeen that the vital role that the north-east plays in contributing to the Scottish economy will be fully recognised when detailed decisions about investment in a modern transport and industrial infrastructure are made?

**Mr Kerr:** That is correct. I spent time in Aberdeen when I was convener of the Transport and the Environment Committee and when the Parliament sat there. I met business people and members of the community and we talked about civic and wider interests.

I understand the strategic role that Aberdeen plays in Scotland, the UK and the world, particularly with regard to the oil and gas sector. We also recognise that organisations in Aberdeen—the chamber of commerce, the business community and the local authority—are working collectively to come up with the best solutions for Aberdeen. Through the spending review, we are taking cognisance of that work and putting resources behind it to ensure that we tackle congestion in and around Aberdeen.

**Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con):** The minister could hardly contain his excitement in announcing that he considers that business rates have been frozen. Is that the start of a faltering journey by the Scottish Executive minister towards a uniform business rate that relies on the process of convergence?

**Mr Kerr:** I hate to disappoint the member, but we have uniform business rates and, because of the difference in re-evaluations north and south of the border, the tax take in Scotland remains the same as the tax take in England and Wales. That is the point of the discussions I have had with the business community. The same burden is imposed on Scottish business as is imposed on business in England. Because properties in England and Wales go for more than in Scotland, we adjusted the rate poundage, to deal with the variance in the cost of property.

I do not know whether Annabel Goldie welcomes the statement. We have listened to, learned from and acted on what Scottish business wants. The economy will grow through our

spending review statement and money will be spent on transport. All that work has been done in full cognisance of what the business community seeks for Scotland. Again, I commend what the spending review statement says about opportunity and growth and about working with business and the community for a better Scotland.

**Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** I take the minister back to the subject of public transport. I welcome the massive additional investment that he has announced today. How will he target the money to ensure that current blocks in the rail infrastructure programme, such as the Larkhall rail extension, which has been planned and costed and for which money has been made available, will be alleviated so that work can begin as a matter of urgency?

**Mr Kerr:** As the member is aware, the money exists for that project. Issues relating to its management and its role are on-going. Through the 15-year franchise, we want Scotland to develop the strategic rail network, not just for commuters but for business. That refers back to our twin approach to opportunity and growth in the Scottish economy. That is what we seek to do.

The money is available and has been assigned to the project but, in addition, we seek to secure a good deal for Scotland that will provide the rail facilities that we require to move freight, commerce and people around Scotland more effectively.

**Iain Smith (North-East Fife) (LD):** Will the minister confirm that the record support for Scotland's local authorities that was announced today will allow our local councils to continue to provide record numbers of police, to invest in our schools and to provide free personal and nursing care for the elderly? Will he also confirm whether councils will be allowed to use some of the additional £180 million that was announced for quality of life initiatives, to tackle not just symptoms, such as vandalism and graffiti, but the root causes, by investing in improved community facilities, for example for sports and leisure?

**Mr Kerr:** I welcome the recognition of the role that quality of life has played in the debate today.

I have the opportunity to go through press cuttings from all over Scotland. Members should read them to learn that local authorities have used the money to focus on dealing with graffiti removal, opportunities for children, skateboard parks and doing up public parks. The money has been used wisely and effectively. That is why, in concert with local authority representatives, we have chosen to continue the quality of life initiatives. Iain Smith is right—we need to allow local authorities to make decisions and to deal with young people in their communities.

Recently, I visited a youth centre in Milngavie. There has been an 80 per cent drop in calls to the police because—surprise, surprise—the kids have something to do. It is a great facility and we can learn from it.

We can roll out such projects across Scotland, giving opportunities to young people not to get involved in hanging about on street corners, innocently or otherwise, intimidating the public and causing concern in their communities. Such projects will give young people opportunities through training, work in schools and, in particular, through sport. By packaging all that together in the cross-cutting way that colleagues have mentioned, we are presenting opportunities to young people across Scotland for better health, better sport, better engagement with their communities, better things to do and, if they get into trouble, better systems for dealing with that than we have now. The quality of life programme is a welcome partnership with local authorities and their partners, to ensure that we deliver effectively in our communities. It is delivering and it will continue to deliver.

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** I welcome the minister's statement, which is good for business, for people and for the environment. I would like to ask specifically about the welcome extra £170 million for the national waste strategy. That is great news for the environment in Scotland. Will the minister confirm that extra money will be made available to local authorities to develop their area waste plans, so that the completely unacceptable amount of waste that currently goes to landfill sites can be drastically reduced?

**Mr Kerr:** We recognised that the gap between the intention of area waste plans and the resources available to local authorities was too big. With the spending review, we have made an unprecedented increase in the resources available to ensure that, through their strategic waste plans, our local authorities work collectively to deliver landfill diversion and recycling. We are making our contribution not only to the environmental agenda but to the social justice and environmental justice agendas. Our local authorities will be pleased with what they have heard today, and I am sure that Ross Finnie was pleased when he heard about the money and resources being made available for the strategic waste fund. Today's announcement will introduce a step change in Scotland's position on recycling, almost at the bottom of the league table. That will change quickly.

**Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. It would appear that the SNP members hate good news, and there is a lot of it going around this morning. Does that explain why there are only four



SNP members in the chamber? Are they more interested in a headline than in the substance of Scotland's future?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That is clearly not a point of order. Given that there is a time limit for this item of business, it is not fair on the members who are still waiting to speak to raise such points.

**Andrew Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I am sure that the minister will agree that, when the Government makes spending announcements, they should be clear, transparent and honest. On 15 July, the Government said in a press release that £1.5 billion of new money would be announced as a result of the UK spending review for next year, 2003-04. Today, Mr Kerr has just announced that there will be £1.5 billion for 2003-04, but that that will take account of the impact of the spending review of two years ago, the health budget announced in April and increases flowing from the spending review 2002. I have a simple question for Mr Kerr, and I want him to be honest and set the record straight. Taking those three factors into account, precisely how much of the new 2003-04 money will be the result of the UK spending review of 2002?

**Mr Kerr:** I took that point on board in my speech and answered it in a previous question. I tend to agree with Jim Sillars, who said in a recent article that Mr Wilson's brain is numbed by the work that he is doing on fiscal autonomy. The people of Scotland will understand that we are putting £1.5 billion to work in Scotland this year, £2.6 billion the following year and £4.1 billion the year after that. That real money is doing real things to change Scotland's lifestyle. I have said repeatedly in the media and in Parliament that the SNP either fundamentally fails to understand basic Government accounting systems or deliberately tries to talk down good announcements for Scotland. SNP members talk down Scotland itself and they whinge and moan, but they will never be able to deliver. [MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I have answered the question and will continue to answer it. SNP members clearly do not understand spending reviews or accounting techniques. It is no wonder that a member of the press had to pass them a calculator at their 1999 press conference.

**Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab):** I congratulate the Minister for Finance and Public Services on his statement. As this item of business draws to a close, I invite him to let his imagination run away with him and assume that one of the members of the SNP—John Swinney, Alasdair Morgan or even Andrew Wilson—had been rising to their feet to deliver today's spending review statement. In those circumstances, the Iraqi preoccupations of the SNP would have been

slightly different today from those that we heard yesterday. Had the spending review been delivered under so-called fiscal freedom, the freedom would have been to await the next meeting of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

**Members:** Question.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Ms Alexander:** This spending review—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order. Ms Alexander, do you intend to put a question to the minister about matters within his responsibility?

**Ms Alexander:** My question is this: would Scotland be better served by the spending review that has been announced today, which is based on guaranteed spending, or by one that was dependent entirely on one volatile resource and an international situation whereby, if oil prices fell drastically, the funding of the Scottish health service could be at risk?

**Mr Kerr:** The question is whether Andrew Wilson—if he was ever in my place, which I doubt he ever will be—could cope with the spending demands of his colleagues on the back benches. Up and down Scotland, in local papers, SNP members make spending commitments. They do it almost weekly in the chamber. That is irresponsible.

Wendy Alexander is absolutely right. I hoped to make it clear in my statement that wasting time on wrangling, challenging and wasting resources and trying to fight what we get through the Barnett formula—which has guaranteed the pound-for-pound increase that Scotland gets to spend on its people—would result in not £4 billion of spending over the third year of the spending review, but a £4 billion deficit at the start of the spending review. That is the gap that would exist between the resources that are available and what would be available through divorce and separation. We know what we want to do with regard to investment in growth, schools and hospitals. The SNP wants to fund divorce; we want to fund public services.

**Ben Wallace (North-East Scotland) (Con):** Given the billions of pounds of taxpayers' money that the minister is throwing at the NHS, and in the light of the consistent rise in the length of waiting times and waiting lists since 1997, when can we realistically expect the Executive to deliver on its manifesto pledges on the health service, which date back to 1997? When can we expect a downturn in the length of waiting times and waiting lists?

**Mr Kerr:** I reassure the member that the Executive does not throw money at anything. Through its processes, it ensures that the money

goes to work effectively. Changes are taking place with NHS modernisation. We have free personal care for the elderly; seven new hospitals; a national waiting times unit; 12 major investments in accident and emergency services; a fourfold increase in the number of one-stop clinics; NHS 24; and more doctors, nurses and dentists than ever before. That is just what we have done to date. The spending review also allows us to invest in more technology; more nurses and midwives; buildings and information technology; 1,000 community places for delayed discharge; the roll-out of NHS 24 across the country; the modernisation of general practitioner and dental facilities; and, crucially, the recruitment and retention of staff in the NHS. It is through those measures that we will deliver.

Our spending review document lays out clearly the objectives that we seek to achieve through our resources. Those objectives are clear and measurable, and we will monitor them.

**Ben Wallace:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Throughout the debate, members who have asked questions of the minister have been told to keep their questions succinct and to the point. The minister has not replied to most of the questions, and has wandered off the subject. My question was specifically on waiting times and waiting lists. I asked when we could expect an improvement. I did not ask about hospitals or anything else. I urge the Deputy Presiding Officer to caution the minister on his replies.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Wallace, you should be aware by now that standing orders do not cover the length or, indeed, the relevance of ministerial answers. Those are subjective, political points that would be better debated when we have ample time.

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP):** I have four brief questions for the minister.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** They had better be very brief, if there are four of them.

**Tommy Sheridan:** How much money has been allocated to the delivery of the direct rail link from Glasgow airport to Glasgow city centre? Does the minister intend to allocate money to establish a minimum wage in Scotland's health service, to tackle the scandal of low pay? What is the estimated end-year flexibility that is contained in his statement? Given his welcome concern for the dietary ill health of the children of Scotland, will he reconsider making money available for universally free healthy and nutritious school meals?

**Mr Kerr:** I am mindful of the point of order that has been raised, but I would point out that we have set out clearly in our document objectives and targets for all the work involved in the spending review.

A study on links to Glasgow airport is continuing, with four shortlisted options. We will deal with that matter once the shortlisting process has been completed.

As Tommy Sheridan is well aware, the settlements that the Labour UK Government has introduced, including the national minimum wage and our provisions for the UK benefits system to support—

**Tommy Sheridan:** I was asking about Scotland.

**Mr Kerr:** The point about the national minimum—

**Tommy Sheridan:** What is the Executive doing in Scotland?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Mr Kerr:** Tommy Sheridan asked four questions and I thought that I would try to give him four answers. I am perhaps starting to regret that.

The national minimum wage is supported through a number of benefits and measures in the UK and, with regard to our support for working families, in Scotland. I apologise to Tommy; I missed his point about end-year flexibility. Perhaps I could write to him on the matter.

Tommy Sheridan will know from my statement that we are seeking to secure enough resources to support the funding commitments that have been made and the nutritional values or levels that have been indicated in recent reports, which will ensure that Scotland's schoolchildren get proper, nutritious and attractive meals in schools. It is the focus of our resources to ensure that that happens.

I do not think that it is good to have universal provision of school meals. Through our education system, we provide choice and the opportunity to provide nutritious, high-value school meals to our children, ensuring that the content of those meals is correct. That is what the Executive will do through its investment.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We have gone just beyond the allocated time, but I will allow one final question, which I allocate to Mike Rumbles.

**Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** I genuinely still do not know what the minister means when he says that he will fix Aberdeen's congestion problems. Is he saying that he has identified and put aside the £247 million that is needed for the western peripheral route and the crossrail project? I know that the minister cannot commit to that now, but has that sum been put aside?

**Mr Kerr:** The point that I was trying to make is that the case for the western peripheral route is still being made; work is still going on. That is a

statement of fact. We will seek to ensure that we deliver on other improvements in infrastructure and transport around Aberdeen. When the Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning has the opportunity to discuss such matters later, we will ensure that the detail is rolled out. We cannot make major spending decisions until all the required work—including the option appraisals—is done. As I understand it, the work regarding the western peripheral route is not yet complete.

We seek to support the findings of that work as well as the work carried out by the north-east Scotland transport partnership—NESTRANS—and other public bodies in Aberdeen so as to ensure that we tackle congestion around the city. We need to await the outcome of that continuing work to ensure that the Scottish Executive can provide the resources.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I apologise to the six members whom I have been unable to call, but we need to conclude now.

13:28

*Meeting suspended until 14:30.*

14:30

*On resuming—*

## Question Time

### SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

#### Skateboarding

**1. Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with sportscotland regarding support for skateboarding. (S1O-5516)

**The Deputy Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Dr Elaine Murray):** I have not had any direct discussions with sportscotland on skateboarding, although I discuss the matter with my youngest son quite frequently. I am pleased to note that skateboarding is regarded as a sport by the home sports councils, including sportscotland.

**Maureen Macmillan:** I note that the Minister for Finance and Public Services announced a doubling of funding for sport for young people and that he mentioned skateboarding in particular. In Forres, a group of young people have set up and manage their own skateboard park. They feel rebuffed that sportscotland does not seem to recognise their sport and claims that skateboarding does not have a governing body. The skateboarders dispute that. They are desperate to obtain funding for a shelter for their skateboard park. Will the minister advise how such grass-roots organisations can receive support funding without compromising how they organise and manage their skateboard parks?

**Dr Murray:** Skateboarding does not have a governing body and therefore sportscotland does not support a governing body for skateboarding. However, it recognises skateboarding as a sport.

A number of facilities have been funded under a number of programmes in the past few years. Money is currently available, including through the New Opportunities Fund, for physical education in schools and in the £95 million that the Minister for Finance and Public Services announced in June. There have been a number of successful applications for skateboarding facilities and £100,000 will have gone to Dumfries and Galloway, I am pleased to say. I note that the money is included as an unidentified bid and hope that something will be forthcoming through the local authority to provide facilities for young people.

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I share Maureen Macmillan's concern and welcome the minister's announcement of the

funding route. However, I want to direct the minister's attention to planning issues to do with skateboarding. Many skateboard installations are moveable and are not subject to planning regulations. In many areas in Stirling, there is concern about the location of skateboard facilities. Such areas want them, but not necessarily right next to play parks, for example. I would be happy to forward more details in writing to the minister, but will she undertake to consider discussions with her colleagues about planning regulations in respect of skateboard parks?

**Dr Murray:** An individual planning application is referred to the relevant local authority and it is up to the authority to decide whether a location is appropriate. However, if the member wants to put further details in writing about his particular concern, I will happily take up the matter with my social justice colleagues and find out whether particular planning issues are involved.

### Chlamydia

**2. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive what is being done to address the 36 per cent rise in chlamydia diagnosis in females in 2001. (S1O-5537)

**The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mrs Mary Mulligan):** The development of a national sexual health strategy for Scotland will build on the existing activity of the Health Education Board for Scotland, national health service boards and healthy respect—the Lothian-based national health demonstration project—to address the rise in sexually transmitted infections, including chlamydia.

**Mary Scanlon:** Will the minister ensure that information and advice that is given on chlamydia includes information and advice on potential infertility problems? Will she encourage young men to present for screening, given the low numbers of young men who have done so and the 50 per cent increase in diagnosis last year?

**Mrs Mulligan:** In one respect, young men in particular need to be targeted. Chlamydia is a disease that shows few symptoms and therefore people are not aware of it until they are offered testing. However, all the health people to whom I have spoken have said that they offer testing where possible and are particularly aware of the need to raise awareness among young men.

HEBS has a scheme of convenience advertising, which allows information to be passed to men and women and which will, I hope, raise awareness of the problem of chlamydia.

**Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I was glad to hear the minister mention at last the sexual health strategy. When will it be published and when will it be implemented?

**Mrs Mulligan:** This summer, the Minister for Health and Community Care, Malcolm Chisholm, announced the formation of an expert group that will bring together a strategy on sexual health. I hope that it will report next summer. In the meantime, we will continue to work through the health boards and HEBS to raise awareness of sexually transmitted diseases and the treatments that are available on the health service.

### Public-private Partnerships

**3. Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will introduce guidance for local authorities and NHS boards entering into any form of public-private partnership to ensure that charges levied by contractors are set at a level which takes account of social responsibility as well as solely commercial considerations. (S1O-5519)

**The Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services (Peter Peacock):** Significant general guidance has been issued to public bodies that are involved in public-private partnerships. The specification of services to be provided in any individual PPP is a matter for the contracting authority.

**Ms MacDonald:** Because he is glad that I am not going to mention the embarrassing leakage of money to the PPP at Edinburgh royal infirmary, the minister might be prepared to think again about the tightness of the guidance. For example, does he think it fair that the new Edinburgh royal infirmary has £10 a day parking fees, 50p a minute phone charges and £1.50 per hour charges for the television and internet? Does that sound like good value for PPP?

**Peter Peacock:** As I have indicated, those are matters for the specification of PPP contracts and are the responsibility of individual authorities. The issues that Margo MacDonald raises are not unique to PPP projects. They concern judgments that are made at a local level by the managers of the facilities in the interest of making best use of the resources that are available to them.

**Mr John McAllion (Dundee East) (Lab):** Many of the proposed PPPs for our schools are partial PPPs, in that they will affect only some schools in a given local authority area, thereby creating two categories of school—the majority, which will still be directly managed by the local authority, and the minority, which will be managed by the PPP. Against the background of falling school rolls across Scotland, we know that the PPP schools will be guaranteed investment and guaranteed against closure for the 25 or 30 years of their contracts. What similar guarantees are available to schools that are directly managed by local authorities, in particular those schools in deprived areas?

**Peter Peacock:** One of the features of PPP is that risk is transferred from the public sector to the private sector. In long-term schools projects, one of the things that is transferred is the risk that John McAllion mentioned. No school has a guarantee that it will remain open for a given period of time, because as we all know, populations move and shift over time, and that must be taken account of.

### **Supporting People**

**4. Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what progress is being made in introducing the supporting people regime. (S1O-5550)

**The Deputy Minister for Social Justice (Hugh Henry):** Supporting people is a new funding and policy framework for the provision of housing support services, and is due to be introduced from 1 April 2003. The Scottish Executive, together with local authorities and service providers, is making good progress in working towards the implementation date of 1 April.

**Mr Macintosh:** Is the minister aware of the anxiety that is felt by residents in Crookfur Cottage Homes in my constituency at the prospect of the alarming rise in service charges that is being introduced by the home owner under the guise of supporting people? Is he aware of the threat—despite the huge extra resources that are going into free personal care—to close the nursing wing there? Will he assure me that he will do all that he can to monitor home owners or care providers who may use the change as an excuse to raise charges, reduce services or otherwise take advantage of the elderly residents who are in their trust?

**Hugh Henry:** From conversations with Kenneth Macintosh, I am aware of the excellent service that is provided at Crookfur. I know that he has campaigned to represent the interests of the residents. Some of the issues are nothing to do with supporting people. No existing user should lose as a result of the implementation of supporting people. I am advised that the proposed rent increases are due to the fact the Retail Trust wishes to restructure services.

Free personal care is a matter for my colleagues in the health department. We have put substantial resources into the implementation of free personal care and into supporting people. I would feel regret if providers used the excuse of those policy changes to increase charges. We have brought about those changes to help people and to improve the quality of their lives. No one should use those policies as an excuse.

### **Domestic Abuse (Homeless Women)**

**5. Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive how it is supporting

homeless women who have experienced domestic abuse. (S1O-5547)

**The Minister for Social Justice (Ms Margaret Curran):** We will shortly introduce legislation to ensure that anyone who is assessed as homeless and who runs the risk of domestic abuse will be defined as having a priority need for accommodation and will therefore be entitled to permanent accommodation. That follows the homelessness task force's final report, which also recommended that local authorities review, in the context of their homelessness strategies, their provision of accommodation and support to people who have experienced domestic abuse.

**Sarah Boyack:** The minister is aware of the excellent project in my constituency called space44, which she opened last week and which is run by two voluntary organisations in partnership, Streetwork and the Ark. Will the minister give a commitment to support work by the voluntary sector that provides places of safety for homeless women who have experienced domestic abuse and which gives them the space and support to rebuild their lives?

**Ms Curran:** As Sarah Boyack said, I visited and launched the space44 project last week. I was most impressed by the quality of the work there and I pay tribute to the staff, who go over the odds in the service that they deliver. It is apparent that a number of women fall through the net and do not receive the services that we expect them to receive. I will happily guarantee that we will work with the voluntary sector to change that.

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** The minister will be aware that I have lodged a series of questions about the operation of the Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Act 2001, which was originally a practical and worthy committee bill. The act protects cohabitants by extending the power of arrest so that it can be attached to common law interdicts. There will be a review later in the year to discover how many people have applied for such interdicts. When will the review be published and what publicity has there been to advise people of the act? It is my experience that people are not aware of the protection that the act could give them.

**Ms Curran:** I take seriously the points that Christine Grahame raises. We have had conversations about the matter in the past. She will know that the matter is not completely within my ministerial responsibility, but I assure her that I will pursue the matter and will discuss it with her later.

**Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** Given that a report that was published last week claims that nearly 3,000 men have been victims of domestic abuse, what is the

Scottish Executive doing to support homeless men who have experienced domestic abuse?

**Ms Curran:** I am pleased that Mike Rumbles has raised that issue. I am aware of his recent comments in the press about the Scottish Executive's approach to the matter. To honour a commitment in the national strategy, we recently carried out and published research into the extent of the male experience of domestic abuse. We had to provide evidence of the number of male victims. The research demonstrated that there is no requirement for a new service for men, but that existing services should be more attuned to the needs of male victims. I am in the process of writing to the appropriate services to ensure that they take account of the needs that the report flagged up.

### Under-age Drinking

**6. Mr Kenneth Gibson (Glasgow) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to reduce under-age drinking. (S1O-5549)

**The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mrs Mary Mulligan):** Reducing harmful drinking by children and young people is one of the key priorities in the Scottish Executive's plan for action on alcohol problems, which was published on 18 January 2002 and which sets out a range of measures in relation to school and community-based education. We also seek to ensure that children who are affected by alcohol problems have access to appropriate services. In addition, the Health Education Board for Scotland is developing new resources for parents to help them discuss such issues with their children.

**Mr Gibson:** According to the Executive's figures, 39 per cent of under-age drinkers who drank in the previous week took illegal drugs in the previous month, whereas only 1 per cent of non-drinkers took illegal drugs in the same period. Will the Executive recognise that alcohol is the main gateway into hard drugs for young people in Scotland? Given that in some courts in Scotland only 4 per cent of licensees who sell alcohol to children are prosecuted, compared with 100 per cent in other courts, will the minister urge the Lord Advocate to provide guidelines to ensure a measure of consistency on the matter?

**Mrs Mulligan:** I am aware of the link between alcohol and drug abuse, which is why the alcohol action teams, which I visited during the summer, are also drug action teams. Those teams work in local communities to resolve the problems that young people experience. I acknowledge the connection that the member draws attention to. The law is quite clear on the prosecution of licensees. I encourage those who are in that situation to use existing laws to ensure that we protect our young people.

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** What is the Executive doing to ensure that many more good activities are available to young people, so that they keep out of trouble? At the moment, in spite of good intentions and an overall budget, very little money is getting to front-line activities. Many youth clubs and organisations such as uniformed organisations are receiving less money than before.

**Mrs Mulligan:** The Executive takes seriously the need to offer other opportunities to young people, so that they do not get drawn into the alcohol and drugs scene. We are seeking to support a number of projects throughout Scotland and much good voluntary sector work is going into the provision of such opportunities. In Edinburgh, Donald Gorrie will be familiar with the developments at the Edinburgh City Youth Cafe. Other similar projects are happening elsewhere and we are eager to hear about such projects.

The ministerial statement on the spending review this morning contained an announcement about more money for sport for young people. That is one way in which we can encourage young people to spend their energy, instead of spending it on alcohol and drugs.

### Vulnerable Children

**7. Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what measures it is proposing to improve the protection of vulnerable children. (S1O-5540)

**The Minister for Education and Young People (Cathy Jamieson):** The Scottish Executive is continually considering ways to improve the protection of vulnerable children. The Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill was introduced on 6 September. The child protection review group, which is due to report to ministers very soon, will provide the basis for future developments in child protection.

**Scott Barrie:** As the minister is aware, I support any measures that are intended to afford our children added protection from unscrupulous adults. Will she assure me that the scope of the bill will include individuals whose names and activities might crop up subsequently—for example in a childcare inquiry, of which the minister has had some experience—but who are not the subject of a criminal investigation? Will she assure me that the bill will close the existing loophole?

**Cathy Jamieson:** I am happy to give such assurances to Scott Barrie. The member has indicated that I have served on a childcare inquiry in Edinburgh and he will be well aware of the inquiry in Fife. He will notice that section 6 of the bill makes provision for Scottish ministers to

include in the list individuals who are named in relevant inquiries.

**Mr Gil Paterson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Does the minister agree that one way to protect vulnerable children would be to ensure that they are heard in our courts when decisions are made on their safety and future? Does she agree that the attitude of Lord Dawson, who said on record that he was

“not of the mind to listen to these children”,

is out of date and out of order?

**Cathy Jamieson:** The member will be aware that the Executive takes listening to children and young people very seriously in all aspects of the work that it undertakes. Many organisations work to support children and young people and to ensure that their voices are heard. I would expect the idea that children and young people should be listened to to be taken account of in all proceedings that relate to children and young people.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con):** Will the minister provide an assurance that criminal records checks and other checks will be sufficiently detailed and thorough to ensure that children will be protected properly?

**Cathy Jamieson:** I reassure the member that the reason for introducing the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill is to plug a loophole whereby people who had been dismissed from a post or who had moved on from it because they posed a significant threat to children were able to obtain work somewhere else. I want that loophole to be closed and I believe that the Parliament will support such action.

### Rural Schools (Parental Choice)

**8. Alex Johnstone (North-East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive what action it can take to prevent local authorities from reducing the scope for parental choice in selecting schools in rural areas. (S10-5517)

**The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Nicol Stephen):** The powers of Scottish ministers to intervene directly in actions being taken by an education authority are limited, but generally the Scottish Executive recognises the importance of parental choice and the need to involve parents, pupils and the local community in any major changes.

**Alex Johnstone:** Is the minister aware of the problem, which was exacerbated by the announcement made in this morning's financial statement, that the money that is being made available for the development of new schools is encouraging a trend towards the development of new schools in rural areas, thus fostering a policy

of centralisation by local authorities? The consequence of the policy is that valuable local primary schools, such as Stracathro Primary School in Angus, are being put at threat. The consultation on the future of Stracathro has been launched in conjunction with the offer to construct a new school at Edzell and has consequently set parent against parent.

**Nicol Stephen:** I am convinced that such decisions are best made locally. In general, local authorities will come to the wisest decisions about the future of their education provision.

I am aware that there are concerns when there is new investment. However, the investment in Scotland's schools over the coming years is significant. This morning, £1.15 billion of new investment was announced. That will benefit more than 300 schools and around 80,000 pupils.

That contrasts starkly with the days of underinvestment that took place under the Conservatives, when our school buildings crumbled. In those days, school closures were for reasons of lack of funding rather than for the positive reasons that are driving the new school-building programme at the moment.

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** Will the minister consider the request from the Education, Culture and Sport Committee and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities for the Executive to produce guidelines for rural school closures?

**Nicol Stephen:** We keep that matter under review and there have been ministerial statements on that. Clearly, if there were to be developments that caused us concern, we would look again at the guidance. My view stands as I explained it in my previous answer. In general, we believe that those decisions are most appropriately made by the local education authority in close consultation with parents, pupils, teachers and the local community.

**Mr Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP):** What specific extra funds is the minister giving to Angus Council to keep small 19<sup>th</sup> century rural schools, such as Stracathro, open if parents so choose?

**Nicol Stephen:** Under the school buildings improvement fund, Angus Council was this year given £614, 000 of additional funding.

### Thurso Hospital (Accident and Emergency Services)

**9. Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive how Highland NHS Board will ensure that the same level of accident and emergency services previously provided at Thurso hospital will be provided in the future. (S10-5548)

**The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm):** Access to accident and emergency services that are safe and appropriate to local needs is important for any community.

National health service boards are responsible for ensuring that they balance local access, safety, and quality factors in planning healthcare services. I expect Highland NHS Board to take those fully into account in its current consideration of future accident and emergency services in Thurso.

**Mr Stone:** I want to push the minister a bit further. I have received numerous representations about the service, which has—I hope—been discontinued only temporarily. There is a huge push locally to have that service restored to the same level that we enjoyed in the past. Not only the community of Thurso but a geographically large area of Sutherland relied on the service. Will the minister concede that it would be desirable to see the service restored as soon as possible?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I discussed the issue when I visited Caithness and Sutherland NHS services during the summer. I know that there was an issue with one of the general practices, which withdrew from the contract. That is how the circumstance arose. I also know that Highland Primary Care NHS Trust is working actively at present with the local health care co-operative, the GPs, the nurses and the ambulance service to see how a service can be restored. Obviously, the key issue is that any such service should be safe and appropriate.

### **Social Work Services (Glasgow)**

**10. Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with Glasgow City Council concerning the provision of social work services in the city. (S10-5535)

**The Minister for Education and Young People (Cathy Jamieson):** The chief social work inspector met officials in Glasgow on 21 February 2002 as part of his annual report visits. Officials from the community care division and other areas of the Executive have also been involved in discussions with Glasgow City Council on future requirements for health and social work services arising from the city's hostel closure and reprovisioning programme.

**Ms White:** Is the minister aware of how the lack of social workers impinges on children's panel hearings, which by law require social work papers to be received three days before a hearing? In up to 50 per cent of hearings, there were no social work reports or the reports were not available until the actual meeting. Will the minister investigate and take action on the matter urgently because it is serious and represents a denial of children's rights?

**Cathy Jamieson:** I am aware of difficulties that have arisen in relation to the provision of social work reports and the attendance of social work staff at children's hearings. The matter was raised with me by chairs of the children's hearing system. It is—I hope—being addressed at the moment and will be further addressed as we try to ensure that we recruit and retain social work staff in future. I refer Sandra White to the announcement that the Minister for Finance and Public Services made this morning, in which he made it clear that we will continue to invest in those areas.

**Trish Godman (West Renfrewshire) (Lab):** Does the minister agree that, although the problem is most acute in Glasgow, there are other problems throughout Scotland? As she said, this morning's announcement, plus the Executive's recruitment and retraining policy should go some way towards addressing that. Does the minister agree that we must start to promote a more positive image of the work of social workers, social work assistants and managers, who do work daily that we could not do? If we do otherwise, we will not get young people to join the profession.

**Cathy Jamieson:** In picking up on the points that Trish Godman raised, it is important that we acknowledge the valuable job that social workers and others who are involved in social care do day in, day out. This lunch time, I was at an event with Unison and the Workers Educational Association, where we launched a return-to-learn initiative, the first course of which will start in October. Eighty-eight courses will run as part of our overall action plan. A total of 12,000 people are likely to benefit from that initiative. We will produce in due course further proposals on recruitment and retention of staff.

**Mrs Lyndsay McIntosh (Central Scotland) (Con):** Will the minister, further to her responses to Sandra White and Trish Godman, tell us a little more about what the Executive is talking about in relation to recruitment and retention of social work staff, when local authorities are competing with one another because of golden hellos?

**Cathy Jamieson:** I hope that the answer that I have just given indicates that we are committed to ensuring that existing social care and social work staff have the opportunities to get the qualifications that will help them to remain in their jobs. A group is working on proposals to create a new honours degree course in social work. As I outlined, the Minister for Finance and Public Services this morning announced additional investment in social work education and training. That is to be welcomed. Those developments will put us on the right path towards ensuring that we have a qualified, professional and confident social work and social care work force that is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



### Abattoir Waste

**11. Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive when it will publish proposals for legislative change to tighten up the controls on the spreading of abattoir waste on agricultural land. (S1O-5551)

**The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie):** We intend late this autumn to issue a consultation paper on appropriate amendments to the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994. The key proposal in, or purpose of, the amendments will be to alter the burden of proof for an exempt activity. Those who intend to spread waste would have to demonstrate agricultural benefit before spreading.

In addition, a new animal by-products regulation is due to be adopted by the European Community in the autumn. We plan to consult on domestic regulations before the end of the year.

**Cathy Peattie:** Is the minister aware that, when abattoir waste and other substances have, under a waste exemption licence, been spread on fields in Polmont and Bo'ness, there have been spillages, animals in adjacent fields, nauseating smells and general public nuisance? It seems that local authorities and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency can do nothing about it. Will the minister agree to publish the recommendations that SEPA made in the report on the matter two years ago?

**Ross Finnie:** I am conscious of what happened and of Cathy Peattie's interest in the subject. Several breaches appear to have occurred. There was a question about the use of the derogation, which is why we are trying to change the burden of proof. There were also clear breaches in the way in which the material was transported. We are in discussion with SEPA about the guidance on such matters. We hope to present that guidance.

**Mr George Reid (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** The minister will remember that the original petition to the Parliament from Blairingone and Netherton raised health and environmental issues. Although the Executive is making progress on the environmental aspect, does the minister agree that it was unacceptable for the investigation team to release material to the contractor before it released it to Parliament? Does he also agree that the villagers' health concerns will be addressed only when the investigation team meets them face to face, as the Parliament's Transport and the Environment Committee did?

**Ross Finnie:** I acknowledge George Reid's interest in the matter. I am grateful to him and to Cathy Peattie for the way in which they have communicated with me.

On the health issues, George Reid knows the way in which the investigation was structured. The hazard investigation team that SEPA set up was asked explicitly to consider health matters. Following representations, SEPA asked the team to reconvene to give further consideration to those points. I understand that the chairman of the team has offered to appear before the Transport and the Environment Committee. It would be useful for the committee to pursue that line of action, as well as for me to look into the matter.

### Seaports, Harbours and Jetties

**12. Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has for the future development of seaports, harbours and jetties. (S1O-5505)

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning (Lewis Macdonald):** The ports policy paper "Modern Ports: A UK Policy", which was produced jointly by the Scottish Executive and the UK Government, provides a clear strategy for the future development of ports and harbours in Scotland.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Is the minister aware that this week's *The Buchan Observer* contains a worrying indication that the disastrous aggregates tax may result in the loss of nearly half Peterhead Bay Authority's business? Will he note that SNP councillors have been joined by a representative of the parties that make up the coalition Executive in expressing concern about the matter? The sole Liberal Democrat councillor in my constituency said:

"Our key developments centre round the bay. It has always been our economic base."

Will the minister say what action he plans to take to offset the effect of the aggregates tax?

**Lewis Macdonald:** I am aware of the issues relating to the Peterhead Bay Authority. I am also aware that the authority has a very ambitious investment project. I would not expect that to be delayed or put off by relatively marginal costs. It is for the authority to produce a commercial plan that takes into account the existing tax framework. Like other commercial harbours around the country, Peterhead bay is expected to produce its own surplus for investment. It is not our policy to invest public money in commercial harbours—that position will not change.

**Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** In the light of the successful timber-loading programme at Ardrishaig in Argyll, what action is the Scottish Executive taking to restore more piers throughout the Highlands and Islands? Such restoration would allow more timber to be carried by sea and prevent huge damage being caused to the Scottish road network.

**Lewis Macdonald:** Jamie McGrigor will be aware that we have a continuing programme for funding piers and harbours in the Highlands and Islands. They are supported differently to commercial harbours elsewhere in the country, because they provide lifeline services to local communities. We will continue to roll out our programme over the coming years.

### **Mental Health Services**

**13. Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what impact its plans to prioritise mental health are having on the provision and delivery of services. (S1O-5553)

**The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm):** The regular reviews and reports of the mental health and well being support group show significant improvements in services, and the spread of good practice in many areas. However, a great deal remains to be done. We are in the process of giving renewed impetus to that important priority.

**Johann Lamont:** Given that the Scottish Executive has identified mental health as one of its three key priorities for the national health service, what assurance can the minister give that that stated priority will be reflected in delivery at local level? Will the minister comment on how work on mental health is being advanced across areas of ministerial responsibility in the Executive? Many mental health problems arise from people's experience and environment and can best be helped by, for example, providing real support for women who are fleeing violence, or by creating secure communities in which disorder and anti-social behaviour are addressed effectively.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** Johann Lamont is absolutely right. We are taking a broader than ever view of mental health. One of the features of the new health improvement fund is that a considerable amount of money is being invested in mental health promotion. That initiative affects all parts of the Executive.

The member's first point was about services. I was pleased to visit Greater Glasgow Primary Care NHS Trust in the summer, where I saw some of the excellent community services that are being developed in Glasgow. More generally, we are insisting that mental health is prioritised far more than it was in the past. When I went to Lanarkshire three weeks ago, I was pleased to discover that Lanarkshire NHS Board, which used to have the lowest spend on mental health in the health service, is undertaking a very ambitious programme to ensure that that problem is put right in the most effective way.

**Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP):** Notwithstanding the answer that the minister has

just given, he should be aware of the countrywide understaffing that exists in mental health units. He should also be aware that there is a lack of staff training provision. What commitment will he give to bolster recruitment and training in our mental health services, bearing in mind the extra burdens that the proposed mental health bill will place on NHS staff?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** Adam Ingram is right and I am conscious of the issue that he raised. The issue of clinical psychologists has previously come up at question time and we acted immediately to boost the numbers who are trained. There is a wider issue of involving more people in mental health care teams. I mentioned in my general answer the initiatives that are under way at present to boost mental health services, particularly in primary care. That is one of the areas about which we will say more quite soon.

**Mr John McAllion (Dundee East) (Lab):** In the most recent year, 30 youngsters aged under 16 were diagnosed as suffering from mental illness to the degree that they required to be held in secure forensic units. Given the complete absence of such units for youngsters in Scotland, at least 21 of them had to be held in adult accommodation, which was entirely unsuitable. What priority does the Executive attach to creating secure units in Scotland so that our youngsters can be looked after properly?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** Child and adolescent mental health care more generally is an area in which there have been deficiencies. We have produced an interim report on the matter and a full report will come out very soon. Secure care is an important part of child and adolescent mental health and I accept that action is required on it.

**Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con):** I remind the minister of his fine words about the lack of eating disorder services within the national health service in Scotland. I presume that since I last spoke to him in the chamber he will have been made aware of the number of other units, albeit only day units, that have been withdrawn from the health service. Does he have any plans to provide new facilities?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** The provision of eating disorder services is very much a matter for local NHS systems. We issued new guidance on such services a few months ago—when we issue guidance now we certainly monitor it and ensure that it is taken account of in our performance management. Local health systems are aware that progress has to be made in that area.

### **Knife Crime**

#### **14. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians)**

**(Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to combat knife crime. (S1O-5513)

**The Deputy Minister for Justice (Dr Richard Simpson):** Successive legislation has introduced tighter and more specific controls to tackle the carrying of knives. The police have the power to stop and search anyone on suspicion of carrying an offensive weapon and to arrest anyone who obstructs such a search. An attack with an offensive weapon is regarded under Scots law as a serious aggravation of assault and can lead to a sentence of life imprisonment on indictment in the High Court.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Is not it the case that within communities in Scotland the number of visible police officers is insufficient to deter knife crime and that that can be put right only by a substantial increase in the number of police officers in those communities?

**Dr Simpson:** I do not agree with Lord James Douglas-Hamilton. However, I acknowledge the acts that tightened the laws on knives, some of which were his responsibility in the most recent Conservative Government. There are record numbers of police officers today and we have guaranteed that we will continue to maintain front-line policing. We are improving the technology that is available to police in order to improve their front-line capacity.

In addition, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary is undertaking a review of the visibility of police, which we will follow up. We are keen that the police are involved in local communities. The various campaigns that they have run—which I can list for the member if he wants me to—on dealing with offensive weapons have been highly productive and have led to some of the increases in the number of convictions that we are experiencing at present.

#### **Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde)**

**(Lab):** I acknowledge the role of the police in the matter, but does the minister agree that we also have to tackle the strange belief in Scotland that the carrying of knives is acceptable?

**Dr Simpson:** I agree entirely with Duncan McNeil on that point. It seems to be the case, particularly in the west of Scotland, although it is also the case in other areas, that people believe that the carrying of knives is acceptable. For example Lothian and Borders police have just carried out a search under operation avalanche. Of the 1,000 people who were searched, 102 were carrying offensive weapons. That is a frightening figure, but it is an indication that the police are doing a good job.

In my area, the police are using metal detectors on clubbers in order to detect offensive weapons. We will continue to bear down on the carrying of offensive weapons, but the message must come from this Parliament that it is not an acceptable part of our culture and it must change. The Executive will do its best to back that up.

## First Minister's Question Time

15:09

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** We come to First Minister's question time. All the questions are topical and I hope to reach question 6 today.

### Prime Minister (Meetings)

**1. Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister when he last met the Prime Minister and what issues were discussed. (S1F-2069)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** I met the Prime Minister in Johannesburg last week and I spoke to him again earlier this week. We discussed a range of issues of importance both to Scotland and to the rest of the United Kingdom.

**Mr Swinney:** I thank the First Minister for his answer. This morning, the Minister for Finance and Public Services said:

"the money that we spend is the people's money—money raised from business and hard-working families."

Since Labour came to office, an extra £1.5 billion of the people's money has been spent on health. We welcome that, but, as a result of spending all that extra money from the people, how many more in-patients have been treated by the national health service in Scotland?

**The First Minister:** I welcome Mr Swinney's recognition of the success of the United Kingdom economy and the money that has been provided to Scotland as a result. Perhaps that indicates another change of SNP policy this week. Such a change is welcome and long overdue.

We have been over this territory quite a few times in the chamber. As Mr Swinney knows, the dramatic increase in the number of treatments and operations that are carried out particularly in nurse-led clinics across Scotland is the factor that is changing the health service. People who are now being treated in clinics would previously have been treated as in-patients.

Mr Swinney knows about the increase in the level of services and treatments. The figures are a demonstration of the change in the health service that is making a real difference to people's lives. The change has been financed by the Labour Government and implemented by the Labour-Liberal Democrat partnership, but it has been delivered by doctors and nurses across Scotland.

**Mr Swinney:** The only thing that was missing from the First Minister's courteous answer was a figure. The number of in-patients who have been treated has fallen by 46,000, despite the investment of £1.5 billion. I listened carefully to what the First Minister said about the change in

the way in which people are treated. Just to give him the chance to complete the picture, I ask him how many more out-patients have been treated in the same period.

**The First Minister:** I know that there are occasionally problems with arithmetic and that Mr Swinney's shadow health minister said in the *Evening Times* on 13 August that arithmetic was never one of her strengths. However, I point out again the substantial increase in non in-patient activity in acute NHS trusts. Six and a half million patient appointments are carried out in clinics across Scotland—mainly in doctor-led clinics but also in nurse-led clinics. That figure is not falling; it has been increasing substantially. As I have said to Mr Swinney before in the chamber, it is better for people to be treated in their local community, in the clinic that matters to them, by a nurse rather than by a doctor if that is possible and better for them and their condition. I stand by that position. If that means that, ultimately, people are not being treated as in-patients or out-patients but are being treated more quickly, more locally and more effectively in those clinics, that is the right thing to do. That is the best investment for the national health service.

**Mr Swinney:** There was no figure in that answer either. It is coincidental that the number of out-patients has fallen by 46,000 in the same period. For the benefit of the First Minister, I can tell him that £1.5 billion has been spent, but the national health service has treated 100,000 fewer people. Given that he has managed to spend all that money, how does he expect the people to believe the fantasy that was announced by the Minister for Finance and Public Services this morning? Is it not the case that all the Executive can deliver is spin and double counting? The Executive is not delivering for the people of Scotland.

**The First Minister:** If I had been sitting on the Opposition benches today, even I might have found something in Andy Kerr's statement that I could have opposed or criticised. If that is the best that Mr Swinney can do, we must have had a successful announcement of the budget for Scotland.

This is an appropriate moment to remind Mr Swinney about the differences that he wants to end between the health service in Scotland and the health service in England. There are proportionately twice the number of beds in the health service in Scotland than there are in England. In Scotland, the number of people per 100,000 head of population who are on in-patient or day-case waiting lists is just over 1,500—in England, the figure is more than 2,000. In Scotland, the number of nurses, consultants and health professionals is higher. All such figures are higher in Scotland.

We know that the choice in the Parliament and the choice next May in the elections to the Scottish Parliament will be between the investment in the health service in Scotland made by the Labour-Liberal Democrat partnership and the Scottish National Party's plans to take Scotland out of the United Kingdom, lose the additional investment and throw the Scottish health service to the wolves.

### **Cabinet (Meetings)**

**2. David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con):** To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Executive's Cabinet. (S1F-2065)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** As Mr McLetchie would expect, the Cabinet will discuss matters of importance to the people of Scotland. Next week's meeting will include a strategic discussion on the importance of tourism, culture and sport to the well-being of Scotland.

**David McLetchie:** I hope that one of the other matters of importance to the people of Scotland that the Cabinet will discuss is the future of the Executive's flagship Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill. Will the First Minister tell me whether it is still the Scottish Executive's policy to introduce a new law to ban the smacking of children and whether it is still the Executive's policy to remove certain 16 and 17-year-old offenders in certain areas from the adult court system and send them to the children's panel system?

**The First Minister:** Yes. We await with interest the report of the Justice 2 Committee—I believe that it will be published tomorrow—which will allow us to see the views of the parliamentary committee that has been studying those matters.

**David McLetchie:** I am disappointed to hear that the Executive is endorsing those policies. However, the First Minister then says that it is considering all the views. Which is it? Does the Executive support its own policies or is it in the business of changing its policies?

If the Executive is determined to proceed with the pilots, will the First Minister consider as part of the review the establishment of a pilot scheme of youth courts for 13, 14 and 15-year-old offenders, so that we can compare such courts' effectiveness in reducing youth crime with the current children's panel system?

**The First Minister:** In all such matters it is important to work steadily towards the right conclusions and to test the possible solutions as we go along. It is right and proper that we use pilot projects to test the various suggestions that have been made for tackling youth crime above and below the age of 16.

It is also important that we listen to parliamentary committees. We will do that for as long as I am the First Minister. I am not prepared to be in a situation where the Executive makes a decision and does not review it following a relevant report of a parliamentary committee. That is what the Parliament was set up for and I am determined to act in that way.

### **Knife Crime**

**3. Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what measures the Scottish Executive is taking to clamp down on the carrying of knives in public places. (S1F-2066)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** Better criminal intelligence and information systems and high-visibility campaigns by police forces have all contributed to the increase in the number of people who are convicted of carrying a knife. In addition, today's budget announced by the Minister for Finance and Public Services confirms resources for a record number of police officers, more closed-circuit television and other crime prevention initiatives.

**Bill Butler:** The First Minister outlines several measures that have been taken and the results that have been achieved and he sets out future investment. Notwithstanding all that, does he agree that, given the appalling knife attacks in Glasgow last weekend, which left two men dead and five in hospital, and the worrying rise in convictions for carrying a knife, something more fundamental must happen? Does he agree with Graeme Pearson of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland that a cultural change is required so that we make it as unacceptable to carry a knife as it is to drink and drive? What can the Government do to effect such a cultural change?

**The First Minister:** The Parliament and the politicians elected to serve the people of Scotland must make the right decisions. We must create the right laws, which are as tough as possible, to allow the police to do their duty and the courts to carry through convictions. We must resource the police and other services appropriately to ensure that they continue to achieve the level of convictions that they have been achieving. We must also provide a lead in Scotland. The Parliament must say loud and clear that gone are the days when the sign of manhood in Scotland was to turn to physical violence or to knives on a Saturday night. That is a lead that the Scottish Parliament can take—I hope that all members will join me in that.

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I am sure that, like me, the First Minister will appreciate that the problem is not confined to Glasgow. In parts of Lanarkshire recently, we have witnessed young people at school carrying knives. Will the First

Minister look into the problem of rogue retailers who sell knives to children? Will he review whether the law that deals with such traders is strong enough or whether additional measures are required?

**The First Minister:** If we had to review the law, it would be important to consider that. However, the immediate priority is to ensure that the law is implemented properly. A number of laws are in place to deal not only with the carrying of knives, but their sale, manufacture and importation. Those laws date back to 1988. Other laws dealing with the retailing and marketing of knives date back to 1997. Four acts of Parliament have been passed in the past decade alone to tackle the issue. The job of the police force and other authorities is to implement those laws properly to ensure that we get knives off our streets.

#### **Firefighters and Fire Service Personnel (National Strike)**

**4. Mr Lloyd Quinan (West of Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Executive has begun to put in place contingency plans to protect the public should there be a national strike by firefighters and fire service personnel. (S1F-2067)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** Public safety is paramount and, at all times, we have contingency plans in place for a range of possible scenarios, including industrial action in the fire service.

**Mr Quinan:** Is the First Minister aware that the Fire Brigades Union national conference has been recalled today and that it is likely to recommend a ballot for strike action to commence by the end of October? Has he given serious thought to the training that should be given to service personnel, given that the reality is that our firefighters spend most of their time removing people from road traffic accidents? Will the training of service personnel be extended to cover the circumstances of a radiological, chemical or biological accident? I am thinking of the fact that, over the past number of months, we have had serious problems with the nuclear reactors at Chapel Cross and Torness.

**The First Minister:** Clearly, we would not put people on the streets to deal with such dangerous work unless they had the appropriate training. Those matters are being considered as part of the scenarios that we need to work through. An important announcement was made last week that there would be an independent review of the pay and conditions of firefighters.

I believe that people should, as far as the public purse allows, be properly rewarded for the work that they carry out. I also believe that there is no mood among the population of Scotland for strike action by our firefighters. I hope that the

firefighters will choose the course of further negotiations and discussions today. In particular, I hope that they will choose to participate in the independent review rather than go to a strike, as that would pre-empt the situation and cause concern across the population of Scotland.

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP):** If the public purse can afford £48,000 for MSPs and £55,000 for members of the Westminster Parliament, does the First Minister agree that the public purse can afford £30,000 for firefighters?

**The First Minister:** I think that I have made my position clear that the independent review, which was established by the Deputy Prime Minister last week, is the right course of action. The pay and conditions of firefighters are desperately in need of review. I hope that the independent review will benefit from the advice of the Fire Brigades Union as much as it will from Government and local government.

#### **Inverness (Flood Damage)**

**5. John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD):** To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Executive will give consideration to a request from the Highland Council for additional funding to help repair the recent flood damage in Inverness. (S1F-2070)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** First, I express my sympathy with all those who have suffered damage to property as a result of the recent floods. We are in contact with the council and, if requested for help, we will assess any case for support from the Bellwin scheme on its merits and respond as quickly as possible.

**John Farquhar Munro:** I hope that any application that is made by the Highland Council will be dealt with as quickly as possible, whether it is done under the Bellwin scheme or otherwise. Will the First Minister consider setting up a task force that would involve the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Water and the local authorities to identify areas that are most vulnerable to flash flooding so that the extent of capital expenditure can be assessed and projects prioritised?

**The First Minister:** The issue of flash floods is giving rise to serious concern not just in Inverness but elsewhere in Scotland. It does not matter whether the primary responsibility for the situation now is climate change or poor drainage systems, or whether investment years ago might have made a difference. Investment is now urgently needed and what matters is that we take that action. Although I would not want us to commit ourselves to establishing a task force, I can say that, in light of recent developments, the minister responsible is having—and will continue to have—regular discussions with local authorities, Scottish Water

and other bodies about the matter. If action is required or other bodies are needed to examine the situation, the minister will consider those options.

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP):** I am pleased that the First Minister has acknowledged the devastation caused to families and the damage to property and transport. He has given his personal support to the Inverness Highland bid to become the European capital of culture in 2008. Does he agree that Inverness does not wish to win the bid by literally becoming the Venice of the north? If so, will he place a far more serious emphasis on flood prevention in Inverness and other cities and towns in Scotland?

**The First Minister:** I treat very seriously the European capital of culture bid and the need for improvements in public services in Inverness and in links to and from the city. I hope that the bid is successful; we have done everything that we can to support it.

Whether they happen in Inverness or anywhere else in Scotland, flash floods are a disaster for the affected families. We must ensure that we take long-overdue action to invest in drainage systems to secure as far as is possible a future without flash floods. However, I suspect that the difficulties are partly caused by climate change.

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** I echo John Farquhar Munro's plea for the First Minister to look favourably at any funding request from Highland Council. The First Minister will be aware that flooding is becoming an increasing problem in the area. As well as the recent problems, railway services from Inverness have been disrupted over the past few months because of flooding. Will he ensure that legislation contains sufficient provision to deal with those problems in an holistic manner?

**The First Minister:** As I understand it, the Minister for Environment and Rural Development, Ross Finnie, is examining the Flood Prevention (Scotland) Act 1961 as part of our wider assessment of flood management systems in Scotland. If legislation needs to be improved, we will consider doing so when legislative time becomes available. However, although Ross Finnie will continue to look at legislation, the immediate and top priority is to secure the changes, improvements and investment in drainage systems in order to make a difference over the coming years.

#### **Torness Power Station**

**6. Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green):** To ask the First Minister what representations the Scottish Executive will make to Her Majesty's Government regarding the economic and environmental

implications of the current operational situation at Torness power station. (S1F-2062)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** Although the current shutdown at Torness power station is a commercial matter for British Energy, we regularly discuss the issue and other matters with the British Government. All the appropriate safety and environmental regulatory bodies were involved in the decision about Torness and at the moment they are fully satisfied that all the necessary precautions have been taken.

**Robin Harper:** Does the First Minister agree that the safety issues raised by a possible serious design fault at the Torness plant and the apparent economic non-viability of British Energy mean that any future development of nuclear power has no future in Scotland? Is he willing, on the ground of national safety, to pursue the matter with the nuclear installations inspectorate and through Her Majesty's Government, if necessary, and to seek a full and transparent investigation into the nature of the fault at Torness and the safety implications of its repair?

**The First Minister:** As political representatives, we cannot pick and choose which inspectorates in Scotland or throughout the UK we are or are not prepared to take advice from. We have independent inspectorates, which should be able to provide reports and advice that we can follow. If that goes for the prison service, it should go for the nuclear industry as well.

The current situation of British Energy—not just the situation at Torness—is serious. Safety is paramount. As to the future of British Energy, I hope that the decisions that are taken commercially and by the Government over the next few weeks—in Scotland as elsewhere—take account not only of safety, but of the large number of British Energy jobs in Scotland. Everyone in the Parliament who is serious about taking an holistic approach to the policy decisions that we have to make will want the British Government to take on board the importance of British Energy to the electricity grid as well as other factors.

**Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab):** Will the First Minister pay tribute to the work force at Torness, which is undertaking the safety checks on the gas circulation pumps? Will he welcome the excellent progress towards getting both reactors back on load—with the consent of the independent nuclear installations inspectorate—before Christmas, generating electricity without emitting greenhouse gases?

**The First Minister:** Those who work at Torness deserve praise as workers do elsewhere. The progress that is being made is admirable and I hope that it reaches a good conclusion in the months ahead. As Mr Home Robertson knows, we

need to have a balanced energy policy in Scotland. There is a place for various forms of electricity generation in Scotland and I am convinced that the policies that the Executive pursues will create that balanced energy generation policy.

## Spending Review 2002

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh):** I invite those members who want to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons now.

I ask Ross Finnie to speak to and move the motion. Mr Finnie, you have 10 minutes.

15:32

**The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie):** I am delighted to have the opportunity to open the debate on the Executive's spending plans. The plans will focus on our resources and on delivering a growing Scotland and a Scotland of opportunity for all.

The proposals that we have set out will deliver results for individuals, families, communities and businesses throughout Scotland. That will be done by improving public services, creating opportunities for our children and young people, investing in our infrastructure and growing Scotland's economy. All that represents sound management of our resources, investing now to secure benefits for the long term.

Today's announcement is a culmination of six months' intense scrutiny of our budget plans—not just proposals for additional expenditure, but spending built into our baseline budgets. The process has not been easy and, as one who was part of the strategy group, I know that. However, I believe that it has delivered the right results.

The easy approach would have been for us to copy Westminster's spending plans. Some people might even think that we should just apply a crude percentage increase to each portfolio. However, that is not what devolution is about. It is not what having a Scottish Parliament is about. We are putting resources into the things that matter for Scotland: delivering growth, meeting priorities, responding to needs and creating opportunities.

We have set out an ambitious approach that will deliver long-term change for the better. We are laying the foundations for a better Scotland—a Scotland that is prosperous and ambitious, and a Scotland where everyone can benefit from the opportunities available to build a successful, sustainable and healthy life for themselves, their families and their communities. We want a fairer Scotland, founded on the values of equality and non-discrimination in which everyone can achieve their full potential and where no one is excluded. We want a Scotland whose modern, dynamic, inclusive society defines the image that we present to the outside world.



We are clear about what we want for Scotland. We want a Scotland that is healthier, with lower crime, improved attainment in schools, effective transport services and opportunities for employment for all. We want a Scotland full of opportunity, where everyone can reach that full potential. The achievement of our desired outcomes will depend in part on others, not just the Executive. We will work with partners in the United Kingdom Government, local government, the business community, trade unions and the voluntary sector to ensure that those changes happen. The Executive can and should lead by example, delivering on its own commitments. To gauge our performance, we have, where possible, described measures of those outcomes and set targets for them, to let the public see whether we are delivering on our commitments.

**Brian Adam (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** The Executive has given us an interesting document, in which it has laid out—clearly, I hope—what it intends to do. I direct the minister's attention to the heading, "What we will do", in the transport section. It is noticeable that, despite what Mr Kerr said this morning, there is no mention whatever of what the Executive will do with regard to the congestion problems around Aberdeen.

**Ross Finnie:** The Minister for Finance and Public Services was asked that question and he made it very clear that the studies that are presently going on there are not yet complete.

**Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Members will find it astonishing that the minister who gave the statement this morning is not present in the chamber even to listen to the debate, let alone to respond to the scrutiny. Will the Presiding Officer consider the implications of that for this Parliament?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am sure that we will consider the implications, but I ask the minister to continue with his speech now.

**Ross Finnie:** We have said that we will announce plans when those studies are completed, and that is what we will do. The studies are not yet complete. The Minister for Finance and Public Services made it clear that, on receipt of those studies, we would take the appropriate action. He made that absolutely clear this morning, and there should be no ambiguity about that.

We have set out what we want to deliver. We want to improve productivity in higher and long-term growth. We will provide 300 new or refurbished schools. Public transport projects will ease congestion and promote more sustainable transport. As we announced, there will be more apprenticeships, and more than 25,000 young

people will have educational maintenance allowances.

**Alasdair Morgan (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP):** Will the minister accept an intervention on that point?

**Ross Finnie:** No. I must make a little more progress before I take further interventions.

I want to highlight two areas in particular where we are taking a more radical path. We will build sustainable development into everything that we do, and invest in health as well as in our health services. Sustainable development was one of the key cross-cutting themes of the review. It is a question not of where we spend our money, but of how we spend it.

**Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** Is the minister aware that, 10 months ago, a report was sent to his office stating that urgent work was needed on the aqueducts carrying drinking water to Glasgow? The cost of that work would be extremely high, but it is vital because those aqueducts are likely to have been the source of the most recent cryptosporidium problems in Glasgow. Did the minister know about the report's contents, and will the money be made available?

**Ross Finnie:** As Mr Crawford should be aware, those reports were studied carefully by West of Scotland Water and the technical solutions involved were considered fully. As he well knows, money has been made available for dealing with those problems and for building a new waterworks at that site.

This is about building sustainable development principles into our key investment programmes in schools, hospitals, transport and housing. It is about growing Scotland's economy, but in a more sustainable way. It is about encouraging shifts in public behaviour through education and making sustainable choices the easy choices. That activity is spread across the whole work of the Executive.

I shall give some examples. We want to build sustainable development into the Glasgow stock transfer to ensure that that investment produces homes that are warm, dry and energy efficient. We shall assess applications for regional selective assistance against sustainable development objectives. We want to promote the modernising Government fund projects, helping to reduce or eliminate the need to travel to access public information, advice or services through contact centres, one-stop shops and videoconferencing. We want to support NHS Scotland's good record on energy efficiency through the Greencode environmental management tool, and we want tourism businesses to become more sustainable through the VisitScotland green tourism business scheme.

In my portfolio, the most significant investment that we will make over the next three years will be in waste management. We are allocating more than £170 million during the spending review period to secure real progress in the implementation of the national waste strategy. Our key target is to achieve 25 per cent recycling and composting of municipal waste by 2006 as a stage on the road to sustainable waste management. That will allow us to make a step change in the way in which we deal with Scotland's waste, reducing local authorities' chronic over-reliance on landfill, bearing down on waste production and developing recycling.

The commitment that we are making to sustainable development in general, and waste in particular, in this spending review should come as no surprise. Of course, the resources that are needed to meet our ambitious new target will, in part, depend on decisions on the landfill tax and other reserved policy measures. However, we are committed to meeting our 25 per cent target and we will commit what further resources are necessary when the decisions are announced later in the autumn.

We are building on a record of commitment to the environment that is exemplified in our achievements. We have spent some £1.8 billion on water and we will spend more than £2 billion more for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I have referred to our ambitious targets for national waste. We have increased our target for renewables to 18 per cent by 2010 and we are consulting on a target of 40 per cent. We are also tackling climate change through our climate change programme.

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** There is a lot of welcome stuff in the report and promises of money to be spent. What is the Executive doing to improve the delivery of the services? Hitherto, that is something that it has failed to crack. Can the minister promise that the excellent money that is to go to sport will produce more boys and girls playing games, especially football, so that, in 10 years' time, we might not have such a bad team?

**Ross Finnie:** I am not sure that I am authorised by the Minister for Finance and Public Services to assure members that we are going to have a better football team, much as I would like to do so.

Donald Gorrie's point is well made. The report is not just about announcing sums of money; it is about ministers' having to set targets for the achievement of outcomes. That will force ministers and others to ensure that the delivery mechanisms are properly put in place.

One of the most exciting elements of our plans is the commitment to investing not just in our health service, but in Scotland's long-term health. That means a doubling of our expenditure on

health improvement but, more important, it means a different way of achieving health improvement. We are taking a much longer term view of Scotland's health care and not only improving services for patients now, but building a healthier nation for the future. As the First Minister put it when the health budget was announced:

"There is little point in us speeding up operations for today's adults if today's children replace them on the operation train."—[*Official Report*, 18 April 2002; Vol 3, c 11009.]

Our efforts are therefore focused on our children and young people. We are providing more support for families and children in the early years; healthier school meals; and activities in our schools and communities to encourage children to get involved in sport. The spending plans that we have set out today will deliver improvements in public services and will mean tangible improvements in the quality of people's lives. However, the most important investment that we are making is in our children and young people. That is an investment for the long term, an investment for the future, and an investment for a growing Scotland that will be full of opportunity for all.

I commend the spending proposals to the Parliament and move,

That the Parliament commends the Executive's spending plans for 2003-04 to 2005-06.

**Michael Russell:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I raised a point of order about the Minister for Finance and Public Services, who obviously does not take his own spending review seriously—therefore, how could the people of Scotland? I seek your permission to move a motion without notice to suspend the meeting until the Minister for Finance and Public Services appears at this finance debate.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The Executive is collectively responsible to the Parliament. There is no matter of standing orders here. Mr Russell's points are political. They may or may not be correct in the political context, but there is no issue of standing orders that would justify my accepting such a motion. However, Mr Russell's point is now on the record twice.

15:44

**Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** I look forward to examining the detail of exactly where any resources that are provided to the environmental headings will be applied in the Executive's spending plans for 2003-04 and 2005-06. The resources may be belated, but if they are genuinely being allocated to environmental budget headings, perhaps—just perhaps—there is hope that, in future years, a real difference can be

made. However, as is usual with the Executive, it is difficult to separate the spin from the reality.

What is being announced today does not always reflect the reality of what we will find tomorrow. Much of what was expected from today's spending announcement, particularly on the environment, was played up highly by the minister. We saw the spin on the mind-blowing amounts to be invested in recycling in the *Sunday Herald* just a few weeks ago. The headline said:

"McConnell to spend billions on tackling waste".

Today's announcement amounts to a much more modest sum. Nevertheless, I welcome the small step taken.

We know that it is not just a matter of the amount of money that is made available, but of how Executive ministers make use of resources.

**Iain Smith (North-East Fife) (LD):** For the avoidance of doubt, could Bruce Crawford let us know how many billions the Scottish National Party would spend on tackling waste?

**Bruce Crawford:** It does not matter whether it is the Labour finance minister, a Liberal finance minister, a Conservative finance minister or us. We all get the same whack o money from Westminster; we cannae do much else than get that cash. The difference is that, with independence, we could make a heck of a better job of it.

The real question is how the money will be used to ensure that Scotland no longer has to suffer the shame of being at the top of the European cowp league while being at the bottom of the European recycling league.

We have heard what Ross Finnie intends to do on waste. What he has not told us is that the water budget is to be slashed by £190 million over the three years of the new spending plans. That cut has been made from the net new borrowings budget head. It was the money that was meant to support the desperately needed capital investment programme for Scottish Water.

The Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services, when he sums up, has to tell us—

**Ross Finnie** *rose—*

**Bruce Crawford:** I see that the minister is going to tell us now.

**Ross Finnie** *sat.*

**Bruce Crawford:** In his summing up, the deputy minister has to tell us how that cut will impact on the investment programme or on the charge payer. He has to tell us—

**Ross Finnie** *rose—*

**Bruce Crawford:** The minister had his chance.

The deputy minister has to tell us whether that money would have helped us get nearer the enhanced option for improving the quality of Scotland's water. Is it not a disgrace that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the quality of Scotland's water still comes nowhere near that of England? I want to know from Ross Finnie—or perhaps from the deputy minister, who might be able to give a better answer—by the end of today, the Executive's target for ensuring that Scotland's water quality matches that of England, now that he has robbed Peter in water to pay Paul in waste.

**Ross Finnie:** Will Bruce Crawford give way?

**Bruce Crawford:** Certainly.

**Ross Finnie:** I say to Mr Crawford—

**Bruce Crawford:** Will the minister keep standing on his feet this time?

**Ross Finnie:** If Bruce Crawford wants to extend his question, I will allow him to do so as a matter of courtesy. If he does not find that courteous, that is entirely his judgment, not mine.

**Bruce Crawford:** Fine.

**Ross Finnie:** Good. It is entirely his judgment, not mine.

Does the member accept that the actual reductions, which he very properly pointed out, and which can be found in the table on page 51 of the expenditure report, are in fact the reductions that are required by the water industry commissioner, relating to the efficiency that the commissioner has sought, and that there is absolutely no reduction in the capital commitment plans for improving the quality of water in Scotland?

**Bruce Crawford:** That is hardly the point. The point is that the water industry commissioner makes recommendations to the minister about how much is being spent. The money could have been used to attain the enhanced option that we discussed during last week's debate. The opportunity has been spurned, however, so we will never get near the water quality that prevails in England.

When I intervened on the minister to ask about the modernisation of the aqueducts that carry Glasgow's water supply, I was far from impressed with his answer. The ducts are very old and very long; one is 115 years old, while the other is 145 years old. According to public health officials, it now seems very likely that those aqueducts and the cattle living alongside them were the source of Glasgow's most recent cryptosporidium problems. The incident control team report will, in all likelihood, confirm that.

The minister told us that the sheep in the Loch Katrine area were the cause of the outbreak. It

appears on this occasion not to have been those much-maligned sheep but cattle living near the aqueducts that caused the problems. The question that everyone is asking now is whether Ross Finnie knows the difference between his cattle and his sheep. Let me show the minister these two pictures: the first one is a coo; the second one is a sheep.

More seriously, why has no action been taken since the report on the aqueducts landed on the minister's desk 10 months ago? Will he confirm that Scottish Water will have the necessary resources to carry out the costly modernisation of the aqueducts?

This is an important debate. Spending figures aside, the debate is also about honesty on targets, on track records and on the resources that are available. Two years ago, almost to the day, Jack McConnell, in his capacity as Minister for Finance, announced the spending allocation designated for Scotland following the 2000 UK spending review. He not only announced the spending levels for 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04, but said what the resources would be spent on. He announced new targets for transport, education and health and the amount of money that would be spent on those key areas. It is simply unacceptable for a minister with responsibility for finance to appear two years later and announce the same money again. It is equally unacceptable for ministers to claim that a new method of presenting money on a balance sheet represents new cash injected into the Scottish budget.

Of course, new resources and uplifts in the budget are welcome, but there should be honesty and transparency rather than double dealing and misrepresentation. Such behaviour does no good to the Executive and the reputation of the Parliament.

Whenever I listen to a Government minister making a spending announcement, I am reminded of a schoolboy showing his friend the latest card trick. It does not matter how often the trick has been done or how obvious it has become—he insists on playing the same card trick time and time again. I say to the minister that the trick is an old trick.

I close with an appeal. Let us drop the chicanery and get on with the delivery.

I move amendment S1M-3382.1, to leave out "commends" and insert "notes".

15:51

**David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con):** It is easy to lose sight of the fact that the extra money that we are discussing is not the result of great personal philanthropy on Gordon Brown's part. Despite what many Labour, Liberal Democrat or SNP

politicians may fondly imagine, money does not grow on trees. A price in higher taxes and slower economic growth must be paid for such largesse.

The chancellor has now made explicit his tax-and-spend approach to public sector reform, having previously followed a policy of taxing people by stealth. Such a stealth tax policy has already had disastrous consequences. Gordon Brown's pensions tax has created a crisis in employer-funded pension schemes by reducing their income by £5 billion a year and his increases in petrol tax have hit motorists hard, particularly those in rural communities.

In the chancellor's 2002 budget, he has finally come clean and imposed his tax on jobs through the increase in national insurance contributions. That will not only hit people in their pay packets, but will, I regret to say, lead to higher unemployment by making it more expensive to employ them.

The hard-pressed Scottish taxpayer is paying for the billions that are being blithely bandied about today and we should never forget that. There are wider economic costs of public spending. It is clear that Mr Brown thinks that there is no growth penalty from increasing public spending above the growth rate of the economy as a whole, but all the evidence suggests otherwise. The effects are already evident in Scotland, where our growth rate has slowed to the point at which we recently tipped into recession. In the UK as a whole, there has been a marked deceleration in productivity growth, which averaged 2.2 per cent per annum in the 17 years to 1997, but fell to 1.8 per cent in succeeding years.

Therefore, the great myth of Gordon Brown as a miracle-working chancellor is in urgent need of reconsideration. The extra money that he has poured into our public services has not brought about real reform or improvements. Year after year, we have been promised better public services in return for higher taxes, but higher taxes are all that we have received—to date, there have been 53 in total.

The approach works no better in Scotland than elsewhere in the UK. Mr McConnell and Mr Kerr boast of all the extra money that Labour is investing in its key priority areas, but where are the benefits? The Scottish public will not be seduced by the Scottish Executive's spin when they see for themselves that our public services are deteriorating. That is exemplified by longer waiting lists for hospital treatment, far too many schools being plagued by indiscipline, and rising levels of violent crime. The statement offers nothing to suggest that things will change. Mr McConnell's stewardship has been merely a continuation of the failed policies of his predecessors.

The spending bonanza may prove to be short lived, which is why I believe that extra resources should go into capital investment, particularly in our transport infrastructure. The Conservatives have advocated that as a priority for a considerable time. That area has been neglected by the Executive. That the Executive, which halted our roads programme on entering office, is proceeding with a number of those projects is a welcome U-turn, but we should reflect on the price of five long years of delay.

We all know that the SNP opposes the use of private finance to improve our public services, which thereby exposes the fact that its so-called pro-enterprise credentials are no more than the fanciful figment of Andrew Wilson's imagination. However, I find it hard to take seriously the missing Andy Kerr in his new role as promoter of public-private partnerships and the personification of financial prudence. The missing Mr Kerr is, after all, the same Andy Kerr who relentlessly harried and monstered Sarah Boyack when she awarded the management and maintenance of our trunk roads to private sector contractors.

That decision, I remind members, is now on course to save the public purse £190 million over the five years of the contracts—contracts that last week's independent report by the performance audit group found to be working well. At the time, Mr Kerr called Miss Boyack's decision

"one of the Parliament's worst decisions in its short life."—  
[*Official Report*, 25 January 2001; Vol 10, c 579.]

I call that decision a pretty good day's work, and I wish that there had been more of them from the Executive.

What does that tell us about Mr Kerr's judgment? He would have cheerfully chucked £190 million down the drain to satisfy his union paymasters. Given that track record, how can we have any confidence that the billions of which he boasted this morning will be spent sensibly? It is, of course, entirely typical of the Scottish Executive that Sarah Boyack was sacked for making the right decision while Andy Kerr was promoted for making the wrong one.

The record to date is poor, the management is unconvincing and the figures in themselves are wholly meaningless. The reality is that our people are paying the price in the form of higher taxes, and they want to see some results. That is the real test of this spending review.

I move amendment S1M-3382.2, to leave out from "commends" to end and insert:

"notes the Scottish Executive's spending plans for 2003-04 to 2005-06, which are funded as a result of the swingeing increases in taxation which were a feature of the 2002 UK Budget; expresses concern about the sustainability of such levels of expenditure; believes that

without major reform of public services the proposed spending increases will not produce the value for money improvements expected by the Scottish people, and calls on the Scottish Executive to provide a boost to the economy by reducing the burden of business rates."

15:57

**Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab):** Possibly the clearest illustration of the SNP's idea bankruptcy is its amendment to the motion. Its contribution to probably the most important debate that we will have in Parliament this year or next year or the year after—because it is the debate about the money—is an amendment that seeks to substitute the word "notes" for "commends". That is the summary of the SNP's ideas. There were no alternative visions and no suggestions for spending reprioritisation—only, as we heard earlier in the response to the spending review statement, the convoluted logic of Andrew Wilson, which only three of his SNP colleagues waited to hear.

**Shona Robison (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** Given the huge importance that Des McNulty has just ascribed to this debate, can he tell us where the Minister for Finance and Public Services is?

**Des McNulty:** Where were SNP members this morning? At the end of the morning there were four SNP members in the chamber, and most of the time there were six. Why are they so ineffective as the Opposition? It is the straightforward issue of competence. John Swinney and his colleagues need better researchers than the ones who prompted him to say that there were no real increases in the Scottish budget in the context of the spending review 2002.

The figures provided to the Finance Committee in the annual expenditure report show a Scottish departmental expenditure limit of £18.7 billion in cash terms, which corresponds to £18.2 billion in resource accounting and budgeting. If we compare on the basis of RAB, the spending review figure is £19.7 billion, which includes £224 million in consequential from the UK budget for health that was announced in April. In other words, the increase in spending is, as Andy Kerr said, £1.5 billion between 2002-03 and 2003-2004, or more than £1 billion if we take out inflation.

As Andy Kerr also pointed out in his statement, a cumulative increase of £8 billion over the three-year period of the spending review will allow the delivery of unprecedented improvements in public services, public infrastructure and support for growth in the Scottish economy. Those are all things that we are delivering, and all things that the SNP is walking away from.

When the SNP gets its sums so spectacularly wrong, how can it expect to be taken seriously?

One can only guess at what kind of electoral strategy is served by the SNP's lack of concrete suggestions. The Labour party is clear about what the public wants. The Minister for Finance and Public Services has come up with substantially increased expenditure and he has developed in the spending review a framework within which priorities are clearly identified, aims and objectives are specified and monitoring of expenditure is put in place to ensure effective delivery for the public. That is not the blank cheque for which Kenny MacAskill has asked in his several portfolios.

**Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP):** The member talks about priorities and the Minister for Finance and Public Services mentioned that the top priority rail projects will be delivered. What are Labour's top priority rail projects? Are they a regurgitation of the Larkhall rail link or the Stirling-Alloa-Dunfermline line, which we have heard about for nigh on a generation?

**Des McNulty:** If the SNP transport spokesman had been at the seminar on the central Scotland rail study that I attended before the recess, he would have heard about the plans that are being considered, which the minister is committed to taking forward.

People will be impressed by the progress that has been made on the ground. The SNP will talk about the theoretical intricacies of fiscal freedom, which would cut off Scotland from the benefits that it derives from operating in the UK market and in partnership with other areas of the UK. If Scotland were ever to embrace the separatism of the SNP, the measures that Andy Kerr announced this morning and many of the measures that have been put in place since the electorate's dismissal of the Conservatives in 1997 would have to be withdrawn. Thankfully, the SNP's failure to engage in the real debate about Scotland's future and the most effective use of resources—as illustrated by the amendment, which would simply change one word in the motion—means that the SNP's chances of success are increasingly remote.

16:02

**Shona Robison (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** I put on record how discourteous I find it that the Minister for Finance and Public Services is not present for what is essentially a debate about finance. I am also concerned that the Minister for Health and Community Care has chosen to leave the chamber, given the importance of health matters to the debate. I hope that Ross Finnie's knowledge of health is better than his knowledge of sheep.

The SNP always welcomes investment in the health service, but the question is what has happened to that investment. What has been done

with the £1.5 billion of taxpayers' money? The debate is not only about the size of the investment, but about what has been done with it.

**Des McNulty:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Shona Robison:** Let me get going. The Minister for Health and Community Care and the coalition are culpable over that issue. It is incredible how little has been achieved with the £1.5 billion. I will outline the situation after Des McNulty's scintillating intervention.

**Des McNulty:** Does Shona Robison accept that there is a £1.5 billion increase? Her leader did not accept that earlier.

**Shona Robison:** My leader asked what has been done with the £1.5 billion, which is exactly what I am asking. If Des McNulty can tell me, I would be extremely grateful. On what we have got for that £1.5 billion, the facts speak for themselves. Since 1997, waiting times for out-patients have gone up by 14 days; waiting times for in-patients have gone up by three days; and the NHS has seen 46,000 fewer out-patients and 46,000 fewer elective in-patients, which means that around 100,000 fewer people have been treated, as John Swinney mentioned during question time. Even if we accept that more people are treated in clinics—although the figure is certainly not 100,000 more people—we must ask why waiting times are up. If people were being treated elsewhere, surely waiting times would come down, but they are not coming down. It is nonsense to say that people are being treated elsewhere in the health service.

There has been a loss of more than 60 residential care homes and there are more than 1,500 fewer residential care beds. The coalition tells us that community care is at the heart of its policy, but 18,000 fewer home care clients are being looked after in their home. The coalition's assertion is obviously the case in theory, but not in practice.

There has been a 13 per cent rise in the number of nursing vacancies since last year and the figure has risen by 46 per cent since 1999. The number of blocked beds has risen to nearly 3,000, which is almost double the 1999 figure. That hardly amounts to success on a plate for £1.5 billion worth of investment. The results are poor. We know that health service staff are working harder than ever, so the only conclusion that I can come to is that the problem is the Executive. The Executive's government and stewardship of the NHS have been a dismal failure. The facts speak for themselves.

The shortage of nurses in Scotland is a crucial issue that must be tackled. It underpins many of the problems in the health service. The coalition

has failed to tackle the shortage—it has let graduates slip through the net to go and work in other health services. The resultant increase in reliance on agency staff is costing the NHS £24 million a year. The SNP will not fudge the issue in the way that the coalition has done. It will go to the heart of the matter—pay and conditions for nurses. As a first step, an SNP Government would increase the pay of all nurses and midwives by 11 per cent, which would give them equity of pay with teachers. Nurses have already embraced change in the way in which they work and so far they have received little recognition or reward. An SNP Government would give them that reward. The sooner it comes, the better.

16:06

**Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab):** I welcome the spending review announcement. I welcome it for my pensioners, for my young people and for those in my community who will be protected by a £270 million investment in front-line policing. I welcome it for my school kids, who will be taken out of crumbling classrooms as part of the largest ever school-building programme. I welcome it for the local national health service. There will be a doubling of spending on health improvement in my area, which is blighted by some of the worst heart disease and cancer rates in the country.

I welcome the spending review for the young people who will not be branded as failures just because their first choice after school is not college or university. They will benefit from the expansion of modern apprenticeships. I welcome it for every man, woman and child in Scotland who is sick of litter in their streets, dog mess on the pavements and graffiti on the walls, all of which drag down their communities and neighbourhoods.

I particularly welcome the announcement for my local college, which will receive a share of the additional £120 million for further education. That investment will allow a record figure of 500,000 Scots of all ages each year to reap the benefit of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning equals a highly skilled work force, which will close the productivity gap, will make our companies more competitive and will broaden and strengthen our economic base. The spending review is good not only for business; it is good for workers and for the acquisition of skills, which, as we all acknowledge, are a passport to a better paid and more secure job.

More money alone is not enough. We must get more bang for our buck. The investment that has been announced must be matched by change. To return to the topic of lifelong learning, there are several examples of how a bit of reform, co-operation and flexibility could deliver results by

providing the sort of services that working lifelong learners want.

In my constituency, there are many contract workers who work intensively.

**Michael Russell:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Mr McNeil:** I do not have much time and I would like to get through my speech.

Those contract workers work intensively for six or nine months and do nothing for the rest of the year. Many of them want to use those three or six months constructively, to learn or improve skills. Introducing more flexibility into the traditional academic year could allow them to do that. There are also many shift workers who are disadvantaged because the colleges close when they are ready to study or because they cannot submit coursework online. All those issues are important and have been identified in the spending review.

We cannot ignore the recurring theme of delivery. We all share the frustration of constituents who wait for buses that do not turn up and who cannot obtain a place in a residential care home. We need to tackle that issue effectively.

I welcome the Executive's recognition that we need to work with the UK Parliament, the trade unions, business and local government to make the investment work for the people of Scotland. Let there be no mistake: we need to deliver.

Political spin is another theme about which we have heard much today. The SNP has been working overtime.

**Michael Russell:** Will the member give way?

**Mr McNeil:** No, I will not.

That party fears good news more than Dracula fears the silver bullet. The nationalists have been working overtime to rubbish our investment in Scotland, but they are kidding no one. They will not kid the Scottish people. The best answer to the ridicule that the SNP has poured on the announcement all week is to deliver for the people of Scotland. We will deliver despite the SNP, not because of it.

16:10

**Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con):** Echoing the comments that were made earlier, I am amazed that the Minister for Finance and Public Services is not present. This morning, while he was ducking and diving and not answering questions, he said that there would be time for a full debate this afternoon.

**Mr McNeil:** Will the member give way?

**Mr Davidson:** In a moment.

I had naturally assumed that the minister was making an offer to come to the chamber. Mr Kerr is the accountable minister. According to the press, he decides on and approves what the other ministers get to spend.

**Mr McNeil:** Let me inform Mr Davidson that Mr Kerr is at a business meeting, which has kept him away from the debating chamber. I also point out that, when the minister made his statement, the SNP members left the chamber. They did not take advantage of the opportunity to speak to the minister.

**Mr Davidson:** I recognise Mr McNeil's view, but let me proceed with the matter in hand.

This morning, we received a very thin set of answers—if we received any at all—even to questions from the minister's own back benchers. Many of us have taken the time to look carefully at "Building a Better Scotland", which is the document to which he kept referring, but we cannot find the detail behind the broad statements that were made in this morning's printed statement. The minister talked about the congestion difficulties in certain cities, but the document gives no detail other than a throwaway line about park and ride in Aberdeen.

Perhaps Mr Finnie is here because he is the minister responsible for waste. I begin to wonder whether the document is a wasted document, because it does not give any detail on the budget declarations of this morning.

As my colleague Mr McLetchie said, the money comes from Scotland's hard-working people and businesses. The minister grudgingly admitted that this morning. However, the money comes not just from the actions of the chancellor but from the raids on the pockets of the Scottish people by the Executive. In that case, Labour and the Liberal Democrats are equally guilty. Or are they? Did both parties agree to every part of the budget statement? The minister certainly ducked a question on that this morning.

Since 1997, when Labour took office in Westminster, council taxes have risen by 24.5 per cent. Since the Parliament opened, they have risen by 14.5 per cent.

We have also had the graduate endowment, which is a tax masquerading under another name. That tax puts our home graduates further into debt once they start work and, using Treasury inflation projections, will account for some £30.5 million in 2007. That flies in the face of the caring, sharing, touchy-feely Executive that looks to give young people opportunity. Getting more young people into university is fine—as long as the universities are properly funded—but those who come out of

university are now faced with a ball and chain of debt as they start their lives. This Executive put that in place.

Scotland's businesses suffer from the 4p difference in the business rates poundage.

**Iain Smith:** Will the member give way?

**Mr Davidson:** In one moment.

Let us look at the Executive's push for the economy and at its budget for growth and expansion. When the Executive had the money in its hand, why on earth did it not invest that money to free our businesses from such an unnecessary burden and to return to them the competitiveness that they desire? Only through the wealth creation that businesses provide do we get employment. If we do not have employment, there will be no taxes and no future. We will lose people because, as has been said, they will drift away to find work elsewhere because Scotland is not a competitive place in which to invest.

We have seen a lot of flim-flam today, which has been a wasted opportunity. At the beginning, the minister said that he considered the announcement to be six months' hard work well delivered, yet no facts and figures and no statistics have been provided. Instead, we have had wobbly promises without any reference to the costs that the Executive has put on Scotland or the manacles and chains that are developing as we see the policies roll out.

16:15

**Iain Smith (North-East Fife) (LD):** I welcome the statement, because it delivers on a number of priorities in which the Liberal Democrats believe strongly. The health promotion budget has been doubled, which is important, and there is money for additional nurses and doctors, for which the Liberal Democrats have been calling for a considerable time. I agree with some of the points that the SNP made, in that the Westminster Government should have started to tackle the shortage of doctors and nurses in 1997. We in Scotland are at least now beginning to tackle that crisis.

Waste recycling is extremely important. I have banged on about it in the Parliament for years. The Scottish Executive is now putting real money into that. The funding necessary to ensure that we have record numbers of police on our streets has also been maintained, and there is significantly more money—£1 billion—for local government.

**Mr Davidson:** I have a brief question. I notice that the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties have decided that more money will go into investment in police. Will the member tell us what his Executive ministers told him about how many new policemen will be on the beat?



**Iain Smith:** Mr Davidson has not read "Building a Better Scotland" as closely as he thinks he has. It states:

"our aim is to maintain frontline officer numbers at present levels."

Those are record levels. That is the point: the numbers are already at record levels.

I will be fair. The debate is supposed to be about the spending review. At least the Conservatives have come up with some alternatives, even if they are not very bright alternatives. Essentially, the Conservatives want to turn down the extra money that is on offer. They want no tax increases and no additional investment in our spending. They would refuse the extra money that is available to deal with the waiting list and waiting time problems in our hospitals. They would refuse the extra money that we need to invest in our schools. They would also refuse the extra money that we need to maintain the record numbers of police. They would refuse the extra money that is needed for free care of the elderly and the abolition of tuition fees.

The Conservatives would do that because they want to cut taxes, not to invest in our public services. If they were investing in our public services, would they invest in our schools, our hospitals and the environment? No—they would build roads with the money. That is absolute nonsense and shows what the Conservative priorities are.

At least the Conservatives suggested some alternatives, unlike the SNP members, who are more concerned about who is here listening to the debate than about contributing something useful to it. They provided no alternative budget. The only two proposals that we heard from the SNP were to increase spending on administration in the water service—not to have efficiency savings—and to raise the pay and conditions of nurses. The SNP made those proposals without indicating how much they would cost and what we would have to cut in the rest of the budget to provide the money. That is the key issue. If the SNP members are willing to tell me how they will pay for their proposals, I am willing to listen.

**Shona Robison:** We would use the £150 million that has been identified in the budget. There is plenty money to pay for our proposals. The problem is that the Liberal Democrats' priorities are all wrong.

**Iain Smith:** You would use the £150 million from what? The budget is fully allocated. It must come from somewhere.

In reality, the SNP does not understand budgets. That is the problem. It understands only spending and making promises. It wants to spend for everyone and promise for everyone. It wants

never to have to prioritise. It will never be in government because it cannot tell the Scottish people what it would do if it were in government. It can only make promises that it cannot afford.

For example, the SNP rejects the Liberal Democrat commitment to improve public health and to try to get people away from hospitals. We had questions earlier that suggested that the SNP wants people to be in hospital being treated. We want to stop people going into hospital. That is why we are doubling the amount of money for health promotion, which the SNP has rejected.

The SNP also rejects the 300 refurbished and new schools in Scotland because it has a dogma that says it does not want the investment. Mike Russell is shaking his head. He actually said that money should not be invested.

**Michael Russell:** That is not true.

**Iain Smith:** It is true. Mike Russell said that the PPP announcement should be stopped because he did not want the money to be invested through PPP. The money is going into investment in our schools; the SNP would stop it. Scottish people do not trust the SNP—quite rightly so—and it will never be in government because it cannot budget.

16:19

**Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab):** The public expenditure package is by far the best that I have seen in the 24 years that I have represented East Lothian in this Parliament and the Westminster Parliament. I gently remind Mr McLetchie that the Tory years are still remembered painfully for the severe cuts to public spending and the real damage to public services that occurred. The statement is the next phase of a new era of reinvestment in health, education, crime prevention, transport and job creation by our devolved Scottish Executive.

In East Lothian, that investment comes on top of valuable initiatives such as the dualling of the A1 and the £30 million private finance initiative to upgrade all secondary schools.

I would like to offer one word of warning to the minister and to make a specific appeal. I will start with the warning. The announcement of billions of pounds of expenditure by ministers must lead to the delivery of better services in our constituencies. We can all vote to add unimaginable millions to this or that budget, but people will not be impressed if they still have to wait for months or years for hospital treatment, or if there are still potholes in the roads. It is imperative that the cash announced today should be spent efficiently, effectively and wisely by the Executive and its agencies to improve our infrastructure and to develop our public services. I

am sure that that can be done, but it is important for the Executive to see the task through.

**Mr Davidson:** The member talks about money being spent wisely on infrastructure. However, it does not appear that the north-east of Scotland—one of the drivers of the economy—will get what it requires. The same applies to the Borders and Dumfries and Galloway.

**Mr Home Robertson:** Mr Davidson should wait and see. The figures have been announced today, but I am sure that the Executive will put flesh on them later. There are further announcements to come.

My specific request is for urgent measures to increase the supply of affordable rented housing in areas such as East Lothian. In East Lothian, 6,000 people are stuck on the waiting list for a diminishing stock of just 9,500 council houses, with a turnover of just 400 re-lets each year. People can be forced to exist in overcrowded, insecure accommodation for 10 years or more.

At the present rate of repayments, East Lothian Council will completely clear its housing capital debt in just four years, so it should not be too difficult to work up a solution that enables the council and local housing associations to invest to meet the desperate need for affordable rented housing in my constituency. I urge ministers to help us to achieve a solution to this serious crisis in the context of the expenditure programme.

I acknowledge that the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, and my colleagues and I on the Holyrood progress group, are taking a significant amount of cash out of the Scottish block before it even reaches the Executive. We are investing that money in Scotland's new Parliament building at Holyrood, which I am confident will be as valuable to Scotland as the palace of Westminster is to the UK and as the Sydney opera house is to New South Wales.

Our Minister for Finance and Public Services has achieved this magnificent programme with an increase of £4 billion in expenditure on services for the people of Scotland over the next three years despite the one-off costs of the Holyrood building. When it is finished, the Labour-led Executive will put the building's share of the budget into public services in subsequent years.

The point that I am trying to make—which SNP members may not have grasped—is that Scotland does not need an embassy-building programme for the future. We need more investment in schools, hospitals and public services. The partnership Executive is determined to deliver that. Let us be thankful that Scotland will never suffer the crippling permanent costs that would flow from a fundamentalist nationalist agenda of fiscal irresponsibility.

16:23

**Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP):** It is fascinating that we hear contradictory messages from Labour members and from Iain Smith. Even though they claim that the SNP will never be in power, they spend all their time worrying about that prospect. They have talked about it all afternoon.

Let me remind John Home Robertson and Iain Smith of a basic fact of life. They are not spending Labour's or the Liberals' money on schools—they are spending Scotland's money. We will match that expenditure penny for penny, pound for pound, and brick for brick. In fact, we will do more with the money, because we will spend it through trusts and public investment, instead of stuffing the pockets of the friends of Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

Let me address the extraordinary document that is before us.

**Iain Smith:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Perhaps inadvertently, the member seemed to imply that some form of corruption is involved in the public-private partnership projects. I hope that he will withdraw that unfortunate suggestion.

**Michael Russell:** Oh dear.

I want to address three issues that are discussed in the spending plans. The first is education. No one could object to the broad terms of the objectives that are set for education. The trouble is that there is no word about how they should be achieved. I am sorry to agree with Mr Davidson, but he is absolutely right about that. The reality is that many teachers will worry about the terms of the spending proposals. Targets 8 and 9 on page 23 are specific, but they have no resources linked to them so that they can be achieved. I suspect that what will happen—this is what always happens—is that the pressure will be on the poor classroom teacher to achieve the targets without any resources. That is very worrying.

Nobody could object—I see that John Farquhar Munro is in the chamber—to the broad thrust of Gaelic policy in the spending proposals. I pay tribute to Mike Watson, who has taken the issue more seriously than others have, but there is nothing specific that tells us how much the new Bòrd na Gàidhlig will cost, for example. That is a major weakness.

The largest weakness is in the area of heritage and culture. The Scottish Arts Council has recently made appointments that bring it foolishly close to the Labour Executive, but today it will be bitterly disappointed because the spending proposals contain nothing for the future of Scottish culture.

The small increase that is set out is tied to terms and conditions that do nothing to make culture more accessible to all.

In the crucial area of heritage, the document is extremely defective. The reality is that the little increases in that area will go into the maw of Historic Scotland, a body about which more and more people worry. I am glad to hear that John Home Robertson agrees—I must be right. The reality is that Historic Scotland will get more and more money and others will get nothing, even though they are making the difference.

I noticed that Mr Stone was behaving like a performing seal this morning when he applauded the minister—the missing minister who is addressing the nation on television from this building just now, rather than in the chamber. But that minister said nothing about museums. Mr Stone knows Tain and Tain museum well. A letter that I have from the curator of the Tain and District Museum Trust says:

“Unless a system for applying museum policy and funding can be established nationally, small independent museums, which care for a wealth of national treasures and irreplaceable local knowledge, will continue to face an uncertain, and in some cases, non-existent, future.”

The spending proposals document is deeply defective, but it is most defective of all in that respect and it will damage Scotland.

16:27

**Mr Tom McCabe (Hamilton South) (Lab):** We always know that Mr Russell is struggling when he tells us that we have not spent enough on culture and that we have spent all our money on education, roads and health. He is running out of arguments.

The First Minister recently made a well-received speech to the Institute of Directors in which he highlighted among other things the tendency of some sections to talk Scotland down. I commend it to the SNP spokespeople. Even if they do not endorse it publicly—it would be optimistic of me to expect that—they should give it serious thought privately. I have to say, after hearing Mr McLetchie’s carping contribution, that he would do well to cast his eye over it too.

The great opportunity with which the Parliament presented us was the opportunity to focus more directly on people’s priorities. As £4.1 billion is directed to priority areas, which will improve dramatically the quality of life and opportunities, the SNP can focus only on the abstract delusion of constitutional change.

Throughout Scotland there is a real concern about the condition of our physical infrastructure, but there is no acknowledgement from the SNP of the fact that the M74 will be extended, that the A8

and M8 will be improved or that there will be rail links to our two major airports.

We are among the most unhealthy nations in the developed world, but when our Executive aims to reduce the number of cases of cancer by 20 per cent and the number of cases of stroke and heart disease by 50 per cent over the next eight years, the SNP can discuss only surgery to our constitution.

**Bruce Crawford:** Will the member give way?

**Mr McCabe:** No thanks.

**Shona Robison:** Will the member give way?

**Mr McCabe:** No, I will not, thanks.

Every MSP in the chamber is aware of how much genuine concern there is in our communities about antisocial behaviour. Every MSP knows the concerns about the insidious effects that drugs have on far too many people’s lives. But when a significant announcement is made about both those critical areas, not one mention is made of them in the SNP’s response.

I mentioned the First Minister’s recent speech, in which he spoke about creating ambition, innovation and opportunity. Today, he backed up those words with significant resources: 150 academic and industry joint ventures, more than 25,000 young people experiencing modern apprenticeships and more than 500,000 Scots in further education. That is a forward looking Scotland, not an inward looking, cowering Scotland. It is a Scotland that embraces the world and the opportunities it provides and that rejects separatism and isolation by embracing a global approach. We are taking that approach because we believe that Scotland can be good enough to stand comparison with the best in the world.

That is all evidence that the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition is working. We ended up with only four or five nationalists in the chamber for the minister’s statement because they have absolutely no contribution to make to discussions about important issues. As a result of today’s announcement, Scotland is a better place where opportunities have increased. That is what the nationalists cannot throw.

16:31

**Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP):** What surprises me about the attitude of those who sit on the Executive benches is that, in their statements, they accept that this is not an ordinary debate. This is not one of the meaningless debates that are sometimes highlighted as having no consequence and that occasionally bring the Parliament into disrepute. The debate is about the spun spending of our people’s money over the next five years.

This is a fundamental debate, yet not only is the Minister for Finance and Public Services absent from the chamber, the ministers who are responsible for the key areas that will be included in the manifestos and about which commitments and pledges have been made—although not elaborated on in the minister's statement this morning—are not here either. The ministers who are responsible for education, justice, health, transport and enterprise and lifelong learning—all areas in which ministers have made commitments and forward projections—are absent. They are treating this debate with unacceptable contempt, given the importance that they claim it has.

**Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab):** Will Kenny MacAskill give way?

**Mr MacAskill:** No, not at the moment.

Over recent weeks, we have heard weasel words. Last week, we heard from the performance audit group about winter snows—pure whitewash. This week, we have “Building a Better Scotland”, which is the spending review document—pure hogwash. As the French say, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. Great pledges, wonderful commitments, tremendous initiatives—but we have seen and heard it all before.

In September 2002, the minister said:

“An effective transport system is central to a thriving economy”.

In “Travel Choices for Scotland”, which was published in 1988, the late Donald Dewar said:

“We shall continue to ensure that the Scottish transport network is appropriate to support Scotland's economy”.

Four years and more later, the minister's statement is a declaration of failure. Due to political and public pressure, the Executive is required to address the importance of transport and to raise it up the political agenda. The Executive repeats itself, but it does not do what it said it would do four years or more ago.

Page 8 of “Travel Choices for Scotland”—not page 8 of the statement that the minister gave today—refers to

“improvements in rail ... connections to airports”.

We are no further forward.

When Ms Boyack was Minister for Transport and the Environment, she published “Travel Choices for Scotland: Strategic Roads Review” in November 1999. That document said that

“the road network will continue to provide the core of our transport system.”

It continued:

“Investment in new road capacity can support the economy by reducing journey times and improving reliability”.

The same warm words, support and inspiration for the economy that we hear today. We have moved on nigh on three years but there has been no progress.

**Sarah Boyack:** Will Kenny MacAskill give way?

**Mr MacAskill:** No—I am into my last minute.

The 20 items that the strategic roads review document referred to included the A8000, but the buck for that road has been passed to the Forth bridge authority. Three years on, we have not managed to complete, or even start, one of the projects that was mentioned during Ms Boyack's term of office.

All we hear today is that the Executive will begin preparations on the A8 and A80 motorway upgrades. As I have said before, it is 40 years since the motorway from London to Birmingham was completed. After 40 years, after nearly two generations of unionist control from Tory and Labour Administrations, we still lack a motorway that connects our major city, Glasgow, to our capital city, Edinburgh—never mind a motorway that connects the central belt population with our rural hinterland in the Highlands.

Forty years on, the Government has failed. All we have heard today is a declaration of failure, a regurgitation of past promises and no sign that any initiatives or construction will commence forthwith.

16:35

**Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green):** Back in February, the First Minister promised us a sustainability audit of all Government departments. That would have provided the baseline for the spending proposals. We have not had that sustainability audit and therefore there is no baseline for “Building a Better Scotland”. I expected a document that would contain, on every page, a reference to the Government's sustainability audit and how the departments measured up in their spending review and spending plans. That is not in the document. Instead, we have a cobbled together set of bullet points on page 11. I shall be referring to pages 11, 31, 51 and 58, with perhaps a passing reference to page 35.

On page 11 there are 10 hastily cobbled together bullet points that try to give the impression that there is something sustainable about the Government's spending plans. One bullet point reads:

“building sustainable development into the major school building and refurbishment programme”.

What exactly does that mean? It probably means a new planning advice note for the building of schools, which will have absolutely no effect for two reasons. First, sustainable development is not

built into legislation, so councils do not have to have regard to it and, secondly, if councils go through the public-private partnership and private finance initiative routes, they will—as they always do—drive standards down to the cheapest level. I can give members examples of that in relation to public building, but I am sure that they know them already.

The fifth bullet point reads:

“building sustainable development into the Glasgow Stock Transfer and other transfers to ensure that our investment produces homes that are warm, dry, energy efficient, safe and secure”.

What about the standards that will be incorporated in those homes? I have plenty of evidence that the standards of insulation produce warm, dry, safe and secure homes, but the energy efficiency is not at a level to produce carbon dioxide savings and we will have to revisit all those improvements in the next 10 years in order to upgrade them.

Page 31 deals with spending on health. Why is mental health always number 4, 5 or 10 on any list of health priorities? There it is at the bottom of the list:

“improving mental well-being across Scotland and action to reduce the rate of suicide.”

Today I had a meeting with a representative from Facilitate Scotland which, last year—its first year of operation—helped 5,000 desperate people. Facilitate Scotland has run out of money and the Executive is doing absolutely nothing to help. That is next year's spending plan for mental health.

I will wrap up by saying that if members turn to the very last page of the spending proposals they will see that the Executive intends to implement environmental management schemes in public buildings

“to monitor and ultimately reduce our environmental impact.”

In other words, the Executive will get round to it eventually. At the moment, it is content just to monitor things.

16:39

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** This has been a good debate in the sense that there has been a commendable amount of honesty among my colleagues in the Conservative party and the SNP.

The Conservatives have stated their position clearly: they are about lowering taxes. That is an old Conservative policy and it is good that it is out in the open again. In fairness to the Conservatives, that gives the Scottish people the chance to weigh up Conservative policies against those of the Liberal Democrats. I would

counterattack with the usual Liberal Democrat question about which services the Conservatives would wish to cut. As an election is not far away, it is only right and proper that that information is out in the open.

This morning, and again this afternoon, SNP members mentioned the “I” word. That too is commendable, as ultimately it is what the Scottish National Party is about. It is right and proper that, next April and May, the Scottish people should debate in their own minds and collectively the merits or non-merits of independence. I am glad that the SNP is open and honest about independence.

The SNP rather gave the game away today. When Andy Kerr was making his announcement, despite forced smiles on the SNP front bench, the rather glummer faces on the remaining SNP benches told the real story. We even saw spurious points of order coming from Mike Russell—I am sorry that he is not here, as I would like to refer to him directly. Mike Russell is a double individual: he is Mr Affable, Mr Suave and Mr Urbane when you meet him in the bar of Deacon Brodie's Tavern and Mr Cross-man in the chamber. When he is Mr Cross-man, he is usually rattled. Mr Russell is rattled: the SNP is faced with a falling membership—

**Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Surely the debate is about the spending review and not about the drinking habits of affable fellow members?

**Mr Stone:** That is a very good point—and it is one that should perhaps be addressed to Margo's colleagues on the SNP benches, as they hardly addressed the subject of money. It was all whinging. But facts are chieftains that winna ding and £1.5 million has been announced today. No matter how it is spun and how much it is rubbished, we should accept that that is good news.

I return to the suave, urbane Mr Michael Russell. When he is angry, he gets rattled. He compared me today—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Do try to keep to the subject, Mr Stone.

**Mr Stone:** It is relevant. Mr Russell stooped to attacking a museum in my home town, but—dear oh dear—I have already mentioned the wretched museum to the minister. I get on with things behind the scenes. I do not make a song and dance about them. I say to SNP members that what Mr Russell said about me earlier shows that Mr Russell is somewhat desperate.

The investment in health is very welcome. I will repeat the point that I made this morning, which is that joined-up delivery will be hugely important. The money is welcome and ministers are to be

commended for putting it in. If the health authorities, local authorities and social work and education departments do not co-ordinate or work together, despite all the best intentions, the money may not hit the targets at which we are aiming, which are improved health and so reduced costs in the years to come. The spending review is about our children and a better life for them.

All the objectives in the announcement are costed—they are there to be seen. When people talk about flim-flam or lack of detail, their attacks are spurious. I advise ministers to ensure that those objectives are attained. To that end, I recommend that ministers in the Scottish Executive, if they have not already done so, install some form of on-going audit of the results that they intend to achieve. Only by getting that information can ministers judge how accurately the money is being directed and whether some fine-tuning or redirection is required.

Today is a good day for Scotland. If I have been called a performing seal, then I am one. I support the minister and I make no apology for doing so. I am proud to be part of an Executive that is delivering in a real way for the people of Scotland. I commend the motion.

16:43

**David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con):** I did not expect Andy Kerr to be in the chamber during this debate. After all, Santa comes only on Christmas morning before he disappears for ever—well, until next Christmas. As all the parents in the chamber know, just like Christmas, the packaging is a lot more interesting than the contents. That is the case with today's announcements—a lot of glitter and fancy bows, but no substance. Rather than have Santa speak to the motion, Santa's little helpers are sent out to explain what is effectively guff.

I give the Executive credit for turning guff into such an art form that nothing can be put forward as a concrete statement. This morning, we had a lot of hurrahs about rail links to Edinburgh and Glasgow airports, but I should tell Mr Harper that, on page 45 of the document, we find that we will not have rail links to Glasgow and Edinburgh airports. Rather, the Executive will

"invest to develop rail links to Glasgow and Edinburgh Airports".

What on earth does that mean?

Elsewhere in the spending plans, the Executive gives a clear commitment that every child in Scotland will get to play a game of golf by the age of nine. Why can it not give a clear commitment that the infrastructure projects will go ahead?

The Executive's guff was, however, topped by

Mr Iain Smith and his Liberal Democrat colleagues, who do not believe that the tax burden on Scotland is high enough. Apparently there is not enough money in the spending review to do all the additional things that Mr Smith wants to do, such as put no extra police on the beat. Instead, he wants to raise income tax in Scotland in next year's budget. As David McLetchie pointed out, he and his colleagues—including Jamie Stone and whatever he is on—quite clearly believe that money grows on trees. If Mr Stone spoke to some ordinary people in Deacon Brodie's rather than the convivial Mike Russell, he would find that they are more highly taxed than they have ever been and are receiving fewer and fewer good public services.

**Mr Stone:** I think Mr Mundell will agree that people are very pleased by the fact that they are having central heating installed and, indeed, by what has been announced today.

**David Mundell:** I think that one has to be a pensioner to qualify for the central heating scheme.

A number of good projects have been introduced all over Scotland, but that does not alter the fact that the quality of service does not match the volume of money that is being invested. It is interesting to note that not one speaker for the Executive has told us how quality of service will be improved to ensure that, when the money is spent, it makes a difference.

**Mr Stone:** It is in the document.

**David Mundell:** If we went through every page of the document, we would find that that point is most certainly not mentioned.

If I had more time, Presiding Officer—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** But you do not.

**David Mundell:** Well, if I had, I would be a lot less kind to Ms Boyack than David McLetchie was. The reality is that after five and a half years of Labour in charge in Scotland, the transport situation is worse. For example, public transport is worse. The needless postponements of important infrastructure works are holding back Scotland's economy.

I see that Mr McCabe has left the chamber. I do not know whether he was at the Institute of Directors lunch or dinner—I am sure that he is the director of something. In any case, he certainly gauged the reaction wrongly. Business is unhappy about the Executive's policies. Now that he has arrived, Mr Kerr should stand up and announce that he will reintroduce the uniform business rate, which is the one thing that business in Scotland wants him to do.

16:48

**Alasdair Morgan (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP):** I share other members' disappointment that the Minister for Finance and Public Services was not present for the entire debate. However, I was reassured by the presence of his very capable deputy minister, who even now is showing Mr Kerr a printout of one of the pages on my website. I await with interest to hear what I said by mistake some years ago. I should add that Mr Peacock has many years' experience in his job. In fact, he has been in the job so long that he is about to be made an honorary Liberal Democrat.

David McLetchie and Mike Russell made an important point about the announcement that we are not talking about the minister's money or the SNP's money. It is the people of Scotland's money. We should remember, when ministers come here appearing so generous and bearing such largesse—which happens fairly frequently—that they are simply giving us our money back.

They are not, of course, giving us back all our own money. If we consider the changes in next year's budget that relate to Scotland, we find that Scotland will be paying £405 million through the 10 per cent tax on oil revenues. National insurance will take another £700 million out of the Scottish economy, which makes a total of about £1,100 million. In exchange, we will get budget consequentials of £225 million and extra expenditure from the spending review of £100 million, leaving £325 million. So we are £775 million down on the budget alone. We do not even come with all our own money.

David Davidson talked about the need for Scottish business to be competitive. He echoed what Andrew Wilson said so ably this morning. In doing so, he revealed unintentionally one of the weaknesses of the unionist case. The purpose of cutting business taxation is to help business grow, to increase the gross domestic product of the country and to enable the Government to provide better services on the existing tax base because GDP has grown.

The only weapon available to a devolved Scottish Administration to stimulate business is to change the uniform business rate. The effect on the Executive's budget is a reduction in income, but it gets none of the consequential benefits from increased economic activity because that goes straight to the chancellor in London. Accidentally, Mr Davidson revealed the need for full fiscal freedom for Scotland—indeed for independence.

I did not want to embarrass the Executive by reiterating its attempt to fiddle the figures this morning or at the weekend, but Des McNulty brought it up yet again in his bizarre gallop: I do

not know whether he was trying for a prize for how many words he could say in four minutes. Our criticism was not of the total sums involved, but of the assertion that we are talking about new money. We all know that the money has already been announced once, and, in some cases, several times. That is a serious point because it means that no announcement by this Government can be treated seriously or taken at face value. One has to refer to the original documentation and beyond to find out whether the figure has accumulated once, twice or three times.

When statements are made about the Executive's plans to spend an extra £170 million on this or that, we do not know whether that is the same amount three years running, counted twice from the second year or three times in the third year because the Executive has discredited its own figures.

I find it unhelpful that the new document talks about total managed expenditure whereas all the other documents we are likely to compare it against deal with departmental expenditure limits and annual managed expenditure. Perhaps the intention is to make it a bit more difficult for us to find out what precisely is going on. It is not helpful and it is not in the spirit of the Parliament.

Many announcements have been made already, but they are imprecise. Mike Russell's contribution, which was excellent, made a strong criticism of the lack of clarity in the education section. I suspect that all the other sections will unravel as we consider them, particularly transport, to which Kenny MacAskill, David Mundell and Brian Adam referred.

Vague promises were made—sometimes as long as four years ago—and they are simply being recycled.

David Mundell mentioned investments to develop rail links to Glasgow. When summing up, will the minister tell me when the first train will run to Glasgow airport? The year will do; we do not need it any more precisely than that.

I will come to a climax by mentioning Mr McCabe's speech and the criticism of those who talk Scotland down—a criticism made by Jack McConnell at the Institute of Directors earlier this week. Labour is so sensitive that it will have to learn to distinguish between criticism of Labour, its record and our economic performance on the one hand, and criticism that identifies problems and suggests how to deal with them on the other.

The problem is not that we are talking Scotland down: the problem is that this Government and this constitution are dragging Scotland down.

16:54

**The Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services (Peter Peacock):** I am sure that members will join me in welcoming Andy Kerr back to the chamber, as so many comments have been made about him. I am also sure that members will welcome the fact that he has come back with even more good news because of his endeavours this afternoon. Andy Kerr was not in the chamber for this debate—he has a very able deputy. As Alasdair Morgan, I hope, acknowledged, Andy Kerr was meeting the business community of Scotland—the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, the Confederation of British Industry Scotland, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Forum for Private Business, the Automobile Association and Scottish Financial Enterprise, among others. The good news is that all those organisations have warmly welcomed the budget settlement that Andy Kerr spoke about this morning. I am sure that that will come as bad news to the SNP, as such things usually do.

From our side of the chamber, many good points have been made during this debate. Des McNulty, the convener of the Finance Committee, properly pointed out the real growth and the real increases in resources that are available to us over the coming years. He also mentioned the unprecedented increases in resources, which will allow unprecedented improvements in public services. Duncan McNeil spoke eloquently about the need to improve policing in his constituency to drive down crime. Tom McCabe also referred to the vital health improvement agenda, which is trying to bear down on cancer, strokes, heart disease and all the difficulties that attend them, particularly in constituencies such as the one that Duncan McNeil represents. Tom McCabe also drew attention to the extra money for further education, skills development, modern apprenticeships and educational maintenance allowances.

Tom McCabe, John Home Robertson and Jamie Stone talked about ensuring that we deliver on the agenda that we have now set in place. There are new measures in today's document that reveal how we will do that. It lists some of the targets that we have set out, some of the written agreements that we have with individual ministers and the improvement function that we are bringing into play.

**Ms MacDonald:** Will the minister be a bit more precise on the question of targets and the delivery of service with particular regard to sport? My heart lifted this morning when I heard the Minister for Finance and Public Services—I was there to hear him—saying that the Executive would double spending on sport. I also read that there are to be more resources in the active primary schools

programme, but unless the Executive has a much better target than 60 trained PE teachers coming out of Scotland's one professional institution each year, it will not achieve those benchmarks.

**Peter Peacock:** I am grateful to Margo MacDonald for drawing attention to that issue, as it is part of the effort that we are making to improve Scotland's health. There is a strong recognition in the settlement that we need to do more to get young people active and involved in sport in the way that she helped young people to be earlier in her career. We must ensure that young people develop good habits in relation to their own physical fitness. Mike Watson will make much more detail available when he announces the detail of his spending settlement in due course.

Tom McCabe was right to draw attention to the health improvement agenda and to the improvement that will flow from the settlement in schools, hospitals, roads and ferries. We heard Mike Russell make the astounding claim that today's settlement was positively damaging for Scotland. That just shows the level at which the SNP operates. We have seen yet again the grudging, nit-picking, tawdry approach that we have come to expect from the SNP. It is another classic display of the disingenuous SNP at work, designed to distract from the excellent news that today's announcement brings to all Scotland. It is an attempt to put up a smokescreen, to obfuscate the issues and to try to confuse the Scottish public. SNP members make obscure technical points and announce again and again the same tired old smears that they announced the last time that we announced good news for Scotland. As Duncan McNeil said, good news for Scotland is bad news for the SNP. That is why so many SNP members had glum faces earlier. To pretend that there are no new resources beggars belief. SNP members know full well that there is £1.5 billion extra next year, £2.6 billion the following year and £4.1 billion the year after that. That money will bring real progress to Scotland.

We see again the shallowness of the SNP. On a day when we ought to be debating future spending, we find a press statement on Alasdair Morgan's own website saying:

"Make Scottish postage stamps more widely available, says Galloway & Upper Nithsdale MSP".

That is the degree of priority that he gives to the real issues.

Where is the alternative budget from the SNP today—the comprehensive budget that it can put to the Scottish public? SNP members nit-pick and girm. They imply that there would be more spending and that they would do more, yet nothing is seen on paper.

**Mr MacAskill** rose—



**Peter Peacock:** I see Kenny MacAskill rising to his feet, but I shall not give way to him. He spoke for the best part of four minutes criticising the settlement, but gave not one constructive idea of what he would do. Shona Robison, to her credit, made one commitment. Bruce Crawford implied that he would do more for the environment, but nowhere did SNP members say what they would spend less on if they were to spend more on the environment, on the NHS, on education, on the police and on transport. The art of government is about a balanced budget for the future.

**Michael Russell** *rose—*

**Peter Peacock:** I will not give way to Mike Russell, whose earlier contributions were pretty outrageous.

What would SNP members spend less on? If there is nothing that they would spend less on, the only thing that would follow from their claims would be more taxation or crippling borrowing to finance the deficit at the heart of their plans. Over the weekend, they accused the Government of Enron-style accounting. The real Enron accounting scandal in Scotland is the SNP's concealment of the fiscal deficit at the heart of their projects. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** Order. There is too much noise in the chamber.

**Peter Peacock:** The differences in approach to Scotland's finances in the Parliament could not be clearer. The Executive is committed to progress, to planning and to providing for the long term. It is committed to the stable UK environment that delivers for Scotland, to investment and to growth—growth in our economy and growth in the public services that we need for our children, young people, families and older people. The Tories are politically becalmed and slowly sinking beneath the surface of Scottish politics, weighed down by the baggage of the Thatcherite legacy and committed to the old agenda—as David McLetchie confirmed today—of making massive cuts in the public services that we are building from today's statement and the other work that we have done.

**Robin Harper:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Peter Peacock:** I will not take an intervention.

The SNP is riddled with divisions, having relegated some of its best people down the list for the forthcoming election. It is inexperienced in the world of government and is making reckless promises. As Andy Kerr said, reckless promises are being made every day of every week. The SNP is the party that is prepared to risk all the progress that we are making on the basis of its economic arguments and its quest for economic

independence, whatever that is. It is a game of chance that the SNP is asking the Scottish people to play—a scratch card approach to the Scottish economy. The SNP is prepared to sacrifice the stability that we have established, the ability to plan for the long term that we have described today in clear detail, and the investment in our future. That is what the SNP is prepared to put at risk.

The differences could not be clearer. The Tories are sinking and have nothing to offer. The SNP offers only risk, uncertainty and inexperience. However, the Executive has strong leadership and is committed to stability that gives us investment, growth, progress and new opportunities for all our people. Through the spending review, we are delivering on the people's priorities. The people trust us with their future and they are right to do so. I commend the statement to Parliament.

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:02

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** We have two Parliamentary Bureau motions on the designation of lead committees.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Council of the Law Society of Scotland Bill and that the Justice 2 Committee be a secondary committee.

That the Parliament agrees that the Education, Culture and Sport Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill and that the Justice 1 and 2 Committees be secondary committees.—[*Euan Robson.*]

## Points of Order

17:02

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am concerned about a possible breach of parliamentary rules in relation to the Justice 2 Committee's stage 1 report on the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill. What I read in today's press gives me concern. I know that—rightly—you will tell us that that is a matter for the Standards Committee, and I have alerted Mike Rumbles to the fact that I shall write to him. However, the matter is very serious. The Executive has not read the report and cannot comment on it in the press, and committee members cannot respond to the press reports. Because the matter is so serious, will you consider whether the rules about such matters could be tightened up?

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** I sympathise with the convener of the Justice 2 Committee. It is a serious matter when a committee's report, which has been carefully considered by all the members of the committee, appears in the newspapers before it has been published. However, that is a matter for the Justice 2 Committee at its next meeting, rather than a matter for me. No doubt the Standards Committee will tell us whether it thinks that anything can be done about it within our standing orders. It is a matter for the Justice 2 Committee first of all, but I take a very serious view of it.

We will now move to decision time.

**Mr Lloyd Quinan (West of Scotland) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I seek your guidance in relation to motion S1M-3379, on the designation of lead committees. Designating the justice committees as the lead committees on the Council of the Law Society of Scotland Bill creates a—

**The Presiding Officer:** I am terribly sorry, but you have missed your moment.

**Mr Quinan:** No. The motion was moved formally, then there was a point of order and then this point of order.

**The Presiding Officer:** All right. Let us hear the point of order. However, you sound as though you are debating the motion.

**Mr Quinan:** No. I am asking whether it is appropriate that two committees that have members of the Law Society of Scotland on them should be the designated lead committees to deal with the Council of the Law Society of Scotland Bill.

**The Presiding Officer:** The committee members who are members of the Law Society have registered their interests.

**Mr Quinan:** That is certainly true with regard to the standing orders of the Parliament but, with regard to article 6 of the European convention on human rights, would the fact that members of the Law Society are scrutinising the bill not threaten the bill's integrity?

**The Presiding Officer:** With respect, that is a very interesting debating point, but it is not a point of order. I think that we have passed on from that matter. We now come to decision time.

**Mr Quinan:** Presiding Officer, I sought clarification. I have to say that I am considerably more mystified now than I was when I first got to my feet.

**The Presiding Officer:** Well, so am I. We will move now to decision time, although I will read carefully what the member has said.

## Decision Time

17:05

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** I have 10 questions to put to the chamber in today's decision time.

The first question is, that amendment S1M-3376.2, in the name of Iain Gray, which seeks to amend motion S1M-3376, in the name of Andrew Wilson, on the performance of the Scottish economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

### FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, 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)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (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)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (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)

Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 67, Against 32, Abstentions 18.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** As that amendment is carried, Annabel Goldie's amendment S1M-3376.1 falls.

The next question is, that motion S1M-3376, in the name of Andrew Wilson, on the performance of the Scottish economy, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, 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)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (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)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (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)

Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 67, Against 33, Abstentions 18.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Parliament endorses the Scottish Executive's aim to increase the sustainable growth of the Scottish economy over the long term, using the powers available to the Parliament, thus providing resources for first-class public services and a more socially just and sustainable Scotland; supports the work undertaken to improve the long-term performance of the Scottish economy as set out in the Framework for Economic Development and Smart, Successful Scotland, and notes the progress in implementing measures to help businesses grow, build Scotland's global connections and improve Scotland's skills base.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S1M-3375.1, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, which seeks to amend motion S1M-3375, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on the acute services review, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### For

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (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)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Crawford, Bruce JP (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (Ind)  
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 62, Against 52, Abstentions 5.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S1M-3375, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on the acute services review, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### FOR

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

McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, 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)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (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)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (Ind)  
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)

Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 65, Against 52, Abstentions 2.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Parliament welcomes the proposed £700 million investment in the modernisation of Glasgow's hospitals; accepts that the status quo is not an option and that improvements and modernisation must be progressed as soon as possible in order to enhance the quality of care; recognises that this is a long-term plan which must be flexible enough to take account of changing service demands and developing medical practice; supports an on-going monitoring and review process that includes external independent audit by Audit Scotland on an annual basis; endorses a commitment to keep named services at Stobhill and Victoria over the next five years and to have this locally monitored; gives high priority to the acceleration of ambulatory care and diagnostics developments in consultation with local communities; recognises the particular concern over the number of accident and emergency departments and supports a review of this in two years time that involves staff, patient and community groups, Glasgow Health Council and the Scottish Royal Colleges, and welcomes current developments in the Scottish Ambulance Service which will include the near doubling of paramedics in Glasgow by 2005 and one paramedic in the crew of each front-line ambulance."

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S1M-3382.1, in the name of Bruce Crawford, which seeks to amend motion S1M-3382, in the name of Ross Finnie, on the spending review, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### FOR

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)

MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Etrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 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)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 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)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (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, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 35, Against 82, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S1M-3382.2, in the name of David Davidson, which seeks to amend motion S1M-3382, 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)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (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)  
 Wallace, Ben (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)



Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, 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)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (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)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (North East Scotland) (SNP)

Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGugan, Irene (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 17, Against 69, Abstentions 31.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S1M-3382, in the name of Ross Finnie, on the spending review, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)  
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)

Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, 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)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (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)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (Ind)  
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)

McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 67, Against 50, Abstentions 1.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament commends the Executive's spending plans for 2003-04 to 2005-06.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S1M-3379, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

#### **Members: No.**

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### FOR

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (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)  
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)

Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)  
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (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)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)

Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)  
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### AGAINST

Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 108, Against 3, Abstentions 7.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Council of the Law Society of Scotland Bill and that the Justice 2 Committee be a secondary committee.

**The Presiding Officer:** The last question is, that motion S1M-3380, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the Education, Culture and Sport Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill and that the Justice 1 and 2 Committees be secondary committees.

## Point of Order

17:14

**Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Members who first heard of the matter when Mr Quinan raised it would be concerned if you made a ruling after committee deliberations started. He seems to have raised a substantive point, particularly in respect of the European convention on human rights. Will you issue a ruling either before committee work starts on the bill or ensure that work on the bill is not started until your ruling has been issued?

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** I will reflect on the matter. The problem was that the bureau motions had been moved and I had no advance notice that a member wished to speak against the motion. Mr Quinan has a right to speak against it, but notice would have been helpful. Timings could have been altered accordingly and a brief discussion of the matter could have been arranged. I will consider what the member has said and make a ruling, if that is necessary.

## Causing Death by Dangerous Driving

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh):** The Presiding Officer wishes to remind members about the annual general meeting of the Scottish Parliament business exchange scheme and its reception this evening. He encourages as many members as possible to attend that event.

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S1M-3210, in the name of Cathie Craigie, on causing death by dangerous driving. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons now.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament notes the publication of the report by the Transport Research Laboratory, *Road Safety Research Report No 26, Dangerous Driving and the Law*, which examines the use and application of the law on careless and dangerous driving throughout the UK; supports the report where it states that in Scotland a "clearer message regarding the seriousness of these offences would be sent to both defendant and society if all causing death by dangerous driving cases were tried in the High Court" rather than sheriff courts, and considers that the Scottish Executive should (a) commission specific Scottish research in this area to take on board the report's conclusions and recommendations and (b) take the necessary steps to ensure that dangerous driving offences are heard in the appropriate court and not downgraded.

17:16

**Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab):** First, I thank all the members who signed my motion. I am especially grateful to the members who continue to support the sentiments and concerns that are expressed not only in today's motion, but in previous motions. I acknowledge also the commitment and persistence that has been shown by members of the Scotland's Campaign Against Irresponsible Drivers. In particular, I acknowledge the work and dedication of my constituents Alex and Margaret Dekker, who work and campaign tirelessly to highlight public concerns around the issue.

Last year, 347 people died on Scotland's roads. According to available statistics, 10 people are involved in serious road accidents every day. The death of a family member or a loved one, notwithstanding the circumstances that bring about that death, is an extremely emotive subject. When someone dies as a result of a road accident, their family and friends endure a painful aftermath. At that time they, like all other victims of crime, need the justice system to be on their side. They should have the support of the system; they should not have to fight it.

The law makes clear distinctions between driving offences, as it should. There are clear differences—often large—between careless driving or a moment's inattention, dangerous driving and causing death by dangerous driving.

The motion was motivated by concern that the courts need to take appropriate action in cases in which drivers have driven dangerously and without adequate concern for the safety and lives of others. The repercussions of such actions require to be taken into account properly. The reason I lodged the motion and previous motions on the subject, and the reason they have received such widespread cross-party support, is that in Scotland there is a clear perception—which is widely held, and not only by families and friends of the victims of road accidents—that careless driving and dangerous driving offences are being downgraded.

First, the perception exists that charges of careless driving are brought when the more appropriate charge would be one of dangerous driving. Secondly, the perception exists that charges of causing death by dangerous driving are not given the attention that they merit from the justice system, because cases are heard in the sheriff court rather than the High Court. In addition, the sentences that are legally available are not passed.

It is clear that those are not just perceptions; those views are borne out by the available statistics. Where charges of dangerous driving are brought, the vast majority of cases are heard in the sheriff courts, where the maximum sentence that can be passed is three years. In Scotland, cases are rarely passed up to the High Court, where a sentence of up to 10 years can be passed. Sheriffs have the power to remit cases to the High Court, but that power is used extremely infrequently. In fact, during the two and a half years of the Transport Research Laboratory study—the report of which I am sure all members have received a copy—only one case in Scotland was remitted from the sheriff court to the High Court.

In England, all cases of causing death by dangerous driving are heard in the Crown court, which can pass a maximum sentence of 10 years. The TRL study states:

"As the maximum penalty for Causing Death by Dangerous Driving is 10 years, it seems strange that the cases"

in Scotland

"are normally tried in a court which could not impose the maximum penalty."

The TRL report was commissioned by the then Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions to evaluate the Road Traffic Act 1991

and its effects on the prosecution of dangerous drivers. Although the scope of the study included the operation of the law in Scotland, its remit in Scotland remains unfulfilled because of the lack of participation by Scottish agencies. For example, the views of Scottish prosecutors on incorrect charging were sought but not given. Nearly 6,000 fatal accident files from England and Wales were analysed, but no such files from Scotland were examined.

There is a clear need for Scotland-based research, and not only because of the lack of Scottish agencies' participation in the study. Another reason is that the 1991 act is applied and administered in two different criminal justice systems. Although the TRL report shows us that people's perceptions of the system are not just perceptions, we are no nearer to an accurate evaluation of the workings of the 1991 act in Scotland. We need specific Scottish research into decisions and considerations in the prosecution of cases of road traffic deaths; into the procedures that identify, convict and sentence those who are guilty of bad driving offences; into prosecutors' selection of offences and into the courts' choice of penalties.

That research is needed, not only to comfort the friends and relatives of victims, but to inform the policy of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. The Crown Office's quality and practice review unit carried out a review of the handling of road traffic deaths, the report of which was published in April last year. The report

"found no fundamental flaws in the system as presently operated."

I accept that the internal review was carried out by a nominal Crown Office unit that is independent of the service, but it has not gone far enough in examining and addressing the situation in Scotland.

If one examines the statistics on road traffic offences and how they are tried and compares the available statistics in Scotland with those in England, it is clear that we are not as informed as we should be. The system must be seen to be fair to those who are charged and to the victims' families, but in cases of causing death by dangerous driving, the system is not seen to be fair. The 1991 act allows the justice system to provide an adequate and appropriate response in cases in which a driver causes death by dangerous driving. In my view, and in the opinion of countless families, the law is not being administered as it was intended. I agree with the conclusion of the TRL report that if all cases in which people caused death by dangerous driving were tried in court, a clearer message would be sent to defendants and society.

The motion has wide support from the public and in the Parliament. I urge the Solicitor General for Scotland to commission specific Scottish research on the matter, to take on board the TRL report's conclusions and recommendations and to take the necessary steps that will ensure that dangerous driving offences are not downgraded and are heard in the appropriate court.

The First Minister was questioned today about the law on carrying knives. He said that it is important that the law is properly implemented. I say to the Solicitor General that it is a widely held belief that the law under the 1991 act on causing death by dangerous driving is not being properly implemented.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** As the list of members who wish to take part in the debate is very long, I invite members to speak for a maximum of three minutes. I will accommodate as many members as possible and I will inquire of the minister whether we might extend the debate.

17:24

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** It is strange that I speak in this members' business debate as convener of the Justice 1 Committee, which is currently dealing with petitions on dangerous driving and the law. I applaud the petitioners, Mr and Mrs Dekker and Mrs Donegan, for pursuing the matter in tragic circumstances. The Justice 1 Committee is concerned about the time that the matter is taking.

The then Justice and Home Affairs Committee first considered petitions PE29 and PE55 in May 2000. We knew that the report that has been referred to—"Dangerous Driving and the Law", which was produced by the then Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions—was in the offing, so we waited until it came out. I note that the report was published in January 2002. We are way down the road and we still have no decisions from the minister.

In the meantime, the Justice 1 Committee has been pursuing the issues that were raised. We wrote to the Minister for Justice and to the Lord Advocate about those issues. I will refer to the Justice 1 Committee's letter of 15 May 2002 to Colin Boyd. We said:

"The Committee supports the suggestion that all causing death by dangerous driving cases should be tried in the High Court."

Colin Boyd's response is that the prosecution service can exercise discretion. We understand that, but the committee's position is that there is no appropriate signal to put out in such cases. There is a hint that sometimes cases that are brought to the sheriff court stay at the sheriff court when they should not have been there in the first place.

The committee was also greatly concerned about the lack of statistical information that is kept on the outcome of cases involving fatalities and serious injuries, where those fatalities and serious injuries do not form part of the charge. In such cases, that information would not normally be entered in the records. The issue was raised again in the Justice 1 Committee's meeting of 3 September. In his response to our concerns, the Minister for Justice noted that the committee

"supports the recommendation to undertake a consultation exercise to assess ... the introduction of an intermediate offence, to sit between the current offences of dangerous driving and careless driving"

and that it supports research into the extension of the current offence of causing death by dangerous driving to include serious and severe injuries. Sometimes it is only the abilities of paramedics that make the difference between kinds of offence. The minister also noted that the committee was

"persuaded by the recommendation that there should be a requirement for convictions for bad driving offences to be kept by the DVLA to assist in monitoring re-offending."

Reoffending happens, particularly where speed is involved.

At our meeting on 3 September, the committee decided—I will paraphrase to save time—to write to the minister to ensure that we obtain a proper timetable for the steering group and that we will see, in the form of answers, an end to the research. The letter will be in the post. We have been considering the issue for two years. Firm answers and responses are required very soon.

17:27

**Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD):** On Sunday, a motorcyclist died. He was the third motorcyclist to be killed on the roads in my area in the short space of one week. A couple of weeks earlier, a head-on collision left a young woman with head and chest injuries and it left a young man with less serious injuries. His girlfriend, who was only 18 and who would have been starting a law degree at the University of Aberdeen after the summer, died from her injuries at the scene of the crash. The young man's father said:

"His broken bones will heal but his mental condition will take longer. He is devastated."

I am glad to have the opportunity to highlight the worrying incidence of serious road accidents in the north-east, which I am sure is replicated throughout the country.

Grampian police mounted a summer safety campaign and its report makes depressing reading. It found, for example, a 125 per cent increase in drink driving, as well as reported rises in the numbers of speeding offences and of people not wearing seatbelts.

Measures are being taken to reduce the dreadful incidents that shatter lives. The police, in conjunction with a local car retailer, ran a young drivers training day in Inverurie during the summer. The North East Safety Camera Partnership, which will come on stream in October, will seek to change driver behaviour through a combination of a high-profile driving education and awareness campaign and an increase in the number of mobile safety cameras in Grampian.

Speeding contributes to a third of all road collisions. Therefore, in one year, it contributes to 1,100 deaths and 12,700 serious injuries. Drivers who speed are more likely to commit other driving violations. A speeding driver is more likely to kill someone. If one is hit by a car that is travelling at 20 mph, one has a 90 per cent chance of survival. A car that is travelling at 30 mph will kill you as often as not—the chances of survival drop to 50 per cent.

Therefore, it is deeply concerning that an attitude survey that was carried out by the Automobile Association Foundation for Road Safety Research concluded that speeding is not seen as a crime.

Many motorists simply fail to make the connection between their actions on the roads and their impact on other road users. The term “causing death by dangerous driving” does not reflect the gravity of the offence. If we stopped talking about road traffic accidents and started talking about manslaughter or murder by car, the status of careless and dangerous driving might shift to become socially unacceptable. It might then be treated with the revulsion that it deserves. We need to underline the link between careless driving and loss of life. We also need to make dangerous drivers face the true consequences of their actions, which should be reflected in the severity of the penalties that they may face.

I commend Cathie Craigie's motion. I hope that the Executive will act on it.

17:30

**Mr John McAllion (Dundee East) (Lab):** I congratulate Cathie Craigie on winning tonight's important debate. I also congratulate Christine Grahame on the way in which the Justice 1 Committee has shown such persistence in pursuing the petition that was sent to it by the Public Petitions Committee some time ago. I know that, as a former member of our committee, she will always treat petitions with great seriousness.

I particularly want to congratulate all the families who have worked through Scotland's Campaign Against Irresponsible Drivers. The endless work that they have put in has ensured that Parliament

has begun to listen to what they have to say. I can remember standing with members of the campaign in the Murraygate in Dundee. They had horrific pictures on display behind them as they tried to persuade members of the public to support the campaign. Their campaign was easy because the public rallied round in the way that I believe members of the Parliament should now.

Although it might seem to the members of the campaign that their progress has been painfully slow, I believe that, step by step, they are beginning to break through the far-too-great complacency that haunts this country's legal establishment concerning the implementation of the law on dangerous driving. The campaign is beginning to make the Parliaments north and south of the border listen at last to what it has to say.

Mention has been made about the wait for the research that was produced by the then Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. We had to wait to see what the research had to say, but that research says nothing that contradicts the main line on which SCID has campaigned for so long. Its campaign has been that the will of Parliament should be upheld by the legal establishment and by the courts. There is no doubt about what the will of the Parliament in Westminster is. Parliament has made it clear that it believes that the law should treat much more severely those whose dangerous driving causes death and produces heartache for the families who are left behind.

The will of Parliament is hardening. In 1995, the maximum sentence went up from five to 10 years. Recently, ministers in Westminster have made it clear that they intend to increase the maximum sentence to 14 years. In those circumstances, it is inexplicable that the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service should routinely initiate solemn cases in sheriff courts, where the sentence limit is three years, rather than in the High Court, where the limit is 10 years and will likely increase to 14 years in the near future. The Crown Office is not in a position to decide how laws should be enacted. Decisions on what the penalties should be are for Parliament. If Parliament says that the penalty should be 10 years, the Crown Office should listen to that. It should ensure that the cases are referred to the High Court in the first place.

It might seem strange, but I missed today's statement on the spending review. However, I understand that we have authorised five new major trunk roads to be started in Scotland and 15 different road improvement schemes. That will mean more cars and more drivers on the roads and more opportunities for dangerous driving.

I hope that the Solicitor General listens carefully to the good case made by Cathie Craigie and

other members in the debate. I hope that she will act in accordance with the will of this Parliament and of the Parliament in Westminster.

17:34

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con):** I warmly congratulate Cathie Craigie on her success in raising such an important subject. Although the matter is reserved to the United Kingdom Parliament, police and enforcement matters come under the remit of the Scottish Parliament. It is therefore right and proper that we should have a strong input.

I can well understand the concern of victims' families that dangerous driving offences are being downgraded and are not necessarily heard in the most appropriate courts. Many years ago, I had to prosecute a man for driving without due care and attention, which had led to the death of a passenger in his car. After his conviction, he was fined £25. Since that time, of course, a great many more cars have come on to the roads.

The number of deaths and injuries on the roads is substantial. I therefore support the two proposals that were made by the Justice 1 Committee, on which I serve. First, all cases of causing death by dangerous driving should be tried in the High Court. I realise that the law officers consider that the current prosecution policy allows for a flexible approach, but the incidence of death through dangerous driving has become such a menace that there is at the very least a case for a presumption that such cases should be heard in the High Court rather than the sheriff courts.

Secondly, the Justice 1 Committee expressed the view that statistical information should be kept on the outcome of cases that involve fatalities and serious injuries where they do not form part of the charge. The Lord Advocate is apparently of the view that there is no straightforward technical solution to keeping track of careless driving prosecutions in which there has been a serious injury. I submit that that is an area in which priority should be given to the collection of statistics in view of the seriousness and scope of the problem.

Thirdly, the committee has recommended that the current offence of causing death by dangerous driving should be extended to include severe injuries and that convictions for bad driving offences should be kept by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. My query is: why not?

The Deputy First Minister has written:

"while I know that the Scottish Campaign against Irresponsible Driving (SCID) has some concerns about the level of Scottish participation in the TRL research project I am not convinced that separate research in Scotland is necessary or appropriate at this stage".

With the greatest respect, I submit that research or full statistical information is necessary to equip the steering group with the correct facts before recommendations and decisions are made.

I will be grateful if the minister and the Solicitor General consider with sympathy the important representations that have been made before they make representations to the ministers in the United Kingdom Government.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I understand that we can extend the debate by 15 minutes. I am prepared to accept a motion to that effect if anyone would be happy to move it.

*Motion moved,*

That under Rule 8.14.3 the debate be extended until 6.15 pm—[*Michael Matheson*].

*Motion agreed to.*

17:37

**Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP):** As others have done, I congratulate Cathie Craigie on raising the topic in the Parliament. As she is aware, I know a member of the Dekker family from my East Dunbartonshire days. I have also been working closely with Wendy Moss of SCID in my constituency. She, too, is a tireless campaigner, despite having had health problems.

I raised the issue in the Westminster Parliament on various occasions. I am sure that John McAllion and Lord James Douglas-Hamilton will remember that. Lord James especially will remember it, because I suspect that he had to reply to some of my questions and letters on the subject when he was a minister.

The people about whom we are talking—the members of SCID and many others who have not joined that useful organisation—are typical of far too many families in Scotland in experiencing sudden and tragic loss. That loss is compounded by two factors, which I want to develop slightly. The first is that most accidents are avoidable. The second concerns the aspects of the legal system that deal with applications for fatal accident inquiries and the procedures that follow from any road accident.

Nora Radcliffe spoke about the overall picture in Grampian and events in her area. Inspector Gibby Phillips, who is the most senior policeman in the Moray and Aberdeen area, said earlier this month:

"The number of fatalities on Moray's roads is already a third higher since April this year"—

the statistics are published on that basis—

"than for the whole of the preceding 12 months.

The circumstances of each crash were different but each one of the accidents could have been avoided.



It would be naïve to think that we could go a whole year with no fatalities but that would be possible if every driver drove within their capabilities and concentrated on avoiding trouble."

Those are sentiments that we would all endorse, but to carry them through we need more than all the campaigns that are run on issues such as drunk driving or using mobile phones while driving. Those campaigns must be backed up by a firm legal system.

I believe that a car is the most lethal weapon that the vast majority of the population will handle in their adult lives. We should treat our cars with great respect. If we fail to do that, we should be punished accordingly.

Some of the issues relating to the legal process have already been dealt with, so I will not say much about them. In my years as an elected representative, countless families have come to my surgeries or written to me to ask why their request for a fatal accident inquiry has been refused. I have spent a great deal of time pursuing such cases. For someone like me who does not have a legal background, the procedure is complex. It can be frustrating, and the outcome is not always successful.

I agree with the recommendations that have been made. I hope that the Solicitor General will take seriously the views of Scotland's legislators.

17:40

**Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab):** I, too, compliment Cathie Craigie and other colleagues for their tenacity in pursuing this matter.

When the Parliament was established, the hope was that problems that for too long had not been tackled would be brought to light and fully explored and that the necessary action would be taken. From my knowledge of cases in Dunfermline East and from talking to other members, I am certain that the state of the law with regard to careless and dangerous driving is one such issue. The response of SCID to the Transport Research Laboratory's study makes for sobering reading. The report highlights many issues, but one key message that emerges from all the evidence is that there is a perception that driving offences, including causing death by dangerous driving, are not always treated with the seriousness that they deserve.

One key recommendation in SCID's response, to which Cathie Craigie's motion refers, is that all cases involving the charge of causing death by dangerous driving should be heard in the High Court rather than in the sheriff court. That would allow a maximum sentence of 10 years to be given to offenders and would signal to the small percentage of drivers in Scotland who willingly and

knowingly drive dangerously that such behaviour will not be tolerated. Every driver is subject to risks of accident and to momentary lapses of concentration. We should turn our attention to the hard core of offenders.

It could be argued that we should be considering alternatives to prison, not increasing the length of sentences. However, whatever the sentencing policy, driving offences should be treated with the seriousness that they deserve and considered on a par with other serious crimes.

Several issues are raised by the proposal to prosecute in the High Court the offence of causing death by dangerous driving. First, there must be guidance on what constitutes causing death by dangerous driving. That ties in with a separate recommendation by SCID that guidance should be issued on what constitutes careless driving and what constitutes dangerous driving. Such guidance would clarify the often blurry line between the two offences and ensure that more serious crimes were not downgraded.

Secondly, the proposal must be seen in the context of proposals to reform the court system. Taking all cases that involve charges of causing death by dangerous driving in the High Court would dovetail with existing proposals to allow procurators fiscal to prosecute directly in the High Court. The procurator fiscal who had dealt with a case originally would be able to see it through to completion.

For that strategy to be fully successful, another of the recommendations of the SCID report would need to be implemented. It is recommended that PFs should be given specific training on driving offences and that specialist fiscals should be used in cases involving such offences.

Lastly, the High Court must be provided with the resources that are necessary for it to cope with the increased case load. I am pleased that the Lord Advocate has made a commitment to ensure that the High Court is adequately resourced to cope with any changes that are implemented.

The proposed changes in the operation of the law as it relates to driving offences would take us a long way towards establishing a culture of safer driving and would help greatly to reduce the appallingly high level of accidents, serious injury and death on Scotland's roads. I support Cathie Craigie's motion.

17:44

**Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I congratulate Cathie Craigie on securing time for this debate. The importance of the debate is clear from the number of members who have stayed on for it.

One of the first campaigns that contacted me after I became a MSP was SCID. I commend SCID for the way in which it has continued to pursue this matter. I am inclined to agree with John McAllion that there is beginning to be movement on the issue, although the wheels of power seem to move very slowly—at times, too slowly.

Until SCID contacted me, I had little knowledge of the issues surrounding dangerous driving or the people who were killed by it. Two years after meeting SCID members, I found myself working with SCID and a family in Bonnybridge, whose 15-year-old daughter had been killed in a road traffic accident. Kathleen Fitzpatrick was killed in January 2001 when she left her school bus, went to cross the road and was hit and killed instantly by a heavy goods truck that was passing the bus. When her family approached me in April 2001, they had just been advised that no charges were to be brought against the driver of the truck.

We have heard about families whose cases have been referred only to the sheriff court, not to the High Court, or whose cases have been downgraded. The Fitzpatrick family did not even get their day in court after their 15-year-old daughter was killed on the street just across from their house.

I am sure that many of us cannot imagine the pain that someone goes through when they lose a young child, but the pain that someone feels when they are told that no one will be held to account for the death of their child on a road is unimaginable. The local procurator fiscal office in Falkirk tried its best to keep the Fitzpatrick family involved and to inform them about what was happening. Although there were problems at times, the odd letter from an MP or MSP put the office back on track in ensuring that the family were kept informed.

For the past year, the family have been pushing to get answers to why no charges were brought against the driver and to find out the exact circumstances. Through their persistence, a year after the accident there is to be a fatal accident inquiry, which I hope will provide answers.

Families should not have to go through that process. They should not have to work for years to get answers to their questions. The Justice and Home Affairs Committee considered the Dekker family's petition—PE29—almost two years ago, but nothing has happened about it. I hope that the minister will take on board the point that Christine Grahame made and the points that the Justice 1 Committee made in its letter to Jim Wallace. I hope that the Executive will set a clear timetable for action to ensure that families do not have to go through the suffering that they go through at the moment.

17:47

**Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands)**

**(Lab):** I thank Cathie Craigie for securing the debate. As Michael Matheson, Christine Grahame and Lord James Douglas-Hamilton have pointed out, the justice committees have been involved with this matter for a couple of years.

One of my most vivid memories of the early days of the Parliament is of attending a meeting in the Signet library that SCID organised to highlight its dissatisfaction and despair about the way in which the law dealt with road traffic accidents where a death or serious injury occurred. That was the first time that I was aware that there was a vast problem.

I have always been aware that the victims of road traffic accidents—not necessarily ones that caused death or injury—are sometimes aggrieved because the prosecution service does not inform them of what is happening. The victims are not part of the game; although the drivers are perhaps prosecuted, the victims are kept on the sidelines. There have been cases of that in which people were traumatised and felt that they should have had an input into what was happening.

Every member who was at that meeting felt deeply that justice had not been done in the case that we heard about, because the prosecution had taken no account of the horrific results of the accident. There was not even a right to a fatal accident inquiry. It was felt that the circumstances surrounding the death in that case were never fully examined.

SCID also pointed out that charges are often reduced from dangerous driving to careless driving and that cases involving causing death by dangerous driving are often dealt with in the sheriff court and are rarely referred to the High Court for sentencing. SCID felt that that trivialised the gravity of what was a most serious matter.

Mr and Mrs Dekker's petition came before the Justice and Home Affairs Committee at about that time and we heard related petitions from Tricia Donegan and Isobel Brydie. In my constituency, Mr and Mrs Gillies of Inverness came to see me, because they felt that they had never had their son's death investigated properly. A taxi killed him late one night—I think that it was Christmas eve—on Skye. His parents have never received a proper explanation of what happened to him.

Two principles are in conflict. The first is the principle that only the action should be judged, not its consequences, although there is also an indication that intention is judged. The second is the principle that there should be a full, public investigation of an action that has killed or maimed someone. The former takes no account of the needs of victims or of their families. We are aware

that victims' needs are being taken into consideration in other areas of the law, so why can we not look at victims' needs in the case of road traffic accidents? I do not mean simply keeping people informed that charges have been downgraded. At the least, people have a psychological need for a fatal accident inquiry at which the death would be explained, as that might allow them to come to terms with what had happened.

Another aspect of the problem is that different types of driving-related charges seem to shade into one another. There seems to be no clear, objective idea of what constitutes careless, as opposed to dangerous, driving. That leads to the worry that sheriffs' and jurors' personal driving standards influence decisions and sentences. People feel strongly that the sheriff court is not the right place in which to try offences of causing death by dangerous driving. They believe that that sends out the wrong signals about such serious offences.

I pay tribute to Mr and Mrs Dekker and the other petitioners for their courage and persistence. I hope that their efforts will be rewarded.

17:51

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** I endorse what other members have said in congratulating Cathie Craigie and SCID. I particularly congratulate Mr and Mrs Dekker, who are models for others. They have turned a family tragedy into a persistent campaign to improve arrangements for the future and to ensure fewer deaths for other families to cope with.

I endorse what members have said about whether such cases should be tried in the High Court or the sheriff court. We must have clarity and consistency in the legal process, because, at the moment, it is neither clear nor consistent, which sends out a bad message. We also need better information about, statistics on and research into the Scottish figures.

Nora Radcliffe raised the issue of speed, which we do not take seriously enough. Quite often, plea-bargaining comes into cases that arise from speeding—in my view, that should not happen. We have fewer traffic police, and members have mentioned the fact that, unlike drunk driving, speedy driving is not regarded as a bad thing. Speedy driving is still socially acceptable, and we must send out a message that attacks that attitude vigorously.

We must also concentrate on developing more road safety measures. When the Parliament discussed the Transport (Scotland) Bill a year or so ago, Nora Radcliffe and I managed to amend it to include home zones, which is an initiative to

create safer roads in residential areas. There are similar measures that we should push for strongly. In particular, we must get the public wound up about road accidents, in the same way as people get wound up about rail accidents. People are killed in those tragic accidents, which are disastrous for the families concerned, but the figures involved are trifling when compared with those for road accidents. More people in Britain are killed in road accidents than are killed in many a fully-fledged battle, yet no one seems to worry about them. We must get over that attitude and bring road safety, speedy driving and the prevention of dangerous driving to the forefront of politics.

17:54

**Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab):** I also congratulate Cathie Craigie and the Dekker family on drawing the issue of death by dangerous driving to the Parliament's attention. I agree with much of what previous speakers have said.

First, I want to highlight the importance of doing all that we can to increase the penalties for serious driving offences. People who drive cars in a dangerous way put not only themselves but others at risk. MSPs want to increase the number of people who use bicycles or who walk, but if we were to penalise driving offences properly, we would increase the safety of people who use those forms of transport.

Secondly, I agree with what Lord James Douglas-Hamilton said about treating serious injury as a consequence of dangerous driving in the same way as death as a consequence of dangerous driving. As Christine Grahame pointed out, whether the victims of such accidents survive often comes down to the skill of paramedics and doctors rather than to the nature of the driving offence. The victims of crime need to be considered.

As well as the issue that has been raised about the length of sentences and decisions about whether cases should go before the sheriff court or to higher level courts, there are also issues of procedures, particularly in relation to the required notification period. I know of a particularly tragic case of a cyclist who was knocked down and who lost the opportunity to have some restitution or understanding of what happened in his particular case because it became time expired as the result of a procedural foul-up. That was particularly devastating for that man.

In other areas of criminal justice we are moving towards recognising what happens to the victim and giving the victim some system of retribution—a process that leads towards closure. Up to now,

that process has not been developed in the context of road traffic accidents. We must pay better attention to victims and their families in the process of handling such cases.

If we are to make a difference, there must be a step change in the way in which people use their cars. Modern technology and engineering means that people feel very safe when they are driving their cars and forget their velocity and the damage that can be caused to the human body as a result of driving accidents. We must change people's perception of that and make them recognise that they are in charge of something that can kill or maim other people, so that they treat driving with greater respect, in their own interests and those of everyone else who uses the roads.

17:57

**Andrew Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I, too, pay warm tribute to Cathie Craigie for securing today's debate and for her excellent speech. I pay tribute to the telling speeches of Des McNulty and other members who spoke before him.

I hope that the debate will provide a wonderful example of the case for bringing democracy closer to the people. Campaigns such as the assiduous campaign on dangerous driving, which has been running since the Parliament was set up, can bring issues to the floor of the legislature in a way that is not possible when democracy is further from the people. I hope that the Dekker family and others will take some comfort from the fact that their assiduous campaign on the issue is beginning to produce results, not just in the form of debate, but in securing the opportunity for the Solicitor General for Scotland and others to listen to what the elected Parliament has to say. The lobbying has been first class.

As we have heard, death by dangerous driving is a particularly horrifying crime for people to endure, given its futility and needlessness. As Margaret Ewing said, cars are lethal weapons to drivers and those all around them. All of us are guilty from time to time of carelessness behind the wheel. As members have said, we must remain vigilant.

When dangerous drivers cost lives, the legal and justice system owes it not just to the victims and their families but to us all to take a stiff look at sentencing. I hope that we will hear more from the Solicitor General on that in a few moments. The motion is right to identify a route through this and I support its sentiments absolutely.

The Solicitor General might say that there are time pressures that prevent cases being heard at the High Court. If so, perhaps it would be possible for cases to be heard in sheriff courts but for

sentence to be passed at the High Court. That would keep the pressure off the top end of the legal system, but would allow the stiffest possible penalties to be applied. That may be one way in which to reduce the bottleneck in the system. Other options have been suggested and there may be the possibility of legislation. I wait to hear what the Solicitor General says in closing the debate.

In conclusion, I congratulate Cathie Craigie on so ably giving voice to her constituents' concerns. I hope that we will prove the worth of the Scottish Parliament and the processes behind it. I hope that we can start to produce results from the excellent campaigning of the good people who have brought the issue to our attention.

18:00

**Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab):** I, too, commend Cathie Craigie and the many people involved in SCID for their continued pressure and campaigning ever since the Parliament was established. I commend in particular the action that has been taken by my constituent Mrs Isobel Brydie, who has been involved with SCID for many years.

I agree with every one of the speeches that have been made so far, but I will single out Donald Gorrie's contribution. He identified the fact that, as a society, we seem to generate far more outrage and concern when there are deaths on the railways than we do when there are deaths on our roads. More than 3,000 people die on the roads in the UK each year. Although that is the equivalent of an accident such as that which happened at Clapham occurring every three days, we still do not seem to show the same degree of outrage that we quite rightly show in the case of deaths on our railways.

Trying to improve road safety and reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on our roads is a broad issue. It does not only cover dangerous driving, but involves issues such as the proper engineering of our road systems and the need for vehicles to be as safe as possible.

Dangerous driving and the use of illegal drugs or alcohol while driving a car are issues that society does not deal with as seriously as it should do. Society considers the use of drink and drugs while driving a car to be a more serious issue than speeding. However, as Donald Gorrie rightly said, speeding should be treated every bit as seriously as the use of drink and drugs while driving a car. The risk of injuring or killing someone through the use of the car, including the making of dangerous manoeuvres, is high.

I agree with members who said that the prosecution of cases involving dangerous driving

should be dealt with at the High Court. As John McAllion indicated, as the Parliament has decided the level of punishment that should be available for such crimes, that level of sentencing should be available in such cases.

It is necessary for us to improve the standard of training for prosecutors and police in respect of investigating and prosecuting such crimes. Detailed, technical arguments are often involved concerning the true cause of the accident. There is also a need to improve detection methods in crimes that involve the use of excessive speed and jumping red lights. I ask ministers to take those issues on board.

We need to have a strong and hard-hitting public education campaign to get everyone to see how serious the issue is and to treat it with the level of outrage that we should.

18:03

**Mr Tom McCabe (Hamilton South) (Lab):** Like other members, I say well done to Cathie Craigie on securing the debate. From previous experience, I know how long she has waited to secure this slot and how patient she has been as she awaited the outcome of certain research. I congratulate her on her tenacity.

Members have mentioned the anxiety and trauma that goes with these types of incidents for the people who are injured and for their families. The anxiety and trauma is immense. People who are unaffected by such incidents may find the subject hard to describe and understand. However, our legal procedures and a lack of clarity are adding to the anxiety and trauma that is involved. That is wrong, as people are entitled to a consistent application of the law. People need the reassurance that when they find themselves in circumstances such as a dangerous driving incident, a consistent and clear application of the law will be made. People also need to be reassured by procedures that allow them to see that a proper investigation has taken place and that proper judgments have been made in all the circumstances that apply in their case.

As has been alluded to, research shows clearly that, as referral to the High Court seldom seems to be an option, the maximum penalty is not considered in all cases. Surely people who, through no fault of their own, have to cope with injury and loss are entitled to much better than that. Surely the debate will mark the start of a process that rights that wrong. I hope that the debate reassures people and bring us to a position where the law in Scotland is consistently applied. I hope that people, whatever their circumstances, anxieties or trauma, are reassured that an incident will be properly investigated and judged on in the appropriate court.

18:05

**The Solicitor General for Scotland (Mrs Elish Angiolini):** I congratulate Cathie Craigie on securing today's debate and welcome the chance to respond on behalf of the Executive. I am aware of the long-standing concern that has been expressed by Cathie Craigie and other MSPs about fatal road traffic accidents in Scotland. I also wish to acknowledge the work of Isobel Brydie, SCID and Mr and Mrs Dekker, whom I had the privilege of meeting this summer. At an early stage in my appointment, I had determined that we required to discuss these issues with SCID.

The debate has emphasised the terrible and devastating impact that fatal road incidents have on the lives of families and on communities all over Scotland. Although, thankfully, there has been a significant decline in the number of such deaths in Scotland, the statistics still make chilling reading. As Cathie Craigie pointed out, 347 people have been killed in 308 fatal road traffic accidents. That figure is unacceptable. Each death represents a devastating and irreplaceable loss for those affected, and I am pleased that the debate gives the Parliament a chance to consider this important issue.

On the suggestion made by some members that there is complacency in the legal establishment, I should say that that is not the case. Having been a procurator fiscal, I know that any cases that are prosecuted and investigated are uppermost in the fiscal's mind. As a fiscal who has become the Solicitor General, I still remember each and every case that I prosecuted under section 1 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, because of its devastating impact on family, friends and community.

Moreover, having been the victim both of a rail disaster and of an offence of careless driving under section 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 in my unfortunate personal history, I have a particular interest in this matter. Indeed, I believe that it is central to our thinking and of great importance to procurators fiscal around the country. As a result, I hope that I will convince the chamber that we are actively examining the matter and that we are certainly not complacent about it.

As Donald Gorrie pointed out, our society generally fails to appreciate the impact of bad driving. Every morning when I come into Edinburgh, I see examples of what could be described as careless and indeed dangerous driving all over the roads. Today, I saw a man who was the height of respectability shaving on his way to work. Others were tailgating and driving without observing the gap. The fact that there is no appreciation of the problem's seriousness is a cultural issue that must be addressed.

The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

are fully aware of that and of the part that the service plays in raising awareness of the unacceptability of such driving in our communities. As part of that, the COPFS meets the next of kin in each of these dreadful cases to explain the processes as sensitively as possible. That very important element of the debate is all too easily neglected and I will touch on it again later.

The TRL's report on dangerous driving provides the context of Cathie Craigie's motion and represents a welcome contribution to the debate about how the law should deal with dangerous driving. Members voiced concerns about the level of Scottish participation in the research project and there have been calls for separate Scottish research. I should point out that the COPFS participated in the research and that researchers interviewed a number of procurators fiscal. However, we will further examine members' concerns about the need for Scottish research on the matter and look forward to reviewing prosecution practice in this area in light of other developments that I will mention later.

As well as building on the good work that underpins the TRL report, we will be fully involved with the Home Office and the steering group in the consideration of the report. I understand that, in light of concerns about the time scale for that consideration, representatives of the Scottish Executive justice department will attend the group's next meeting in October.

Christine Grahame mentioned statistics. A very salient point that I mentioned earlier to Mrs Brydie of SCID is that we have adopted a system to ensure that figures are collated by our computer systems in the COPFS. As a result, we are now able to distinguish section 3 cases that cause death from those that do not. However, there is clearly room for development. Indeed, improving research and development in the service forms part of our current modernisation programme.

A number of important issues have been raised today, to which I wish to respond. It has been suggested that the fact that many prosecutions under section 1 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 are taken in the sheriff court in some way downgrades the seriousness of the offences. As members of Parliament will be aware, careless and dangerous driving encompasses a vast range of conduct. There seems to be no end to the infinite creativity of bad drivers and those who are determined to abuse motor vehicles in their conduct. Many of those cases are different in their facts and circumstances, as are the personal circumstances of the accused, some of whom might have bad records for driving and show a disregard for our road traffic laws. Each case must be considered on the basis of its individual facts and circumstances.

In considering the available evidence, Crown counsel and a central collegiate body that exists to ensure consistency in the application of this law will consider each case and apply professional judgment based on the evidence available and the accused's record, as well as a full precognition by the procurator fiscal. If a sentence in excess of three years—the limit of the sheriff's ordinary powers—seems appropriate, the case will proceed in the High Court. That is not the end of the story, as has been recognised by many members during the course of the debate. If the sheriff takes a view that a sentence in excess of three years is appropriate, he or she can take the view to remit the case to the High Court, as occurred recently in the case of Robert Sharp, where the High Court imposed a sentence of seven years' imprisonment.

The decision to proceed in the sheriff court does not and should not be taken to devalue or downgrade the seriousness of the offence. Sheriffs in Scotland deal with a full range of driving offences every day. They have a huge expertise in road traffic law; they are professional judges at the same level as Crown court judges who consider all those cases in England and Wales.

The Crown court—where all such cases are indicted in England and Wales—shares a common jurisdiction between the sheriff sitting with a sheriff and jury and our High Court. It should not be compared to the High Court alone as that comparison would be an inaccurate one to draw.

Sheriffs, however, see the full range of bad driving and are uniquely placed to consider the serious offences under section 1 they have the power to remit to the High Court for sentence when they consider it appropriate to do so.

Although a High Court judge can pass a sentence of up to 10 years, the statistics available to us demonstrate that our practice of indicting at sheriff and jury level in Scotland does not result in any material difference in the sentencing levels in England and Scotland.

**Christine Grahame:** Do we have figures for the number of cases that sheriffs remit from the sheriff court to the High Court for sentencing? It would be interesting to know those figures.

**The Solicitor General for Scotland:** There will not be a collection of such statistics but I will inquire whether we can get that information. If so, I will write to the member.

Although the number of such cases that are prosecuted in England and Wales is much greater, there is no significant difference in the pattern of sentences imposed. It is vital to note that our conviction rate for such cases is higher than it is in England and Wales despite the stringent evidential demands of corroboration in Scotland. It is also

acknowledged that sentencing is the responsibility of the court, not of the prosecutor or of the Executive. However, researchers also acknowledge that it is difficult to compare the circumstances of any one case in this category with another.

The motion that we are debating today calls for all deaths by dangerous driving to be prosecuted in the High Court. Given the difficult circumstances surrounding any death, I understand the sentiments behind that. However, as I have explained, existing law provides the Crown with the ability properly to consider the circumstances of a fatal road traffic accident and to allow matters to be dealt with effectively. However, that is not to say that we cannot improve the way in which we deal with such cases. Many members have made suggestions that we are acting on at present.

Members will be aware that the Procurator Fiscal Service is proceeding with the most wide-ranging review in its long history. That review will touch on all aspects of our department's work.

In June, I met Mrs Brydie from SCID to discuss some of her concerns and I indicated that I would look at sentencing patterns down south and compare them with our own patterns. Bob Ainsworth's announcement of the UK Government's intention to increase the maximum penalty to 14 years clearly must inform prosecution policy and our approach in future.

Lord Bonomy is conducting a review of the work of the High Court in Scotland. That report is due later this year, and any reappraisal of how we handle fatal road accidents must, quite properly, be taken in light of the recommendations that Lord Bonomy will undoubtedly make. In the meantime, I have instructed that we will monitor closely each section 1 prosecution and review our approach in contemplation of the new maximum penalty.

I shall conclude today by commenting on the aspect of dealing with fatal road accidents that can sometimes be overlooked. Many members have touched on the grief and distress experienced by families. Members will be aware from their constituencies that engaging with the criminal justice system can be difficult and frustrating. We have taken serious steps to ensure that better information, support and communication is available to allow the next of kin to feel less marginalised by the system and to feel that they are being listened to. We must ensure that they follow and are supported through the process, which is in itself extremely traumatic.

I am grateful to members, and particularly to Cathie Craigie for raising the matter. We are training our prosecutors. Detailed and extensive training on homicide, road traffic deaths and specifically on section 1 offences will take place

this year. We have implemented detailed guidelines for the police, ensuring that there is a consistent and thorough approach to the investigations of road traffic deaths. Those steps are being taken this year and we are still considering more actions to ensure that we enhance our performance and reflect truly the public interest in this area. I am grateful to members for their attention.

*Meeting closed at 18:16.*





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