

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 26 September 2002

Session 1

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 26 September 2002

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

Rural Business (Sustainability)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh): The first item of business is a debate on motion S1M-3418, in the name of Alex Fergusson, on business sustainability in rural Scotland, and on two amendments to that motion. I invite members who wish to take part in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons, and I call Alex Fergusson to speak to and move the motion.

09:30

Alex Fergusson (South of Scotland) (Con): I draw members' attention to my declaration of interests as registered.

It is good to see that a debate on rural issues first thing on a Thursday morning can still pack them in. I am grateful to those members who have turned up, particularly from other parties, to hear a little bit of common sense spoken on the subject. That was not meant to be a joke, but I shall now get down to serious matters.

Four years ago, Scotland was beginning to buzz with anticipation at the prospect of life with a new Parliament after almost 300 years without one. Although it should be noted that that anticipation was accompanied by varying degrees of eagerness, it was remorselessly led by the proponents of the new constitutional arrangements as being the panacea for all ills, the very greenest of grass on the other side of the political fence, and indeed the answer to all Scotland's problems. That it could never be mattered not a bit, as the electorate were lulled into believing that the new politics that would be on offer would solve issues one at a time in a mature, consensual manner befitting the 21st century and the new political era that devolution would bring.

It is therefore perfectly fitting that, as the build-up to the general election begins, we should reflect on whether those overfed aspirations have been met and on whether the new politics—which, as we all know now, turned out to be exactly the same as the old politics except that it is perpetuated as such by the power-crazed ambitions of the Liberal Democrats—has delivered. The short answer is, of course, that it has not and that fact was even admitted recently by our First Minister. It has not delivered because the hype was over the top, the aspirations were

never based on reality and the promises were never deliverable.

As I have said on many occasions, nowhere is that disillusionment more keenly felt than in rural Scotland. Rural Scotland was always more sceptical about this Parliament and it has remained so about the achievements of its first Executive. The reasons for that are not hard to come by and are what lie behind our motion this morning. Our traditional rural industries—fishing, forestry and farming—continue to face real problems. Although we all accept that times change and that economic forces must change with them, we cannot underestimate the value of those industries to our rural economy. They are still the bedrock and will remain so for some time to come. To those great industries we can now add tourism. My colleagues David Davidson and Jamie McGrigor will expand on tourism and fisheries in their contributions.

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): Will Alex Fergusson join me in congratulating the Scottish National Party on boosting tourism in rural areas by having its conference in Inverness, where most of my colleagues are today?

Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab): Inverness is a city. [*Laughter.*]

Alex Fergusson: I am only sorry that Mr Home Robertson beat me to it, because I would not dream of congratulating the SNP on anything, and I certainly cannot do so now, as SNP members do not even know the difference between a town and a city.

Last Thursday, together with John Scott and Jamie McGrigor, I joined a third of Scotland's dairy farmers, who were gathered at Asda's Grangemouth distribution centre to protest at the pitiful share of the end price for milk that they receive. I spoke to three relatively young men from north Ayrshire, who spoke with great clarity but also with great bitterness about what the Executive was, or was not, doing for them. One of them, whose farm borders a town and who has traditionally had a generally good relationship with the residents of that town, who walk on his farm both at his direction and with his blessing, said that no one now bothers asking him. He told me, "They walk all over the farm with two fingers pointing in my direction." That is before the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill is even enacted. His question, which is echoed by many, including me, is why, given all the problems that he faces as a farmer, the Government has concentrated on the social engineering that lies behind the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill, the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Bill and the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002. It does not make any difference how easy it is to sell those bills to

the urban majority. In most of rural Scotland they are seen as irrelevant, damaging and driven by political dogma rather than practical reality.

Even where the Minister for Environment and Rural Development has turned his hand to practical measures, they have usually ended in shambolic failure. For proof of that shambles, one need only look at the agricultural business improvement scheme, the rural stewardship scheme, the less favoured areas support scheme in any of its various guises or the 121 farmers caught up in the double payment of sheep annual premium. Farming, whether the Executive recognises it or not, feels let down and unwanted and the blame for that lies squarely in the hands of the Executive.

Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Does the convener of the Rural Development Committee recognise that, between 1995 and 1997, farm incomes fell by 56 per cent, so that is not something new? Does he also realise that the Scottish Executive has just announced that the average amount of money given to all farmers who claim a subsidy has risen to £19,000 a year?

Alex Fergusson: Yet the problems continue every year. The situation has continued to decline on an annual basis, and it is probably one of the longest sustained depressions that agriculture in Scotland has known for some considerable time. I shall give some figures later that will address Mr Rumbles's point.

Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP): Does Alex Fergusson accept that Mike Rumbles's point is erroneous? The average may be £19,000 per farmer, but too much of the money goes to too few farmers, and we must cap the amount of cash that goes to the bigger farmers to spread the cake more widely.

Alex Fergusson: Mr Lochhead knows as well as I do that the problems with capping come not from this Parliament or from Westminster, but from Europe. That is something that can be addressed only at European level.

I want to move on to forestry, if I may.

Mr Rumbles: I am not surprised.

Alex Fergusson: I shall come back later to figures that will address Mike Rumbles's problems.

Yesterday marked the opening of the international forest fest 2002 at Lockerbie. It is a magnificent celebration that receives worldwide recognition of which I hope all Scotland can be proud. I believe that the Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development will be there tomorrow in the company of the Princess Royal—probably counting his blessings that it is not her brother. That event is a worthy recognition of a

vital industry which, as I highlighted in my members' business debate in Aberdeen, is in some peril and will remain so if the Executive does not engage with the industry to solve the transport problems that currently beset it. Given that the industry was founded with considerable help and assistance from the taxpayer, it is surely criminal that the same industry should now be almost paralysed in some areas by the lack of public funding in its transport infrastructure. Following my members' business debate in Aberdeen, at which the deputy minister agreed to join the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and representatives of the industry to discuss those problems, I wrote to him in early July requesting further details. I only hope that he has implemented his meeting rather more urgently than he has treated my letter, as I have yet to receive a reply.

Over the past three and a half years, we have constantly been told that, as traditional industries decline in overall importance, new industries and businesses will take their place in the rural economy. It would be lovely and wonderful to think that they had, but the truth is that they have not. That is why my motion

"notes that rural business start-ups remain at an unacceptably low level".

Although I welcome the significant successes that occur in the Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise areas, there are just not enough of them. Despite the upbeat report given to us two weeks ago by Dr Jim Hunter of HIE, there were fewer business start-ups in the Highlands and Islands during the first five years of this Labour Government than in the last four years of the previous Conservative one. Mr Rumbles will be interested to note that there were 350 business start-ups per annum under the Conservative Government, but that figure has been reduced to 275 under Labour. Why is that? It is quite simply because the Administration has no understanding of business and no sympathy with business needs, and has led this country to the pitiful situation in which we have seen a decline in company creation from 10 per cent to 1.7 per cent in just one year. That is unsustainable and must be addressed.

The way to address the problem is through infrastructure, both for transport, which is the subject of our next debate, and for information technology. Only when some meaningful Executive attention is paid to those matters will we be able to address the fact that rural Scotland has to play what the chief executive of Dumfries and Galloway Council recently referred to as catch-up in the jobs market.

Only then will we be able to unleash the potential to which the SNP's new snappy little slogan refers, but which the only policy on which

all its members agree, independence, will hold back and stifle—not unlike the new SNP colour scheme. Only when the Executive realises that it must differentiate between urban and rural transport, schools, health issues and all other service provision will rural Scotland again begin to prosper.

Almost four years, 328 agricultural publications, 100 fisheries documents and 816 environment and natural resources papers have passed, yet rural Scotland has little to show for that other than an increase in the number of shelves that are required to hold 1,244 reports, strategies, leaflets, reviews and studies with which our Government has busied itself. The problems remain, the fires continue to burn and the Government continues to fiddle. Last weekend, more than 400,000 people took to the streets of London to show their displeasure. The people of Scotland will undoubtedly show equal displeasure at the ballot box next May.

I move,

That the Parliament deplores the failure of the Scottish Executive to arrest the decline of our rural industries; notes that rural business start-ups remain at an unacceptably low level; regrets and deplores the Executive's continued lack of investment in rural transport and information technology infrastructure and the over-regulation which has resulted in barriers to the regeneration of the rural economy, and calls on the Executive to devolve decision-making powers to a local level while reversing policies which are damaging to rural communities in Scotland.

09:41

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Allan Wilson): I thank Alex Fergusson for his less than inspiring address, but I must correct him. When I was last in royal Deeside, I was in the company of HRH Prince Charles rather than his sister. The delightful Camilla Parker Bowles was also there. Prince Charles was a charming dinner host and we discussed the future of aquaculture in Scotland. I do not believe any of the recent press reports.

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Will the minister confirm how many times HRH Prince Charles has written to him?

Allan Wilson: He wrote to me after the dinner. The note was personal and I do not wish to share its contents with the chamber.

Scottish Labour and our trusty friends and allies, the Scottish Liberal Democrats, are committed to ensuring that our rural areas develop and thrive in ways that leave no one behind. We are committed to closing the opportunity gap. We must find radical solutions to problems in our farming and fishing industries—I agree with Alex Fergusson that there are many problems in our rural areas. We should support a diverse rural economy that

provides opportunities for local people, aim to reproduce what is best in rural communities and spread benefits to those who have previously been excluded.

Supporting sustainable rural economic development is a key priority for us. We want to help rural Scotland to capitalise on its strengths, many of which members know about. There should be an adaptable and entrepreneurial work force, a reputation for quality and an excellent environment and quality of life in rural areas.

While Labour and our partners are investing to help people in rural areas to get jobs and tackle rural poverty, what are the Conservatives doing? They seem to be more concerned with fox hunters and landowners. The Tories have called the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Bill a right-to-rob bill. In fact, it will mean that tenants will have first refusal in buying land that comes up for sale. Labour is empowering tenants while the Tories want to protect the vested interests of landlords. The Conservatives and the SNP support a right to rob. We command the centre left, which is where the vast majority of the people of Scotland are.

The Executive's commitment to rural development is firm. We take an integrated and holistic approach to the issues and needs of our rural areas. We embrace economic development and the development of communities, skills and learning, transport and infrastructure, communications and connectivity. Specific responsibility for rural development at Cabinet level ensures that rural issues are correctly prioritised and there is a co-ordinated approach through the Cabinet sub-committee on rural development to tackle particular concerns and problems.

However, we recognise the scale of the challenges that rural businesses face and the significant variation in economic challenges that are faced in different parts of Scotland. We recognise that local flexibility is required. Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise, together with their networks of local enterprise companies—on whose boards significant representation is drawn from local business communities—provide the right mechanism to deliver economic development activities in rural and urban areas.

We firmly believe that a strong economy provides the foundation for robust and sustainable rural development—that underpins our political strategy. A strong economy also helps to meet our objectives for social justice, which are as important in rural Scotland as in urban and suburban Scotland. It also helps to meet our objectives of increasing opportunities for all and first-class public services and infrastructure to help rural businesses and communities to grow and prosper.

Like their urban and suburban counterparts, rural businesses first need a climate of macroeconomic stability. Scotland's position as an integral part of the UK economy brings us substantial benefits in respect of macroeconomic stability. Interest rates are at a 38-year low.

Mr Duncan Hamilton (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Not a single member and neither of the two people in the gallery would dispute that we want a strong economy, but will the minister concede that we are in recession? On delivering for rural businesses, the minister mentioned information technology infrastructure. He will remember that Wendy Alexander, the previous Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning, wanted a strategy that included a pilot scheme in the Highlands and Islands to roll out broadband. Has anything been done about that project? When will it be delivered?

Allan Wilson: I intend to deal with connectivity in my oration. We do not deny that there are problems in the economy, but the member should listen to what I say. Macroeconomic stability—whether in urban or rural Scotland—is absolutely fundamental to the ability of the Scottish economy to pull its way out of recession. The member must share that objective with Scottish Labour and its Liberal Democrat colleagues.

Inflation is at a 30-year low and unemployment is at its lowest for a generation. I say to Duncan Hamilton that each of those achievements would be jeopardised by economic independence. Irrespective of how economic independence is packaged or the colour that is used to disguise it, it jeopardises such stability. Inflation is at a 30-year low, interest rates are at a 38-year low and unemployment is at its lowest for a generation.

Richard Lochhead: Will the minister give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, the minister is over his time already.

Allan Wilson: I must make progress.

With such economic stability, we are delivering unprecedented resources to growing the Scottish economy. Recently, the Executive unveiled significant and far-reaching expenditure plans, which mean that, by 2005-06, public spending in Scotland will be more than £4 billion higher than in 2002-03.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister should wind up.

Allan Wilson: That is a huge investment in every aspect of Scottish life—in growth in the economy, improved transport infrastructure and in increasing opportunities for all our people. The investment will be throughout Scotland.

The Executive is committed to promoting a vibrant rural economy, building on existing

strengths, encouraging new opportunities, supporting inward investment and developing a skilled work force. We are providing significant additional resources to deliver growth in the Scottish economy, supporting rural businesses and delivering our top five priorities for the whole of Scotland—health, education, transport, jobs and reducing crime.

I move amendment S1M-3418.2, to leave out from “deplores” to end and insert:

“endorses the Scottish Executive's significant plans for investing in Scotland over the next three years to support economic growth, including sustainable rural development; notes that a strong economy provides the foundation for meeting social justice objectives in respect of increasing opportunities for all, first-class public services and infrastructure, and further endorses the key priorities and long-term actions set out in *A Smart, Successful Scotland*, the enterprise strategy for urban and rural areas, of helping businesses and communities grow, building global connections, and improving Scotland's skills base.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Richard Lochhead to speak to and move amendment S1M-3418.1. I ask members to stick to the time limits.

09:50

Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the debate, which is on a very important subject, although I lament Alex Fergusson's woeful performance in his opening speech for the Tories.

The best thing about the Tories today is the colours worn by Annabel Goldie. It is good to see the impact that the SNP is having on setting trends. I commend her for wearing a lovely shade of heather.

The SNP will support the Tory motion, but the striking thing about it is that it could have been lodged and supported by the SNP in any of the 18 years when the Tories were in power, because it is as relevant to the 18 years of Tory Government as it is to the three and five years of Labour Government in Edinburgh and Westminster respectively.

The Government's record on making progress in rural Scotland in the first three and a half years of the Scottish Parliament has been appalling. Despite the fact that the budget is apparently going up to £26 billion in a few years, I do not think that anyone in Scotland, particularly in rural Scotland, would trust the Government to spend any of the cash wisely in rural Scotland or to make the blindest bit of difference. That is why it is so important for rural Scotland that we change the Administration at next May's elections to the Scottish Parliament.

One of the difficulties about the debate is in defining rural businesses. When I made an inquiry

at the Scottish Parliament information centre, I was told that

“it is very difficult to provide information about the status of ‘rural’ businesses”

and that

“the Executive said that ‘there is no official measure of rural businesses’.”

One thing that we have to get right at the beginning is information and statistics about the health of the rural economy and the number of rural businesses. All of us who represent rural constituencies know fine well that our rural communities face enormous challenges. In recent years we have seen a downturn in the agricultural and fisheries sectors. The manufacturing sector has taken hits because of the strength of the pound and tourism has taken hits because of foot-and-mouth disease and other issues. We know that a challenge that faces the Parliament is to stimulate economic growth in the rural economy if we want to create jobs and build our rural economies in the future.

Mr Rumbles: I referred in an earlier intervention to the Scottish Executive’s announcement, in response to my question to a minister, that the average amount of money given to all farmers who claim a subsidy is £19,000 a year. In Richard Lochhead’s intervention on Alex Fergusson, he indicated that he wanted to cap that level. At what level does he want to cap the subsidy to farmers?

Richard Lochhead: Mike Rumbles clearly does not understand the situation, which is that some farmers get up to £300,000 while other farmers get almost nothing. The SNP supports family farms and believes that they should get more support. The point that we are making is that support should not go only to the big farmers.

The Rural Development Committee has run two important inquiries into the state of the rural economy. The first one was on changing employment patterns in rural Scotland and the second was on identifying obstacles to rural development. We have heard woeful stories from around the country from our rural communities. The submission from Argyll and the Islands Enterprise indicates that the population in that part of the world is declining. It states:

“All areas are depopulating other than North and Mid Argyll, Mull and Cowal.”

That story is replicated throughout many rural communities in Scotland. It is worrying that even when the population is increasing the number of young people in those communities is decreasing, because they are going to the cities to get a future and to get jobs.

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): Will Richard Lochhead give way?

Richard Lochhead: I want to move on.

We are finding out from the evidence that is coming in from rural communities that small businesses are closing down and collapsing. Boarded-up shops litter the high streets of our rural towns and villages. Supermarkets are taking a big share of all the business and no one is doing anything to protect the high street shops. Aberdeenshire has lost 181 shops over the past 20 years. The situation is going from bad to worse under the Executive. All our communities have lost their banks and post offices.

George Lyon: Will Richard Lochhead take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No. He is in his last minute.

Richard Lochhead: The message that we are getting from all rural communities is “Infrastructure, infrastructure”. If we get the transport infrastructure right the rest will happen naturally. Broadband is a huge issue. We must do more to improve broadband infrastructure in rural communities.

Bob Downes, from BT Scotland, wrote yesterday in *Business a.m.* that broadband will not help many rural communities because of the costs and the lack of infrastructure. We must ensure that geographical location is not a factor for businesses. We can do that only by making sure that we have a modern economy.

Regulation is a huge issue. Who on earth would want to work in many of our rural industries? I am holding up a summary of the fisheries regulations, which the Executive issued a few weeks ago. I challenge anyone to understand 27 pages of the most complex fisheries regulations. It is no wonder that people want to leave that industry. I also have a 70-page document that outlines one scheme and it is accompanied by a 17-page leaflet. That is for only one of the many farming schemes. It is no wonder that the farming community has to divert valuable resources to employ people to fill in the forms for them. That cash should be staying in the pockets of the farmers.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is time for the member to wind up.

Richard Lochhead: It is not only about infrastructure. We must ensure that we have powers in the Parliament to deliver for our rural communities. The aggregates tax and other macroeconomic matters, which are damaging our rural communities, are reserved to Westminster. There is nothing that the Parliament can do about them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is launching into a lot of new material. Can he wind up, please?

Richard Lochhead: There is also the issue of European representation. Ross Finnie, the Minister for Environment and Rural Development, apologised recently to the people of Scotland because Margaret Beckett, the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, turned down agrimonetary compensation for Scottish farmers. We lost £11 million for rural Scotland because we do not have our own representation.

I conclude by saying that our message to the Executive is to deliver the infrastructure to take rural Scotland forward and to ensure that the Parliament acquires powers so that we can represent our rural communities in Europe and elsewhere. Perhaps then we will be able to release the potential of rural Scotland.

I move amendment S1M-3418.1, to insert at end:

“and recognises that Her Majesty’s Government has ignored the plight of our rural communities and calls for the many powers that it currently has to be transferred to the Parliament in order to boost the rural economy.”

09:56

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): I declare my interest, as in the register of members’ interests.

I congratulate Alex Fergusson and the Tories on lodging the motion. Alex Fergusson suffers from the widespread complaint that seems to afflict all Tories—they have no memory of what happened before May 1997. Once again, Alex Fergusson demonstrated that in his speech.

Alex Fergusson: Will Mr Lyon take an intervention?

George Lyon: I want to make some progress. I will let Alex Fergusson in later.

The Tory motion criticises the Executive for its continued lack of investment in rural infrastructure and rural public services. Alex Fergusson failed to notice that last week Andy Kerr announced a £4 billion increase in new spending by the Scottish Executive over the next three years. That is a 4.6 per cent real-terms increase. Rural Scotland’s hospitals, schools, houses and roads all stand to benefit from that massive increase in investment by the Lib-Lab coalition.

That investment comes on top of the real-terms increase that has been delivered in the first three years of the coalition. That investment is starting to rebuild our rural infrastructure after 18 years of neglect under the Tory Government.

Alex Fergusson: Can George Lyon tell me of one rural businessman, farmer or land manager who was operating five years ago who would

rather be where they are now than where they were then?

Mr Hamilton: George Lyon. [*Laughter.*]

George Lyon: As I make progress through my speech, Alex Fergusson will realise that that is all down to the Tory legacy.

Our rural economy is in such a state because of 18 years of Tory misrule. The Tory motion claims that the Executive has failed

“to arrest the decline of our rural industries”.

The facts do not support that premise. Farming will this year receive a record high of £60 million in less favoured areas support. The average figure under the Tories over 18 years was 50 per cent lower than that. There has been a 50 per cent increase since the Executive came to power. This year there has been a 30 per cent increase in the sheep annual premium that goes to our hard-pressed sheep farmers and £25 million of help is going into the fishing industry, under the decommissioning scheme, to bring the catching effort into balance.

Richard Lochhead *rose—*

John Scott (Ayr) (Con) *rose—*

George Lyon: I will make some progress, because I am limited for time. Calm down, boys. I have more points to make.

The sum of £1.8 billion is going into cleaning up our beaches and improving Scotland’s water quality. We have increased spending on promoting Scottish tourism. I have named but a few areas of investment.

That record of investing in rural Scotland is head and shoulders above the Tories’ disgraceful and appalling record of mismanagement and failure to invest in our rural infrastructure, health services and schools.

Of course, responsibility for the mess in which our primary industries, such as agriculture, find themselves falls squarely on that appalling record of mismanagement. Many of the problems that face our farmers and crofters can be traced back to the Tory years. For example, over the past six years, Scotland’s beef industry has been locked out of its export markets and Scotland’s sheep industry has been constantly threatened by the export ban on lamb that is more than six months old. Our livestock industry has been strangled by regulation, all of which was introduced by the Tories, and small abattoirs have been put out of business by that same Tory regulation.

Scotland’s reputation for the quality of its livestock’s genetics has been ruined. We were once regarded as the livestock yard of Europe, but now we are seen as the diseased man of Europe.

In 1995, the beef industry in the UK produced 110 per cent of UK consumption, but today the figure is 65 per cent. That is all down to Tory mismanagement. The Tories, in their complete mismanagement of BSE and their dealings with Europe, put electoral survival ahead of the interests of Scotland's farmers and crofters. We see the result today.

Alex Fergusson and John Scott claimed that they lobbied with their milk producer friends, who are suffering from a price for milk that is one of the lowest in Europe. Milk producers are in danger of bankruptcy and are unable to stand up to the power of the supermarkets and processors. I will tell members why they are in that position: in 1993, the Tories, in pursuit of their ideological dogma, deregulated the milk marketing boards and banned our producers from forming a single co-operative to take on the power of the supermarkets. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please close, Mr Lyon.

George Lyon: That left the producers powerless to extract a decent price for their milk.

I hope that Alex Fergusson and John Scott reminded their milk producer friends that the Tories destroyed the milk marketing boards.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please conclude, Mr Lyon.

George Lyon: I will do so, Presiding Officer.

The Tories' attempts to portray themselves as the champions of rural Scotland are nothing more than shameless hypocrisy and should be exposed as such. The Lib-Lab coalition is championing the interests of rural Scotland. We are seeking to rebuild a vibrant, prosperous rural Scotland after a disastrous 18 years of Tory failure. *[Interruption.]* I support the amendment in the name of my colleague, Allan Wilson.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Such excitement so early in the morning. *[Laughter.]*

10:02

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): For the purposes of the debate, I declare my interests.

By anyone's standards, Scottish agriculture is one of the mainstays of Scotland's rural areas. Total farm income in Scotland was £519 million in 1996 but £273 million in 2001—virtually half the total of five years earlier. I hope that that answers Mr Lyon's question.

Since 1997, we have had a Labour Government that knows little and cares less about rural areas. Since 1999, we have had a Lib-Lab coalition in power that chooses not to address the real issues and that, in the words of Iain McMillan of CBI

Scotland, needs to be less "self-indulgent" and to "grow up". After Mr Lyon's performance, who could disagree with that?

Let us look at some of the problems. Business rates in Scotland put off would-be entrepreneurs in urban areas. The difficulties of starting up a business in rural areas are far greater, given the lack of skilled people and connectivity. It is little wonder that the rate of business start-ups in Scotland is 40 per cent below the figure for England and Wales, or—as David Ross said after 1,000 days of devolution—that people are discouraged by the fact that the Scottish Executive has delivered 1,000 new laws and 500 new regulations. Coincidentally, over the same period, the Scottish Executive has produced 1,244 reports, strategies, leaflets and reviews, none of which has contributed one penny to rural incomes.

After the extra burdens of regulation, reporting and additional taxation, is the outlook positive or negative? Has the framework to deliver a prosperous rural Scotland been put in place? If one were to ask those questions of any thinking person from a rural area, the answer would be a resounding no. Of course, the farmers' markets co-operative has been a success, given that, from a standing start in 1999, it now turns over £12 million to £15 million a year. Sadly, although that is a valuable model of how to create new small rural businesses without putting at risk a significant amount of capital, and however proud I may be of the co-operative, it will not solve the problems, because they are much deeper. The difficulties that rural Scotland faces are no longer the strong pound and the lack of access to export markets because of disease. The problems that we must address are much worse, and they are of the Parliament's making.

Allan Wilson referred to the importance of macroeconomic stability, but we face macroeconomic instability. We also face land reform legislation that promotes tenants' rights to buy and unfettered access to land, coupled with the impending unquantifiable cost of the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Bill. The stock market is at its lowest level for almost a decade and the value of land, which underpins Scottish agriculture's indebtedness to the bank, is at risk.

George Lyon: Will the member take an intervention?

John Scott: No.

Quite simply, the successful businessmen and women—let us not forget the gender balance—who invest in land and houses in Scotland have sustained land values for the past 100 years or so.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have one minute, Mr Scott.

John Scott: That source of investment is about to dry up as stock market values and company profits crash about our ears and as the self-inflicted and damaging legislation sinks in to the minds of would-be investors in land in rural Scotland.

The proposed land reform legislation is bad enough in itself, but it will have the effect of bringing significantly more land on to the market at the exact time when would-be buyers have neither the funds nor the inclination to invest. The value of land will fall—who can say whether its fall will be as dramatic as that of the stock market, but fall it will, as a result of the Scottish Executive's legislation. What then? As land prices fall, the security that banks hold will become less valuable and more land will need to be sold as the ratio of security to borrowings slips into imbalance.

In the worst-case scenario, land prices will no longer be sustained by their profitability or by investments and profits from the south. They will be burdened by needless legislation from the Parliament and will fall to the value of land in third-world countries. *[Interruption.]* I see the Presiding Officer signalling me to wind up—I will do so now.

The Lib-Lab, politically correct coalition will be to blame for that fall in land prices. Make no mistake—the Parliament's land reform and access legislation is a wound that is being inflicted by the politically correct Scotsman on the unsuspecting rural Scotsman.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please close, Mr Scott.

John Scott: Within 10 years of the Parliament's inception, it will deliver third-world status to its rural dwellers. The solution lies in less regulation, taxation, reporting and interference.

The Executive still—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Scott, you must close. I do not have five minutes to give to everyone who wishes to speak.

John Scott: All right.

10:07

Mr Alasdair Morrison (Western Isles) (Lab): As always, I listened carefully to Richard Lochhead's enlightening speech. I put it into the context of the nationalists' latest mantra, which is "Release our potential", and it has just dawned on me exactly where they have been keeping their potential for all these years.

For the purposes of the debate, I will confine my remarks to the part of rural Scotland that I know best—my constituency in the Western Isles and other parts of the Highlands and Islands. Alex Fergusson's singularly depressing motion betrays

a staggering ignorance of the real success story of the Highlands and Islands. There is continuing revival and regeneration of that region, which, for one and a half centuries, was synonymous with economic contraction, social collapse, cultural decay and, above all, depopulation.

Alex Fergusson: Will the member give way?

Mr Morrison: I cannot.

The Highlands and Islands is no longer synonymous with those things—we are on the way back up and well on the way to becoming one of the highest-quality economies and societies in Europe. Business start-up rates are higher than the national average and are continuing to rise.

The Tories speak of barriers to regeneration, but where are those barriers? In my constituency, we are witnessing a transformation as we continue to invest in new ferries, causeways and bridges to link islands. We are turning the Western Isles into an ever-improving single economy. For the record, this year was our best-ever tourism season.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Mr Morrison: I cannot, as I have only four minutes. *[Interruption.]* I will not take an intervention.

I do not deny that we face challenges, but we continue to make progress. Duncan Hamilton, in an intervention, raised the issue of broadband technology. This morning, I was happy to learn from the BBC's Radio nan Gaidheal's news service that the Western Isles is closer to securing that technology, which is an important development. Delivery of that infrastructure is just around the corner. In Lewis, we continue to retool the Arnish yard, which will become a multipurpose industrial facility and a centre of excellence for the renewable energy revolution. All that work is being done with the support of the Executive, the UK Government and their agencies.

I remind the chamber of George Younger's visit to the Western Isles 20 years ago, when the unemployment rate sat at an incredible 40 per cent. Today, the unemployment rate is 5.5 per cent. In Lochaber, which for years was blighted by high levels of unemployment, unemployment sits at 1.6 per cent.

The Tories trumpet their rural and countryside credentials. Let them align themselves with the people of north Harris, who, as we speak, are negotiating a purchase price for 50,000 acres of their island. The Tories will not do that, nor will they support our Land Reform (Scotland) Bill, which will empower people and communities. They will not support the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Bill, which is another piece of legislation that will help to redistribute rights.

There is no doubt that the Tories will support their friends—the gentrified land-owning classes. Rather than helping the people of north Harris to secure the land and to set their own priorities, the Tories would prefer the island to be bought by some faceless millionaire absentee landowner. There is no doubt that the Tories will fight for the countryside; they will go to the barricades and march in our streets to sustain the systems of privilege that are being dismantled by the Executive and the UK Government.

As for Scottish National Party members with their tartan variation of Toryism, they traverse our country blowing their tartan bugle, which makes a different sound according to which part of Scotland they are in. Although they profess a desire for a publicly owned Caledonian MacBrayne ferry network, one of their spokesmen in the Western Isles welcomed a buyout bid by a private operator. They proclaim their support for the people of north Harris, but another island-based nationalist destabilised and undermined the people's efforts.

It must be admitted that the SNP has come a long way from the days of its fiery slogan, "Free by 93", to today's mildly rabble-rousing, "Release our potential." Both slogans are absolute nonsense, but at least Alex Neil had the good sense to demonstrate that he has a sense of humour.

Today's motion could have been spawned only by representatives of a party that is firmly wedded to the past, to an age when privilege was the religion and avarice was God. Let us give the Conservatives' depressing motion a resounding no vote.

10:12

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): I congratulate Alasdair Morrison on telling us the blindingly obvious—that the Western Isles is closer to getting broadband. It is closer to getting broadband only in the sense that the Western Isles is closer to the United States than Edinburgh is. That does not mean that broadband is round the corner or that broadband will come tomorrow.

I want to concentrate on broadband, because although farming defines the geography and topology of the countryside, increasingly the economic life of the countryside must lie elsewhere. Future generations must have access to future industries. The infrastructure that is delivered by broadband technology is an essential component of the countryside's access to the future.

The Executive's strategy is not a broadband strategy at all; it is a narrow-band strategy. Ministers have indicated in replies to me that delivery of the aggregated public sector demand for broadband will start in the second half of 2003,

some two years after the announcement of the strategy.

Let me read a quotation:

"Broadband is crucial to the success of the ... economy, public services and the drive to raise people's skills and knowledge."

George Lyon: Will the member take an intervention?

Stewart Stevenson: I do not have time.

"Bringing broadband within reach of more areas ... will help ... companies to become more competitive, open up opportunities for online learning and help deliver services more effectively."

I apologise to Andrew Davies, the Minister for Economic Development in Wales, for omitting the words "Welsh" and "of Wales" from that quote. Wales is an example of a country with significant rural areas that is engaging in a real broadband initiative, which receives £100 million. The rate of take-up of broadband in Wales is between 20 and 30 per cent higher as a result of the measures that have been taken.

In Scotland, we have universal access to broadband via satellite technology. How many people have taken up a system that is expensive and has some technical limitations? The answer is 182. Countries that are similar to Scotland are in a very different position. The UK is 22nd out of 28 countries in an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development survey of the most connected countries. The rate in Scotland is half the UK's rate. Finland is 10th in the OECD survey, Sweden is fourth, Norway is 14th and Switzerland is 12th. Those countries all have financial independence. Although that might not be the only reason, it certainly helps when one can control everything that one does in an economy.

We are expected to welcome the fact that 67 of our telephone exchanges are capable of supporting ADSL, but we should remember that there are 1,100 exchanges in Scotland. The figure of 67 represents a tiny percentage of that total. Scotland will be left behind unless we can bring broadband to the whole country, on a level playing field and at uniform cost, as is being done in Wales. We must not restrict the new technologies to city centres.

The next generation of broadband is SDSL—symmetric digital subscriber line—which is being piloted in Glasgow. SDSL will present a further disadvantage to rural areas, which will not have access to the technology. This week, we have learned that things will get even worse.

Allan Wilson: Will the member give way?

Stewart Stevenson: I am finished.

The fact that the new Office of Communications has no Scottish representation will mean that

broadcasting and communications will have no voice where the decisions are made. The Executive's partners in government are responsible for that.

10:16

Euan Robson (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise a couple of constituency points. Roxburgh and Berwickshire has benefited from European structural funding since 1994, in the form of the objective 5b programme until 1999 and under the south of Scotland objective 2 programme from 2000. Over the six years of that programme, the total investment available will be £44 million, of which about 45 per cent has been allocated. That represents a considerable success story.

Investments have included the business centre at Ettrick Riverside, the Border Union Agricultural Society showground at Kelso and the rural resource centre at Tweed Horizons. There have also been investments in tourism and in business support, growth and promotion, which are particularly relevant to today's debate.

The point of the European funding programmes has been to invest in such areas to the benefit of the rural economy. Unfortunately, the objective 2 programme will end in 2006, as will LEADER +. Further such programmes will be required after 2006. Without such programmes, there will be a significant funding gap, which will have a detrimental effect on the rural economy and rural businesses in my constituency and throughout the south of Scotland. That could occur at a time when the proposed reforms to the common agricultural policy might mean that the Borders and the south of Scotland will lose the direct investment that comes into the local economy from the CAP.

The overriding necessity for a new funding programme is clear to those in the south of Scotland who have noted the benefits of present and previous programmes. Any post-2006 programme should include greater flexibility than is available at present. The current programme excludes hard infrastructure projects, by which I mean transport and building projects and other direct investments of that kind. To use the jargon, the programme prefers soft infrastructure projects.

Unlike our friends in the Highlands and Islands, the south of Scotland does not have a history of European funding over many years. A large backlog of problems needs to be addressed. European funding could well address that backlog to the benefit of the rural economy and rural businesses. Flexibility would be immensely valuable in any post-2006 programme.

The key problems that will face the Scottish Borders and whole of the south of Scotland in the

next few years revolve around the lack of skilled labour, which is the result of demographic trends such as out-migration and the need for upskilling. Therefore, it is equally important that we obtain an extension of the lowland Scotland objective 3 programme for training and guidance support, which ends in 2006. The programme includes £300 million of expenditure and its objectives are to raise employability, address social exclusion, promote lifelong learning and develop a competitive economy. That investment is immensely helpful and valuable.

The rural businesses and rural economy of the south of Scotland, and of my constituency in particular, have benefited from those European programmes. I would dearly like those programmes to continue after 2006. I hope that my colleagues from the south of Scotland will be prepared to back the campaign of the south of Scotland alliance, which is drawing up important advocacy of the post-2006 programmes that we need in our part of the world.

10:20

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): It was good to hear Alasdair Morrison speak in glowing terms about the Western Isles and its causeways and bridges. All of them were instigated by the Tory party.

I want to highlight how we can regenerate one sector of the Scottish rural economy in the Highlands and Islands. I will highlight the problems facing people in the salmon farming industry and in the wild salmon and sea trout angling industry, which have received so much comment in the press recently. After attempting to show how the problems of those two industries are linked, I will suggest solutions that will help to encourage enterprise, employment and wealth creation so that both sections can flourish and do better.

For many years, there has been a furious debate about whether the huge growth in salmon farming over the past 20 years has been a key factor in the decline of wild salmon and sea trout stocks in the north-west of Scotland. Many believe that the explosion in the numbers of parasitic sea lice is a result of the increase in salmon cages in sea lochs. That explosion has led to a huge increase in mortality in the smolts, which are the young wild salmon and sea trout starting their journey to sea. If the smolts have to pass through clouds of sea lice, they are easily overwhelmed and killed by parasites. The lice also do immense damage to the farmed salmon.

George Lyon: Will the member take an intervention?

Mr McGrigor: I am sorry, but I do not have time.

Both circumstantial and scientific advice show

that those claims are correct, so it is vital that the situation is reversed to allow more money and employment to be generated by angling tourism.

I cannot stress enough the importance of wild freshwater fisheries to the economy of rural Scotland and especially to that of the Highlands and Islands, but the reality is that the Scottish farmed salmon industry is now a key industry, which produced 40 per cent of Scotland's food exports last year. The farmed salmon industry employs some 7,000 people, many in remote areas and others in processing plants within towns. When will the Scottish Executive face up to the issue and find a solution so that the wild and farmed industries—which are equally vital to the Highlands and Islands—can live together in sustainable co-existence?

Both industries underpin the future of people, families and communities. On the one side, the wealth of experience in river management and angling that has been amassed by generations of river ghillies and managers has now been added to by the scientists who work on the fisheries trusts. The trusts are making progress in delivering area management agreements with the different fishery stakeholders. Believe me, despite its recent deterioration, Scottish fishing is still sought after by many anglers worldwide. As such, it provides income and employment and is a large contributor to many rural hotels and businesses.

On the other side, we have the salmon farming industry, which underpins the lives of so many in remote areas and the products of which support many ancillary industries. The salmon farming industry has become indigenous in the Highlands and Islands and supports local culture, including the game of shinty.

Allan Wilson: Does the member care to explain away the reported increase in the sea lice population on the east coast of Scotland and in the Solway firth, where there are no salmon farms?

Mr McGrigor: There is no increase in sea lice on the east coast. The increase has been on the west coast, where the salmon farms are.

The tools now exist to resolve the sea lice problem. I ask the minister to make it easier for fish farmers to use those tools to secure the future of fish farms and of wild fish interests. The drug Slice has been shown to be effective in reducing sea lice levels markedly. Six farms that were tested on Loch Sunart had nil lice after treatment. Why is the Scottish Environment Protection Agency taking so many months to grant licences for something that it says is safe? Surely SEPA should be pragmatic. That is the first thing that I ask the minister to do something about.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It should be the last thing, because your time is up.

Mr McGrigor: I shall just close, Presiding Officer.

The second thing is that I would like to see both industries live together in sustainable co-existence. I ask the minister to do everything in his power to ensure that.

10:25

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I am pleased to be able to contribute to the debate, but I do not recognise the area that I represent in the description in the Conservative party motion. Yes, the Highlands has problems, but they are more about housing our expanding work force than about finding jobs. The Highlands is bucking the Scottish trend because our population has increased by 20 per cent over the past 30 years.

In line with other parts of Scotland, our unemployment rates are low and are lower than the average. Unemployment in the Highlands has dropped by 13 per cent in the past year alone. Everyone in the Highlands knows that Lochaber was an unemployment black spot, but it now enjoys some of the lowest unemployment rates in the whole of Scotland. That is due not only to an increase in the number of jobs but to the work that agencies have carried out. They have ensured not only that people have the skills to take the jobs on offer but that they have the skills to access them, providing driving lessons, for example, as part of the new deal. As Alasdair Morrison mentioned, the business start-up rate in the Highlands and Islands is higher than the Scottish average.

There are still challenges. Some communities are dependent on tourism, which may provide only seasonal employment. We need to attract year-round tourism. That already happens in places where people undertake winter sports. We must create more indoor activities for those who would come to the Highlands in the winter for our scenery but not for our weather. I welcome the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee's inquiry into tourism. I am sure that the committee will receive a great welcome when it visits the city of Inverness on Monday.

The Tory motion talks about the lack of investment in IT. In Argyll and Bute, the three islands partnership is using IT to deliver services to remote communities. For the first time, those communities can access services without having to travel to the mainland. Almost all the public agencies are involved and the Executive has helped with finance. The north Argyll islands also benefited from digital communities initiative funding. By giving each home a computer, the initiative has not only encouraged the use of IT but has provided the tools to do it with. That is a clear example of the benefits of IT to rural communities.

Last week, the Highland Council advised MSPs how the council, the Executive and other public bodies hope to take things further by connecting schools and general practices to broadband. I believe that a similar project is going on in the south of Scotland. Such projects will bring IT to the heart of rural areas and will provide a quality of service that would be unavailable commercially.

Rural areas also face transport problems, because they lack the critical mass of people for the commercial provision of public transport services. Again, the Executive has stepped in by investing £18 million in the rural transport fund between 2001 and 2004. By 2004, local authority money for rural public transport services will increase to £25 million.

Different communities are using that money in different ways to suit their needs. In Sutherland, a bus service has been built round the peak times for use of the successful dial-a-bus scheme. That means that the existing resources can be expanded into other areas. In Aviemore, the money has been used for a community car scheme for those who do not have access to a car. IT has also been used to provide a reception service for the scheme. People who wanted to volunteer but were not able to do so outside can now provide the service from home. Those are not high-profile schemes, but they make a huge difference to the lives of the people who benefit from them.

As I said in my introduction, we face challenges. More people are moving to rural Scotland to benefit from the quality of life and experience, and high-quality work is now available in rural areas. We need further investment in housing to ensure that that continues. Many businesses tell me that expansion is held back by the difficulty of finding a work force because of the lack of housing. We need to take an inter-agency approach to deal with the problem and to ensure that the barriers are broken down. I ask the minister to ensure that he takes that forward.

10:29

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): Let me quote from the speech that the Minister for Finance and Public Services made to the Parliament:

"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."

But what was the next sentence? It was:

"Our cities are central to the quality of life and well-being of Scotland."—[*Official Report*, 12 September 2002; c 13669.]

That is where the rub lies. We hear a lot of gesture

politics and gesture words about rural communities, but there is no financing.

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Christine Grahame: I have only just started. The member should let me get on.

As far as infrastructure is concerned, the Borders has received nothing for roads or for the rail link. Although a rail link has been proposed to Edinburgh and Glasgow airports—

Euan Robson: Will the member give way?

Christine Grahame: No—the member should sit down. We have received only £2.4 million for the Borders rail link. That is a hill of beans.

Euan Robson: Will the member give way?

Christine Grahame: I am not giving way at the moment. We have not even received any funding for broadband.

What has the Scottish Executive delivered for the Borders economy? I will tell the chamber. It has delivered a call centre. In 1999, Donald Dewar announced the creation of a call centre that would boost the Borders economy and bring 250 jobs to the area. In a Scottish Liberal Democrat press release from 14 February 2001—it is always handy to keep such releases—Ian Jenkins described it as a

"major boost for the Borders economy, an economy that has had more than its fair share of job losses in recent years."

He continued:

"I am especially pleased that this will help diversify the economy and will also provide opportunities for young people to both live and work in the Borders."

Well, well. What happened to that call centre, which received about £1 million of Government funding? Until this June, its employee total was in double figures. In June, it managed to increase that figure to something like 160 and, for a brief moment, on 29 August, it employed 313 people, 60 of whom were commuting from Edinburgh. Within three weeks, 100 of those jobs had gone and I have learned today that 30 more people are on short-term contracts. That is the reality of investment in the Borders economy.

Let me quote from young people—

Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD) rose—

Euan Robson rose—

Christine Grahame: Oh, deary me. The Liberals have been in the Borders for 40 years. They were a waste of space then, and they still are.

I have some comments from young people who took up employment at the call centre. "One upset worker" said to *The Southern Reporter*:

"I only started three weeks ago, and had a week on a training course. This came totally out of the blue—everyone was looking forward to the careers they were promised."

A mother said:

"My son gave up his job to go there and has had to pass a lot of tests, only to be told he no longer had a job. They shouldn't be allowed to get away with destroying people's lives."

For the people in the Borders, there were simply a lot of soundbites, noise and big promises. If people are working at the centre, they are lucky to get £10,000; most of them are on short-term contracts. The way in which the organisation hires and fires its staff is outrageous. How anyone can stand up in the chamber and say that the Borders has done well out of this Lib-Lab coalition is a great mystery to me and to the people who will vote next year.

10:33

Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab): As a resident of the Borders, I am well aware of Christine Grahame's own ability to generate noise and soundbites.

I begin by referring members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

As the member for East Lothian, I must say that I do not recognise the picture of rural doom, despondency and desolation that Opposition members have conjured up. Alex Fergusson is really too nice to be convincing as a Jeremiah, although the nationalists have some potential in that area, if nowhere else.

The main complaint from rural East Lothian is that the economy is overheating with high house prices and rents. There is also a lot of concern that there is too much development, with consequent pressure on rural schools and infrastructure. However, I welcome such pressure. We simply need to learn to cope with the situation and get it right.

I am well aware that the foot-and-mouth outbreak in 2001 was a catastrophe for agriculture and that commodity prices for milk and cereals are unsustainably low this year. However, most reasonable farmers will agree that the Scottish Executive's environment and rural affairs department is making the best of a difficult job.

There are encouraging signs. For example, a couple of weeks ago, I visited Kelso tup sales and saw very healthy trade. Indeed, the fact that one of Stewart Stevenson's constituents saw fit to spend £18,000 on a Fife-bred Suffolk tup indicates a certain degree of confidence in the future of sheep farming. That cannot be a bad thing.

I recall from my time in the rural affairs department during Donald Dewar's Administration that the Executive gave a very high priority to rural policy. That is not surprising, because the influence of rural Scotland has never been greater than it is in the Parliament. Indeed, the First Minister was brought up on the isle of Arran, which is in Allan Wilson's constituency. What greater rural influence can one ask for?

The big challenge is to ensure that rural support measures are value for taxpayers' money. It is a funny old thing, but—to take a topical example—every single year the Scottish Executive spends more than the total capital cost of the Holyrood building on production subsidies to Scottish farmers under the common agricultural policy. However, all that public money is conspicuously failing to sustain employment on Scottish farms. As a result, I welcome efforts by the Scottish Executive and the UK Government to shift the CAP's emphasis away from production subsidies towards environmental and social priorities. That must be the right move.

I pay tribute to the thousands of rural enterprises that are adding value, diversifying and helping to develop tourism and a range of opportunities in rural Scotland. That must be the way forward, based on partnership between local businesses and public agencies including Scottish Enterprise and local authorities.

Mr Hamilton: Will the member give way?

Mr Home Robertson: I am sorry—I do not have the time.

I want to cite two examples of such partnership that will help rural areas in my constituency. The Haddington farmers' market is an extremely successful example of a local authority initiative that has boosted the rural economy. I am also looking forward to some innovative projects that will be proposed for new European Union funding under the LEADER + community initiative for rural East Lothian.

Such initiatives, together with new funding for essential health, education and transport services, must be the best way forward for rural Scotland. With great respect to the Conservative party and those who went to London last weekend, it is time for a reality check. Fox hunting is not, and never has been, the mainstay of the rural economy, and the Conservatives are not doing anyone any favours by trying to stoke up antagonism between rural communities and the rest of Scotland. That sort of division is as futile and damaging as the nationalist threat to break up the UK. We do not need that potential for mayhem.

10:37

Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): The partnership agreement between the Labour party and the Scottish Liberal Democrats says:

“We will work to support rural life, rural communities and the rural economy.”

The programme for government makes it clear that our priority is to

“promote improved environmental, employment and living conditions in rural areas”.

I have already pointed out that we are seeing one of the highest-ever levels of investment in rural areas. Indeed, the minister made the same point in his opening speech. I also highlighted the fact that farmers who claim support from the Scottish Executive now receive an average income of £19,000, which is the highest-ever level of support.

John Scott: Will the member give way?

Mr Rumbles: Not after 40 seconds.

I will not dwell long on the SNP’s position, but I point out that its members seem intent on talking down rural Scotland for their own political purposes. Although there is no doubt that there is a real crisis in farming, they have no policies on or answers to how we can improve the current situation. They even failed to consider the interests of rural areas when they proposed that fuel taxation should be harmonised with that of other European nations. Such a policy would have deprived Scottish farmers of cheap red diesel.

Before I leave the subject of the SNP, I should say that Christine Grahame’s speech was remarkable. She constantly talks down the Borders and refused to take interventions from my colleagues Ian Jenkins and Euan Robson. Indeed, she has constantly attacked their fight to get investment and jobs into the Borders. In her speech, she again attacked investment and job boosts for the Borders. For example, she ignored the £2 million funding for the Borders rail link and the Scottish Executive’s £45 million investment in the A1. She spoke complete bunkum.

Christine Grahame: Will the member give way?

Mr Rumbles: Sit down.

I want to turn my attention to the Conservatives, because I have some information for them. Alex Fergusson seems to think that rural Scotland’s problems started in 1997 when the Tories left the scene, but official statistics show that, between 1995 and 1997—the last two years of Tory rule—the total income from farming fell by 56 per cent. Between 1995 and 1997, borrowing by farmers increased by £73 million, or 8 per cent, while investment remained unchanged. The value of

cattle livestock products fell from £594 million in 1995 to £545 million in 1997, which is a drop of more than 8 per cent. The value of sheep livestock products fell from £290 million to £260 million, which is a drop of more than 10 per cent. Between 1996 and 1997, the value of non-cereal crops fell by 53 per cent to £130 million. Between 1991 and 1997, debt increased by 27 per cent from £1,250 million to £1,593 million. The value of output for finished cattle fell by 22 per cent and the value of cows and bulls fell by a massive 76 per cent.

John Scott: Will the member take an intervention?

Mr Rumbles: I would if I had more time.

I have listed those statistics to prove a point. The Tories are intent on pretending that they are the guardians of rural Scotland. Nothing could be further from the truth. Their policies have damaged rural Scotland. The statistics show how damaging it was for rural Scotland the last time they were in government.

We now have a Scottish Executive that is doing its best to improve life in rural Scotland. There are real difficulties, but the situation is improving. We have had the highest level of investment ever.

10:41

Mr Duncan Hamilton (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Perhaps the most remarkable admission in Mike Rumbles’s speech was that the Scottish Executive is “doing its best”. Frankly, the Scottish Executive’s best is not good enough.

I am grateful to the Conservative party for lodging today’s motion. It has given us the opportunity to unveil the range of half-truths and downright lies that we have heard from the Scottish Executive over the past couple of years.

Today’s debate has brought out three issues. The first relates to broadband. Annabel Goldie has left the chamber, but she will remember from the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee that business identified broadband as the number 1 issue for businesses that seek to improve their competitive capacity. It was their number 1 priority and we said that we would make it our number 1 priority.

What happened was that the Scottish Executive introduced a pilot project and punted the issue into the long grass. There was the suggestion that we would be able to aggregate public sector demand, which would stimulate the use of broadband across Scotland. We have not seen that happen. There is no evidence that we are any further forward.

When Stewart Stevenson says that the uptake of connectivity in Scotland is half that of the UK,

we should take that statistic further. Connectivity in the Highlands and Islands is half that of Scotland. The area that can benefit most because it is remote and rural is the area that is benefiting least.

George Lyon: Will the member take an intervention?

Mr Hamilton: No thank you; I will come back to the member in a second.

Secondly, with regard to transport, there have been some interesting statements in the debate. It is obvious to those who represent the Highlands and Islands—Rhoda Grant will know this—that ferries and roads dominate—

Maureen Macmillan: Will the member take an intervention?

Mr Hamilton: I am just talking about the member's colleague.

Ferries and roads dominate just about everything in the Highlands and Islands.

I was interested to hear George Lyon argue that Argyll and the isles is a land of milk and honey and that there is a strong economic community there. I refer George Lyon to the submission from Argyll and the Islands Enterprise and from Argyll and Bute Council. The council said that the absence of roads, bridges and ferries was a

“major constraint on economic development”.

Argyll and the Islands Enterprise said:

“Transport, especially to the islands, is inadequate in terms of frequency and affordability.”

Those people are on the ground and they are telling us about the reality of the situation. To try to spin that away is disingenuous. Consider the CalMac position and the instability in the CalMac tender. Consider the diminution of service on the Clyde and ask whether those are really the signs of an Executive that is committed to economic development. Perhaps they are; Maureen Macmillan will tell me.

Maureen Macmillan: Duncan Hamilton has made a lot of noise in the press about the CalMac issue. He said that he would write to me, as reporter on the CalMac issue. That was approximately a month ago. He said that publicly but I am still waiting for the letter. When will it come?

Mr Hamilton: Perhaps that is another difference between Prince Charles and me. I think the member will find that the people in Dunoon and those who live along the Clyde consider the matter with dismay. They see an Executive that is now committed to a diminution of service between Dunoon and Gourock—an Executive that is today claiming that it is in favour of economic development.

In his contribution, the minister said that he believed in the stable economic environment provided by the United Kingdom. Now that we are in a recession, I ask the minister to consider who got us there. It is not the case that it is not the Executive's responsibility or that it can ask who will get us out of the recession. The Executive has been in charge of a relative economic decline. The UK Government will not now claim the £11.8 million of compensation that it could have done to alleviate the recession. When farming has been decimated by the strong pound, there is no prospect of the Executive claiming that it has created a strong economic environment.

When it comes to who will turn the situation around, I ask members to consider the comments made by Mr Lyon earlier this year. He said:

“Labour policies are a disaster for rural Scotland.”

He also said that it is clear that Labour is trying to

“slash vital support for our most fragile communities.”

That is the support that the Executive is getting from its so-called allies. I suggest that we all be clear today that whoever turns the economic situation around, it will not be this Executive.

10:45

Allan Wilson: I am tempted to say that whoever turns the situation around, it will not be Duncan Hamilton because, as I understand it, he is leaving us. I am sure that we all agree that he will be a loss when he goes.

I thank the Conservatives. I am extremely grateful to them for the platform that they have again provided for us to focus on the Executive's significant plans to invest in and support economic growth and sustainable rural development. I am grateful to them for giving me the opportunity to outline again our strategy for growth, which is a strategy for all of Scotland, urban and rural—we do not distinguish between the two. That strategy has the key priorities of helping businesses to build and grow, building global connections and improving Scotland's skills base.

Alex Fergusson: The minister has just hit on the nub of the problem. The Executive does not make any distinction between urban and rural Scotland. That attitude is behind today's motion. Does the minister accept that there is a need to differentiate between the two? The situation is not one in which one answer suits all. We need differentiation of policy to address the problems of rural Scotland.

Allan Wilson: Closing the opportunity gap is as relevant to rural Scotland as it is to urban Scotland. Social justice is as important in urban and suburban Scotland as it is in the countryside. That is the point I am making. It is a very simple

point. The Conservatives try constantly to create an artificial divide between urban and rural Scotland where none exists, and they do so to be divisive and to talk down Scotland.

“A Smart, Successful Scotland” sets out a policy that is acknowledged—even by the SNP—to grow businesses, promote global connections and extend skills and learning. Scotland’s people are a huge resource, as many an inward investor has realised.

The Executive’s latest expenditure plans will take public spending in 2005 and 2006 to a level £4 billion higher than in 2002-03. I make no apology for repeating that. That is a product of our successful stewardship of the UK economy. Investment has been rightly targeted at growing the economy and improving transport infrastructure. If there are three i’s that are significant for the rural economy, they are infrastructure, infrastructure and infrastructure.

In the spending review, we identified two specific targets to encourage more sustainable agricultural activity in the 13,500 farm businesses in Scotland’s remote hills by 2006, and to deliver better service provision to rural communities through support for around 80 new rural development projects each year and funding for three to four joint initiatives per year with other Executive departments or agencies by 2006. The spending review will also expand the Scottish rural partnership fund by an additional £2.2 million. It will maintain the historically high levels of support for agriculture through the less favoured areas scheme. It will also provide an additional £2 million per year from 2003-04 to improve the quality and range of businesses and other advice available. It will implement the Scottish forestry strategy with an additional £4 million of resources for recreational and tourism-related facilities, especially in our national parks. It will also make available an additional £2 million in the first year, £2 million in the second year and £3 million in the third year in domestic funding in support of European Union fisheries structural funds to secure sustainable and successful sea fishing and aquaculture industries in Scotland.

If there was one blot on the landscape of today’s debate—which I have enjoyed—it was Jamie McGrigor’s contribution, which talked down the importance of the aquaculture industry to sustainable rural communities and to sustaining employment in the most fragile, remote and rural communities. Frankly, Jamie McGrigor should reflect upon his speech. I will say no more.

Mr McGrigor: Will the minister give way?

Allan Wilson: No, I am in my last minute. The only thing I will say is that Jamie McGrigor should reflect upon his speech to the chamber, and ask

himself whether it contributed to growing a sustainable agricultural industry.

The doubters and cynics should stop talking down Scotland and rural Scotland. The habit of doing down Scotland, our abilities, our performance and our potential can impact on our future. Let us lift the level of debate. We should talk about what we can do, rather than constantly talk about what we cannot do.

There is much that is positive in rural Scotland. To answer Duncan Hamilton’s question, I say that I believe that it is an attractive place in which to live and work. Technology is helping rural Scotland to have the kind of enterprises that used to be located far away, which is increasing the population in the Highlands and Islands, as Alasdair Morrison said. We have real diversity, real companies, real jobs and real prosperity. Our challenge is to build on that and extend it to remote and fragile areas of rural Scotland.

10:51

Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con): The Executive seems to have wakened up this morning, which is about the first time that it has done so on rural affairs since the Parliament was established. It gives me great pleasure to support my colleagues in highlighting the continuing failure of the Scottish Executive to acknowledge its shabby disregard of our rural economy and the sustainability of rural communities.

Maureen Macmillan: Will the member give way?

Mr Davidson: Not yet.

I thank Richard Lochhead for generously supporting our motion. I presume that he did so because the SNP could not think of anything else to say. It is a shame that the SNP misguidedly thinks that independence will automatically restore profitability, diversification, investment and hope to rural Scotland. Once again, despite this being SNP conference week and despite the SNP having the opportunity to lay out its stall, we have not heard anything new.

Amazingly, once again, the minister failed to respond to the motion in any detail. The Executive’s amendment refers to “significant plans”. One must ask where the Executive has been since the Parliament opened. In the past few years, farms’ profitability has sunk to its lowest level. Never mind all the nonsense and drivel from Mr Rumbles this morning. The fact is that the Executive is now talking about farm income, whereas the Conservatives used to publish the figures for net income—in other words, wages. Mr Rumbles seems to confuse a £19,000 subsidy

with the profit that farmers and their families can spend. The man does not have a clue.

Mr Rumbles: Will the member give way?

Mr Davidson: Not at this time.

Many members across the parties have mentioned broadband connection. In the days when Wendy Alexander was a minister, significant comments were made on how broadband would be rolled out and how we would get diversification. However, apart from in the Western Isles—that unique community that is forging ahead of the rest of Scotland—broadband is not being rolled out in rural areas. In addition, training is not being made available and there is no access for start-up businesses.

I am puzzled as to why the minister did not refer to the fact that schools in rural communities are closing. Why is that happening? Where are the general practitioners and dentists that we need in rural communities? The minister did not refer to quality of life, yet he went on and on about what the Executive has done for rural communities. As my colleagues have asked, why have there been fewer business start-ups in the past five years under Labour than there were under the last four years of the Conservative Government?

It was interesting to hear about the minister's new relationship with the royal family. What did he learn from Prince Charles, who admits, because of his direct connection with the rural community, that there are problems? Prince Charles might be able to persuade the minister when the Parliament cannot.

Given the minister's broad brief, can he tell us how many new rural bus routes have been introduced and how many have been withdrawn over the past few years?

All I can give the minister and the Executive credit for is interfering and meddling in the vital areas of the rural economy. The Executive has spent a lot of parliamentary time on issues such as hunting and land reform, on which it thinks it is doing well. Land reform is already damaging investor confidence.

Maureen Macmillan: Does David Davidson disagree with Jim Hunter, the chairman of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, who said, when the Executive was accused of failing to deliver:

"Well, not in the Highlands and Islands you aren't ... you're presiding over something ... remarkable—the revival and regeneration of a region?"

Mr Davidson: It probably helps that the area still has objective 1 status, which has been denied elsewhere.

Maureen Macmillan: No, we do not.

Mr Davidson: I beg Maureen Macmillan's pardon. I meant transitional support.

Over the next few days, I will visit some of Aberdeenshire's sporting estates to hear about the problems first hand. It is interesting that many of their problems seem to be caused by the uninformed approach of the urban Labour party, meekly supported by the Liberal Democrats, who posture in their constituencies and then, hypocritically, turn up in the Parliament to act as voting fodder for the Executive week after week. That cannot be denied; it is on the record.

I have dealt with Mr Rumbles. We have to get across the fact that we are talking about net income, not gross income. We do not want to play the accountancy game.

Mr Rumbles: Will the member give way?

Mr Davidson: Not at this time.

John Home Robertson—whose speech was wonderfully insulting—compared the cost of the new Scottish Parliament building with the rural economy. He even suggested that the Holyrood project is better value for money than putting money into agri-support. I wish that he would tell that to the farmers of Scotland. That was a classic comment from someone such as him.

The debate has been interesting, in that there has been a lot of heat but little light. There have been one or two pockets of honest comment from Labour members. However, it is interesting that, in his ranting apology for the Executive's actions, George Lyon talked at some length about how land reform was going to be fair. Does he agree—he may have a personal interest; I could not possibly comment—that one set of landowners will be replaced by a new set of landowners? That is not the way in which to drive the economy forward. That is just political dogma.

George Lyon: It is clear which lot of landowners the Tory party supports. The Duke of Buccleuch's recently published accounts show that he gave £7,500 to the Tory party to ensure its continued support for his cause.

Mr Davidson: I am sorry, but I thought that we lived in a free society where people could put their money where they wanted. I notice that the expatriate Scot who is big in the film industry does his business and nobody criticises him for that, except for the fact that he does not live here. Such things happen with the Labour party, too. How many millions are given to the Executive's colleagues by large businesses down south? George Lyon raises a spurious defence. We need honesty in the chamber from the Liberal Democrat lackeys and the Labour party about what they think the problems in rural communities are.

Once again, all we heard about in Allan Wilson's speech were plans to invest. There are always plans to invest, but there is never action. The issue is always the future and having another think-tank and another initiative. The Executive never does anything. The minister has failed to tell us the differences between the Government's rural and urban approaches. We have also learned that the Executive has nothing to say to rural communities. Roll on May 2003.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have a point to make about four members who spoke in the debate and who referred to their interests in the "Register of Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament". It is preferred practice that, when members refer to their interests, they specify what the interests are. I did not pick up any individual member on that point, because the clerks did not draw it to my attention until two members had already passed us by. Members ought to say what their interests are, but not at any length.

Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Members of the Opposition did not observe parliamentary protocols in this morning's debate—they made their speeches and then left the chamber. That is becoming a regular practice and we might need to take some action.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The clerks keep a running note of members who leave the chamber early—those members are not confined to one party. The Presiding Officers make it clear in advice to all members that, when they have spoken, they should remain in the chamber, that they should hear the opening speeches when they are participating in a debate and that, when they have participated, they should be in the chamber for the closing speeches. Those are elementary rules of courtesy that we should all observe.

Tricia Marwick: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Would you care to invite those members who made declarations of interest to declare what those interests were?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No.

Transport (Investment)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh): The next item of business is a debate on motion S1M-3342, in the name of David Mundell, on the impact on transport of the comprehensive spending review.

11:01

David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): Today's debate and the circumstances preceding it follow an all-too-familiar pattern. There was spin and hype in the press about the importance that the Executive allegedly attaches to transport issues and there was an announcement in Parliament. The Executive's words sound good, but when the fine print of their documents is finally read, the position is more confusing than ever. That was true of the late, lamented Wendy Alexander's much-vaunted transport plan, which subsequently became a report. It is true of the comprehensive spending review announcement and the section on transport in the glossy document "Building a Better Scotland: Spending Proposals 2003-2006".

Ms Alexander's report turned out to be nothing more than a wish list with no substantive commitments. The only new announcements that flowed from it were for a car park and a roundabout. How can we be confident that the spending review announcement will be any different? It is couched in the same terms. Beneath the spin, all we get are the usual weasel words: "work starting on work to develop proposals to bring forward options on surveys that could be progressed on how further consultation could be taken forward with stakeholders in partnership with partners so as to address the concerns as to how to take forward top priorities flowing from studies on how to create a land of milk and honey". And so it goes on.

The amendment to today's motion, lodged by the Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning, is in exactly the same terms. As I said of the comprehensive spending review, the Executive has turned the production of guff into an art form. The minister might be able to get away with drivel in the chamber, but what kind of reception does he think he would get if he tried to soft soap Fife rail commuters or a Glasgow bus queue with such anodyne nonsense? Like all hard-pressed transport users in Scotland, those people want to know the facts. When and how are services and infrastructure to be improved?

The purpose of the motion and today's debate is to flesh out the reality and the facts of the Executive's commitment to transport so that the Parliament and Scotland know what the Scottish

Executive is going to do and, as important, when it is going to do it. When will the first rail be laid on the Glasgow airport rail extension link? When will the first sod be cut on the M8 at Newhouse? When will the first passenger travel on the rail link to the Borders?

On reading the amendment, I am not optimistic. It is not that I expect the deputy minister to be a magician or some kind of Mystic Meg, but I cannot believe that, with the vast resources of the Scottish Executive at his disposal, he cannot come up with reasonably accurate costs of the projects outlined and the likely time scales.

Mrs Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): Given that Mr Mundell's party was in power for 18 years and that it had the vast resources of the entire United Kingdom Government at its disposal, why did the Conservatives not cut the first sod on the M8, lay the first rail on the Glasgow airport and Borders rail links or build a tram system for west Edinburgh?

David Mundell: Margaret Smith will find that we constructed the M74 motorway and dualled the route up to Aberdeen. We carried out important infrastructure projects. That compares well with the recent five and a half years of inaction.

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

David Mundell: Not at the moment, but I will come back to the member.

If the Liberal Democrats aspire to be an Opposition party at national level, Margaret Smith should be holding the Executive to account and not going along with any old anodyne flim-flam that it comes up with.

If the Conservatives want to hold the Executive to account for its inactivity, so too do one of the minister's predecessors and Mr Bill Butler. I support the sentiments of the motions that they have lodged, which call for more detail on the Waverley station upgrade and the Glasgow airport rail link projects respectively. Today's debate gives the minister the opportunity to provide members, including Labour back benchers, with that detail.

Let me make it clear that I have no difficulty in welcoming genuine, additional expenditure on the key transport projects that were alluded to in the transport plan and the spending review document. After all, as I have set out many times in the chamber, Scottish Conservative policy is to put additional investment into our transport infrastructure as a key element of improving Scotland's potential for business growth and investment, as well as being of benefit to the travelling public.

You may call me cynical, Presiding Officer, but given Labour's record on transport in the five and

a half years since it came to power in Scotland, I regret to say that the provision of that infrastructure is as uncertain as it ever has been during that period. In those five and a half years, we have seen the minister and his predecessors preside over a decline in investment in transport. As Wendy Alexander conceded in *The Herald* earlier this year, transport was

"sold short in the first spending round".

During the five and a half years, Scottish and UK ministers have presided over the needless delay of important infrastructure projects such as the M77.

Bristow Muldoon: Will the member give way?

David Mundell: I will do so at the end of this piece.

Equally damaging to the whole economy of Scotland was the needless delay to the M74 Gretna to Carlisle extension. I say to Bristow Muldoon that both those improvements would have been complete by now had the Conservatives been returned to power in 1997.

Bristow Muldoon: I put it to Mr Mundell that, had the Conservatives been returned in 1997, they would have further neglected infrastructure investment not only in transport but in schools, hospitals and the water industry. Perhaps Mr Mundell will explain why, in the 18 years in which the Conservatives were in power, they failed to realise the strategic importance of the completion of the M8 motorway.

David Mundell: The Conservatives have always understood the importance of Scotland's motorway network. That is why we put massive investment into the M74 link. Today's debate is about the Executive's record over the past five years and what the Executive is going to do in future. The Executive parties are being held to account. We want to hear what they are going to do.

Let us take the situation in Aberdeen. I do not have to tell the Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning about the reaction of his local press to the lack of firm commitments in the spending review. As my colleague Alex Johnstone has said, the Executive's failure to make any announcement on the future of Aberdeen's western peripheral route is yet another missed opportunity. Once again, people in the north-east are left wondering when they will ever see a firm funding commitment for that project instead of the usual platitudes. In this instance, the platitudes include

"addressing the concerns of business and the wider community in and around Aberdeen by fixing Aberdeen's congestion - stimulating the local economy, strengthening the community".

That takes the biscuit, even by Executive-speak standards. No concrete commitments whatever are given.

Elsewhere in the spending review document, what does "invest to develop" mean in relation to the Glasgow and Edinburgh rail links? Why use the phrase "begin construction" of the M74 northern extension rather than use the word "construct"? The phrases raise more questions than they give answers.

When challenged on its failure to deliver on road and infrastructure, the Executive has responded repeatedly by claiming that it has concentrated its efforts to date on public transport. Not only did we have Ms Alexander's outrageous claim that all rural transport issues were "fixed", we also had the relentless promotion of the Executive's much-vaunted concessionary travel scheme for elderly people. Of course, the spin fails to point out that the scheme does not become fully operational until April next year, which coincidentally is only one month before the Scottish Parliament elections, and that, as we have seen in the past few weeks, the implementation has been an absolute pig's ear, with many elderly people left confused and disappointed. As ever, the Executive's priority is not the detail or the implementation, but the number of column inches in the press. This time, that has rebounded on the Executive.

Despite the platitudes and expensive advertising campaigns, there is not a shred of evidence that the Scottish Executive has encouraged more people to use public transport.

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning (Lewis Macdonald)
rose—

David Mundell: Lewis Macdonald can make his point in his speech.

Travellers remain as sceptical as ever about rail services in Scotland, which are struggling to return to normal after the ScotRail strike, during which the Scottish Executive demonstrated remarkable ambivalence. As we have said repeatedly, and as Lord James Douglas-Hamilton will set out in more detail, the attempts by the Executive and the City of Edinburgh Council to browbeat the public of Edinburgh on to public transport through iniquitous congestion charges, which is a tax by any other name, will not work.

I look forward to hearing some detail on how the Executive will achieve the so-called objective in the spending review of supporting

"sustainable development by promoting more efficient transport networks and more sustainable modes of transport, having regard to the overarching principles of minimising resource use, energy and travel".

I am disappointed that, although the Liberal Democrats at Westminster have attacked vigorously the Labour Government's disastrous track record, in Scotland we hear only acquiescence and support for flim-flam and double-speak. If realising our potential means simply saying that independence will solve everything, the Scottish National Party is as bereft now as it has been in the past three and a half years of ideas to deal with the issues that face the people of Scotland.

In the past five and a half years, we have had prevarication, flannel, spin and studies and the jargon of inter-modal, multimodal, semi-modal, urban-modal and sustainable-modal, but we have not had decent roads, reliable trains or a growing bus network. The Executive claims that there is sufficient money. I want to hear from the minister how and when the Executive will deliver.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that increased investment in transport infrastructure is essential to providing the best business environment to generate growth and investment in Scotland; regrets that since Labour came to power in Scotland in 1997 there has been a failure to deliver any meaningful infrastructure or public transport improvements; further regrets that the Scottish Executive continues to prefer spin and wish-lists to costed plans and timescales for delivery, and calls on the Executive to provide full details, including the cost and timetable, for completion of each commitment outlined in the recent Spending Review which included the Scottish Passenger Rail Franchise, rail links to Glasgow and Edinburgh airports, public transport improvements across Central Scotland, A8 and A80 motorway upgrades, improvements to the existing trunk road network and tackling the congestion problems in Aberdeen.

11:13

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning (Lewis Macdonald): I welcome the opportunity to debate the increase in the Scottish transport budget over the next three years. The budget settlement for 2003-06 reflects the fact that transport is one of our top priorities. The settlement provides the tools that we need to transform and modernise Scotland's transport infrastructure.

Excluding capital charges, our transport budget will rise from £671 million in the current financial year to more than £1 billion by the end of 2005-06, which in cash terms is a rise of 52 per cent. That unprecedented level of funding will allow us to act on our priorities and compares exceedingly well with the £100 million of additional funding that the Tories proposed when they last initiated a transport debate.

The budget settlement is about allocating resources, but it does not stand in isolation from the rest of the transport policy process. The origins

of that process lie with the white paper "Travel Choices for Scotland", which the Scottish Office issued in 1998. That white paper set out a distinctive modern agenda, which highlighted the importance of integration, of transport as a tool for addressing inequality and of a range of solutions to meet the range of different transport challenges in Scotland. Since devolution, the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 has carried many of those ideas into legislation. It provided the framework to begin delivering an integrated sustainable transport system.

The third stage was to set out priority projects and to address the gaps in the transport network, which we did with the transport delivery report in March of this year. The report identified the greatest single transport challenge facing Scotland as road traffic congestion and proposed a series of measures to contain traffic growth. It established clear priority projects and a clear agenda for working in partnership with other bodies to tackle the growth in road traffic and to complete the missing links in the transport infrastructure.

The budget settlement does not, as has been implied, set out priorities for the first time—that has already been done—but it provides sufficient resources to meet those priorities.

Brian Adam (North-East Scotland) (SNP): The minister makes great play of the fact that he has a lot of resources. Will he give a commitment on the finances that are required for the western peripheral route? I remind him of the letter that he wrote on 18 September to my colleague Mr Welsh.

Lewis Macdonald: I will address the matter of the western peripheral route, but the point that I was making, in response to Mr Mundell's motion, is that the spending review and the budget do not aim to make substantive decisions on projects and priorities. That was done in the transport delivery report. As a former member of the Audit Committee, Brian Adam will know that level 3 spending details will be shared in due course with the Finance Committee as part of the budget process. That will provide more detail on some of the figures that have been announced.

The decision on Aberdeen's western peripheral route is important. We are making progress on tackling Aberdeen's congestion. As Mr Adam knows, we made provision for that earlier this year. The budget settlement includes provision for whatever work might be required for the western peripheral route in the spending review period, provided that the value-for-money case and a basis for further progress are agreed. As all members with an interest in north-east Scotland will be aware, the transport modelling to provide the basis for that further discussion is under way and is expected to produce results later this year.

Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP): Will the minister give way?

Lewis Macdonald: I have covered the issue, so I will press on.

The re-letting of the Scottish rail passenger franchise is at the top of the list of priorities for the next 18 months. Directions and guidance have been issued and a joint franchising team of Executive and Strathclyde Passenger Transport officials is working to deliver the service specification. We are working with the Strategic Rail Authority to let the franchise by March 2004. That is a specific commitment.

We are considering proposals from the central Scotland corridor studies and we will make an announcement on the way forward later in the year. We expect to begin preparation on the A8 and A80 motorway upgrades shortly, which will lead to a likely construction start date of around 2008.

Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): I welcome the investment and the priorities, but does the minister recognise that barriers exist to the delivery of improvements? For example, work on the A78 West Station bridge in my constituency has been dogged by delay, which has caused great inconvenience to constituents and to business. Will the minister investigate that matter and bring it to a speedy conclusion?

Lewis Macdonald: I am happy to investigate the matter, as I am happy to investigate any case in which an agreed transport priority has been stalled for reasons that can be addressed.

As well as picking up the specifics, we must look at the wider picture. We must recognise that by the end of the decade we will have transformed Scotland's transport infrastructure. The budget settlement provides the resources to allow that to happen. It will allow the completion of the central Scotland motorway network, the provision of new railway links throughout the country—including rail links to Edinburgh and Glasgow airports—and significant public transport improvements in and around our cities.

For some projects, discussions are on-going to establish a value-for-money case and, for other projects, progress depends in part on commitment from partners. We have sought to provide in the budget settlement the necessary resources to allow projects to be carried forward in the spending review period. I am confident that that has been achieved.

We will continue to fund and support lifeline air and ferry services and to make provision through the public transport fund. Between 2002 and 2006, we will increase Executive support for public transport by 70 per cent. The budget settlement

sustains social inclusion objectives, such as free local off-peak concessionary bus travel, and environmental objectives, such as an increase in public transport to reduce traffic congestion.

We have sought in the budget settlement to make the resources available to deliver on our priorities. Over the coming months, our tasks will be to deliver on those in detail, working in partnership, and to bring to completion the projects that we have identified and established as our priorities for a sustainable transport system.

I move amendment S1M-3422.2, to leave out from “recognises” to end and insert:

“welcomes the increase in spending that the Scottish budget settlement for 2003-06 provides for transport as one of the Scottish Executive’s five key priority areas and recognises that these resources lay the foundation for priority projects set out in the *Transport Delivery Report* that will transform Scotland’s transport infrastructure over the next decade, delivering a sustainable transport system fit for the 21st century, which supports business and economic growth and meets the needs of all in society.”

11:20

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): It is difficult not to disagree with the Tory motion. We require to press, probe and call the Executive to account. There is no outline manifesto by a new Administration, because this is an Administration that is in its death throes. It should be capable of resting on laurels won for what it has done in its tenure in office to date. Instead, it is proposing to do something away in the future. That is unacceptable—we have seen it all before.

Nonetheless, I cannot agree entirely with the Tories, who had the opportunity to change things during 18 hard years of Tory rule, 10 or 11 of which were Thatcher rule. They cannot continue to dine out on the construction of the M74 and the dualling of other roads. In those 18 years, we witnessed the undermining of the rail industry. Whatever criticism I may make about where the rail industry is heading, the problems began under a Tory Administration that privatised and underfunded it.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will the member give way?

Mr MacAskill: Not at the moment. I am trying to move on.

Mr Monteith: He is frit.

Mr MacAskill: The Tories have no reason to be self-congratulatory.

Reading the Executive amendment is a bit like seeing “Groundhog Day”—the amendment is couched in exactly the same terms that we have heard in the comprehensive spending review debate and from Andy Kerr. The Executive offers

various outline proposals but not one commitment or pledge. I had assumed that, in an attempt to spike the Tories’ debate, the Executive might give a clear commitment today. However, not even today, in an attempt to take away from the lustre and light of the Tories’ debate, has the Executive offered any firm commitments. We are told that the promised land is on the horizon, but we are not told how far away it is, what direction it is in, or what we have to do to get there. The Executive amendment is simply an abomination and an apology for the actions that it has taken.

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): Will the member take an intervention?

Mr MacAskill: Yes.

Mr Monteith: He is not scared of George Lyon.

George Lyon: It must be Brian Monteith’s beard.

Kenny MacAskill is criticising the Executive’s performance, but the SNP has abandoned its policy of raising tax with the penny for Scotland. How would it deliver its policies under the current budget?

Mr MacAskill: We will speak later about the powers that are required, some of which are fiscal and some of which pertain to ways of dealing with the rail industry.

We have heard what the Executive is now saying previously in the CSR debate. Back in 1998, the position was outlined not by Jack McConnell, the current First Minister, nor by Henry McLeish, the previous First Minister, nor even by Donald Dewar as the first First Minister. It was Donald Dewar who, as the Secretary of State for Scotland, said on page 7 of the white paper, “Travel Choices for Scotland”:

“We shall continue to ensure that the Scottish transport network is appropriate to support Scotland’s economy”.

Does that sound familiar? Does that sound like the Executive’s amendment? What has happened since July 1998? The Executive has put forward no radical proposals. On page 8 of the same document, the Government talks about pressing

“for improvements in rail ... connections to airports”.

The fact is that, since July 1998, no real progress has been made. There are more potholes, there is more congestion and we face a bus strike in Edinburgh.

Some improvement schemes would be cheap. For example, the proposal to re-regulate the buses is supported not only by Executive back benchers, but by Glasgow City Council and Strathclyde Passenger Transport. That is not a grand scheme; it would be relatively cheap. Will the Executive support it?

Lewis Macdonald: I am interested to know the differences between Mr MacAskill's proposed re-regulation bill and the quality contracts that exist under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001.

Mr MacAskill: Lewis Macdonald need only listen to the bus industry to realise that quality contracts are not working. How many quality contracts are in place? None. Why do Glasgow City Council and the SPT not believe in quality contracts? It is because they accept that regulation is required.

Lewis Macdonald: Will the member give way?

Mr MacAskill: Not again. I have given way once.

We are told that the flagship concessionary fare policy is a national scheme. Yes; it is a national scheme in Wales, where people can travel from Anglesey to Swansea and from Cardiff to Colwyn Bay. By contrast, in Scotland a national scheme seems to be one whereby people can travel from Alloa to Falkirk and the lucky people in the Strathclyde region can travel from Girvan to Gareloch. However, can people travel from Wick to Wigtown? No, they cannot. The flagship policy is nothing but a con that will unravel before next April, when Scottish pensioners will realise that they have been sold a pup.

There is also the question about the state of our roads. We had a great debate in the Parliament, during which Andy Kerr—as the then convener of the Transport and the Environment Committee—attacked the then Minister for Transport and the Environment, Sarah Boyack, about the privatisation of trunk road maintenance. However, we are told, on page 27 of the 2002 trunk road operating companies' report, that

“Media criticism, predominantly of BEAR's winter performance, was sometimes inaccurate.”

I remember John Farquhar Munro voicing criticism that I certainly do not think was inaccurate. The Executive has not even resolved the shambles surrounding the care and maintenance of the roads. That is why we need to have control of the rail network. If we are to create rail links to airports, we must first tackle the congestion at Waverley station. Who is in charge of that? Is it the Strategic Rail Authority? Is it the minister? Is it the Department for Transport? We do not even know who is dealing with that problem. The only way in which to address matters is by taking control of the rail network and the rail industry, but we need full powers to do so.

I move amendment S1M-3422.1, to insert at end:

“and calls for the Parliament to be given all powers necessary to allow these and other required transport and infrastructure improvements to be properly implemented.”

11:26

John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): I am amazed that our Tory colleagues have chosen this subject for today's debate. It is a vain and misguided attempt to discredit the coalition partnership, which is endeavouring systematically to overcome the legacy of decades of underfunding and neglect and the Tories' abysmal mismanagement of the national transport infrastructure. Their efforts today are, to say the least, ill judged and inappropriate.

Any sensible individual would accept that the sustainable economic viability of our urban and rural communities can be secured only if there is an efficient and—most important—affordable transport infrastructure. Scotland deserves and has come to expect a much-improved transport network. The Liberal Democrats are striving to achieve that goal and, as members of the partnership Government, we have at last begun to reverse the decline in spending on transport that characterised the last years of the Tory Government and the first two years of the new Labour UK Government.

What are the Liberal Democrats doing to secure an integrated transport system? With our partners in government, we have introduced a bill that will give powers to local authorities to introduce improved bus services and to tackle congestion. We have funded more than 30 major public transport projects throughout Scotland, which will encourage improved rural transport services, over and above the other 350 projects that have been introduced to the advantage of the travelling public. Extra funding has been allocated to local authorities to allow them to make a start on the backlog of repairs to our deteriorating roads and bridges, especially our remote rural single-track roads, which were never designed to carry the increasing volume and weight of traffic that we are seeing in the 21st century. Much is happening.

Substantial sums have also been allocated to encourage a change from road to rail freight, which we hear quite a lot about. Over the past two years, freight facilities grants have removed millions of lorry miles from our congested road network. However, much more is required. Substantial spare rail freight capacity is available, which should and must be utilised. I am sure that further incentives to that section of transport would attract widespread public support.

The Liberal Democrats are proud to have secured the resources to provide free bus travel for all Scottish pensioners and people with disabilities. That programme is due to commence next week. Some local authorities, such as the Highland Council, will not restrict free travel to off-peak periods. We need to secure an agreement for through-ticketing to remove border restrictions

and allow the benefits to be enjoyed Scotland-wide.

I represent a Highland constituency. My wish list for the Highlands is an improved trunk road to the north coast and an east-to-west coast road built to modern standards. All of that could and should be integrated with our fishing and ferry ports and supported by an enhanced rail system.

Members will be aware that the Highland Council has not secured a passenger service obligation on flights to and from Inverness. We must continue to support that aim and the council's endeavours towards achieving it.

The convener of the Transport and the Environment Committee recently suggested to the Executive that it should consider a further reduction in, and ultimately abolition of, the Skye bridge tolls. I hope that that laudable suggestion finds favour in the chamber because the current level of tolls is the most expensive and absurd impediment on any transport link in Europe. The tolls defeat the Parliament's aspiration to social inclusion.

I need not tell anyone that an uncaring Tory Government introduced the tolls and, consequently, I cannot support the Tory motion.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We come now to the open part of the debate. Time is tight.

11:31

Alex Johnstone (North-East Scotland) (Con): When Andy Kerr, the Minister for Finance and Public Services, gave his statement on the spending review, the groan from Aberdeen must have been audible in the chamber. However, it is sad that the spending review document did not appear to have anything at all to say about Aberdeen. Nevertheless, the priorities of Aberdeen's modern transport system, particularly the western peripheral route, will come back to haunt the Executive, its members and possibly even the Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning, Lewis Macdonald, who is on the front bench today.

We must pay tribute to the organisation that has driven forward the western peripheral route project: the north-east Scotland transport partnership—NESTRANS—which represents the area's two local authorities, the enterprise company and Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce. NESTRANS has brought together a series of ideas and has proposed a project that would be of great value to the people of the north-east.

It is important to acknowledge the level of support that exists for a modern transport plan for Aberdeen. According to a household survey that

was conducted by the then north-east Scotland economic development partnership—NESDEP—85 per cent of respondents supported the option of developing a modern transport system in Aberdeen. In an Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce survey, 89 per cent of respondents from the business community supported the option of a modern transport system.

Funding is, of course, the key issue and we will keep coming back to that. Business in the north-east, particularly in the Gordon and Banff and Buchan areas north of Aberdeen, faces extremely high transport costs. The difficulties are caused by the failure to have a route around Aberdeen. Competitiveness is being seriously damaged.

I talk regularly to businesses and their representatives and spoke recently to businesses in the industrial estate in Huntly. They made it clear that every time they go through Aberdeen the lack of a bypass costs them money. It is increasingly difficult to run competitive businesses in the Aberdeen area.

That Scotland's third city is constrained by a trunk road that fails to serve it is ridiculous and unacceptable, as is the 400-year-old Bridge of Dee's inability to carry vehicles that are more than 7ft wide. The 14 sets of traffic lights on North Anderson Drive are also a serious encumbrance to transport.

NESTRANS has created plans for a modern transport system whose estimated costs are in line with policy and have been fully tested. Despite the overwhelming support that those plans have among people and the business community of the north-east, the Executive has given no firm commitment to funding the scheme.

Lewis Macdonald: Will the member give way?

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): Mr Johnstone is just in his last minute. It is up to him whether to accept the intervention, but he must finish his speech within the four minutes.

Lewis Macdonald: Does Mr Johnstone acknowledge that the Executive has provided match funding throughout the development of the NESTRANS strategy for the Aberdeen area?

Alex Johnstone: Indeed, I acknowledge that. The problem is that that funding is extremely small. We need to set out a project that includes estimates of the time that it will take to construct the western peripheral road in particular. That is the most important part of the project for many people, especially to the north of Aberdeen. We must also have a system by which funding can be provided over a set period. It is extremely important to the economy of Aberdeen and the north-east that we progress the matter.

We need a commitment from the Executive to fund the western peripheral road. If ministers will not listen to me, let them heed the words of their Aberdeen colleague Brian Rutherford, who is a Labour councillor and Aberdeen City Council's planning committee convener. He has called on ministers to stop pussyfooting around and to get off the fence and give the people of the north-east a firm commitment on the western peripheral route. The deputy minister's career could depend on it. We look to him to deliver on behalf of the people of Aberdeen and the north-east.

The Presiding Officer: As the Deputy Presiding Officer said, we are tight for time so I must be strict about keeping speeches to four minutes so that we can get everybody in.

11:36

Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab): I welcome this debate on transport expenditure in Scotland, particularly in the wake of the comprehensive spending review. Everyone in the chamber recognises transport's importance to several major Executive objectives. Whether it is developing the Scottish economy with a 21st century transport system, improving our environment or reducing the opportunity gap, transport has a central role to play.

It is also important in any transport debate to recognise that the United Kingdom as a whole has over decades not invested in its transport systems to the level that many of our European counterparts have. We must put that right and I believe that the Executive and the UK Government are putting that right.

In responding first to the Conservative's motion, I think that it is clear that they have learned nothing from their period in opposition. They have not acknowledged their failure to invest in the transport system, nor have they acknowledged how they devastated the system through rail privatisation, declining bus services and underinvestment in roads. In particular, as I said in my intervention on Mr Mundell's speech, the Conservatives failed to complete the link between our two major motorways.

David Mundell: Why does Mr Muldoon persist in spending so much time in transport debates talking about the Conservatives? We want to hear what the Executive will do. Labour has been in power in Scotland for five and a half years. We want to hear about Labour's record.

Bristow Muldoon: I understand why Mr Mundell does not want to talk about the Conservatives' record in government. I assure him that the Labour party will never tire of reminding the Scottish people of the legacy of the Tories, a once-strong party that is potentially reduced to scrabbling for

fifth place in next year's Scottish parliamentary elections.

Let us move on from Mr Mundell and his failure to acknowledge the Tories' past failings. It is also sad to see Mr MacAskill, the original billion pound man, reduced from his usual uncoded wish list of transport projects to painting his face with blue woad and telling us that all transport problems will be solved as soon as we achieve our freedom. It is particularly amusing to see Mr MacAskill perform, given the Scottish National Party's recent abandonment of its previous tax policies. Mr MacAskill continually fails to recognise that, per head of population, Scotland spends more than the UK average on transport and that because of the spending review the transport budget in Scotland will continue to grow.

Turning to the Executive's plans—to please Mr Mundell—I believe that the priorities that the Executive has set out will make a real difference to Scotland's transport infrastructure. However, I regret Mr Mundell's simplistic desire for Mr Macdonald to produce precise costing plans when those costings are still being worked out. We are still identifying routes and costings for some of the major projects. It is naive of the Tories to want such details at this stage.

The Executive will deliver on several important issues. It will increase capacity in our rail network, most notably at Waverley. It will deliver a new rail franchise for Scotland. I was surprised that the Tories suggested that the Executive should simply put a wad of cash on the table and expect various people to say what services they would provide.

One of the most important issues that the Scottish Executive will work on in the coming years relates to the A8, A80 and M74 corridor studies. Each is important and I urge the minister to implement the recommendations, particularly—if I may speak from a constituency point of view—those relating to the A8 corridor, especially the suggestion that it be upgraded to motorway status, and the reopening of the Airdrie to Bathgate line.

Transport is vital to the future prosperity of Scotland. The Opposition has nothing to offer in that regard. I ask members to back the Scottish Executive's transport vision for the 21st century.

11:42

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): Far be it from me to criticise the SNP's opening speaker, but I think that he was far too generous. He said that the promised land was on the horizon, but I am afraid that my eyes cannot see it and I suspect that neither can those of many in the chamber.

We do not need to confine ourselves to the views of people in the SNP. David Begg, the

Government's adviser, has consistently told the Government that it is woefully underfunding the public transport network. *Private Eye* has a column called "Signal Failures" and I believe that this Government has been a signal failure with regard to transport. I will illustrate a few of the difficulties under which we labour—I use that word advisedly.

There is a monopoly in air transport. BAA owns the three most geographically important airfields in Scotland, which are there simply as feeder stations for BAA's economic workhorses: the London airports. No passenger jet aircraft in Scotland is registered to an owner in Scotland. Is it any wonder that air services in Scotland are peripheral to the commercial interests of airlines that are based elsewhere and which will always seek to develop services closer to their bases?

We continue to suffer from the tearing up of many of our rural railway lines. As members have heard me say previously, I represent one of two mainland constituencies that have no railway line. Nonetheless, we get no greater share of the road budget. From the limited largesse that is being distributed to support railways, we get little additional benefit. Alex Johnstone was entirely correct to highlight Gordon and Banff and Buchan as being places that suffer from poor roads and limited railways. If I come to Parliament by public transport, I have a £20 taxi ride to the two-hourly service that runs from the nearest railhead at Huntly, which is outside my constituency.

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

Stewart Stevenson: We have no time for nonsense from Aberdeen Labour.

The western peripheral road is an economic drag on people in the north-east north of Aberdeen. I know of a company that estimates that congestion in Aberdeen costs it about £100,000. The area contains the world's biggest offshore oil base, but the 20 to 30 trucks a day that travel between Peterhead and Aberdeen are delayed by between 20 and 40 minutes on each of their round-trip journeys.

I know that Duncan McNeil did not hear this because he joined us late in the morning but, in the previous debate, Allan Wilson made the important point that his Executive is focused on three i's: infrastructure, infrastructure and infrastructure. Well, without infrastructure, we have no transport system worth debating.

The minister and I have exchanged comments on free local travel, especially with regard to disabled people.

Mr McNeil: Welcome it, then.

Stewart Stevenson: I welcome what provision

there is, but my disabled constituents do not have buses upon which they may exercise their right to those free rides. Labour is not delivering for the disabled or the pensioners in Scotland.

11:45

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): I apologise for the fact that I will not be here to listen to the closing speeches, because I have a previous engagement, of which I have informed the Presiding Officer.

I welcome the substantial increase in transport spending and I hope that rural Scotland gets its fair share. I note the big increase in spend on the Clyde and Hebrides ferry services from about £27 million in the previous budget to £31 million this year, £37 million next year and £38 the year after that.

As the minister is no doubt aware, Caledonian MacBrayne has made a bid for two new ferries for the Wemyss Bay to Rothesay route. No more work needs to be done on the bid and I would appreciate it if the minister could make an early decision on the matter. I will read the *Official Report* of the minister's speech in the hope that he will indicate that some positive thinking is being done in that direction.

There is an urgent need for further upgrading and widening of the A83. Already this year, £3 million—a significant increase—has been spent on the road and another £1.5 million will be spent next year. In the past 20 years, there has been virtually no investment in that vital trunk road and the benefits of the road-widening and road-straightening work are evident.

I have spoken to the minister about a section of the narrows between Tarbert and Ardrishaig on which two lorries cannot pass each other without great difficulty. In this day and age, it is unacceptable that we have a trunk road on which lorries have to go onto the grass at the side of the road to pass each other. I appeal to the minister to look favourably on bids to do remedial work on that section. It was argued that the work should have been carried out at the time of the landslides, but it was not. Now that extra funding is in place, that road-widening project should go ahead.

I have also spoken to the minister about further trunking of the A83 all the way to Campbeltown if the Campbeltown to Ballycastle service restarts in spring next year.

The A82 north of Tarbert also gives us great concern. To describe the road that passes Loch Lomond as a trunk road is an insult to the term. It is single track in many places and most people who want access to north Argyll take the long route around Inverary. It is surely time that that

disgraceful road was repaired, widened and upgraded to allow access to the west coast of Scotland.

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Will the member give way?

George Lyon: I am in my last minute, but I will agree with the point that I think the member was going to make, which is that that road is important not only to the economic future of Argyll, but to that of Fort William and the rest of the west coast of Scotland. This is not simply a constituency issue; it is to do with turning around the economic prospects of the west of Scotland.

The issue of the Tobermory to Salen road has been raised by the minister on previous occasions. The consultation document on the Clyde and Hebridean services states categorically that the Executive will consider the short crossings to Coll and Tiree at some point. That road is absolutely vital if that promise is to be delivered and I appeal to the minister to consider funding for it.

11:49

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): As the motion suggests, Labour is failing to address the problems of Scotland's transport infrastructure. Indeed, in Edinburgh, it is much more concerned with its anti-car agenda and the introduction of road tolls.

The City of Edinburgh Council's recent announcement of the result of its public consultation on the £2 road toll for the capital showed a small majority in favour of the scheme. That lacks credibility, because the whole consultation process was deeply flawed and rigged from the start. Of the 250,000 leaflets that were printed, only 20,000—fewer than 10 per cent—were returned. That is no surprise, given that the leaflets were available only on request. If the consultation were to have any credibility, the leaflets should have been delivered to homes throughout the city and surrounding areas. The consultation period of less than two months was far too short and it was cynically timed to coincide with the holiday period.

Moreover, the council further manipulated the results in its favour through the horrendously slanted manner in which the options were presented. The leaflets said that the option of no charge would lead to limited rail improvements and limited further environmental improvements in the city centre. That is patently misleading as it gives the impression that only by introducing road tolls could the cash be found to improve public transport. That is simply not the case—the Scottish Executive should provide funding for major public projects from its transport budget, as it will for projects elsewhere in Scotland.

The Executive's supposed commitment to developing an effective, modern, 21st century transport system for Edinburgh is duly proclaimed, so why should our motorists, who are already paying the highest petrol prices in Europe, be clobbered with yet another tax?

In the past week, two other shocking facts have emerged about the bogus consultation. First, 6,000 of the consultation forms—bear in mind the fact that only 20,000 were returned—were sent to green lobby groups, such as Friends of the Earth Scotland, which are strongly in support of tolls, in an attempt to draw up favourable responses. Secondly, the data that were collected from the returned questionnaires did not show a majority in favour of tolls. Only when the data were weighted to represent people who did not own cars and did not take part in the survey did the figures show a majority. In other words, the council made up the result by inventing people. We consider that a disgrace.

The Conservative party is the only party to have fought city-entry tolls every step of the way, and we will continue to do so. When we tried to amend the Transport (Scotland) Bill on 20 December 2000 by lodging two amendments opposing section 69 of the bill, which introduced road tolls, the amendments were voted down by all Labour, all SNP and all Liberal Democrat MSPs. Those MSPs include Fiona Hyslop, Kenny MacAskill and Margaret Smith, who are now falling over themselves to claim that they are against tolls.

Furthermore, the SNP's 1999 Scottish Parliament manifesto stated proudly that the SNP would support city-charging schemes. On 14 September 2000, while debating stage 1 of the Transport (Scotland) Bill, Kenny MacAskill said that the SNP

“are broadly sympathetic on congestion charging.”—
[*Official Report*, 14 September 2000; Vol 8, c 289.]

Nonetheless, I hold in my hand a copy of a leaflet that Kenny MacAskill distributed, which proclaims:

“Join the SNP campaign to end the Highway Robbery”.

We welcome U-turns in our favour from wherever they come.

The road toll public consultation has failed to fulfil its purpose. It is no more than an exercise in political manipulation and that should fool nobody. The only way that road tolls will be stopped is at the ballot box next year. Only one party can be trusted to remain in the lead to stop them, whatever the circumstances.

11:54

Elaine Thomson (Aberdeen North) (Lab): Today's Tory motion can be described only as slightly bizarre, given the current scale of

investment in transport in Scotland. We had 20 years of underinvestment in transport in Scotland, thanks to the Tories. The ill effects of that have been felt nowhere more acutely than in Aberdeen and the north-east. Parts of Aberdeen's modern transport system, such as the western peripheral route, were proposed years ago and could have been delivered by Grampian Regional Council, which for much of its existence was controlled by the Tory party or Tory-led coalitions under the national Tory Government. It has been left to the Labour administration in Aberdeen City Council and the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition in the Scottish Executive finally to push for significant transport improvements, with the recognition that Aberdeen is one of Scotland's top 10 transport priorities. I welcome that.

In Aberdeen and the north-east, more progress has been made in the past three and a half years than was made in the previous 30 years. We have publicly supported plans with real development money, not to mention improvements that are up and running. Those include park-and-ride schemes and dial-a-bus schemes, which I mention particularly to Stewart Stevenson, because I am sure that they run in Aberdeenshire. I refer also to "twenty's plenty" schemes for safer communities and A90 trunk road improvements.

There is the prospect of further funding from the recent spending review, if NESTRANS can introduce completed proposals rapidly. We know that tackling congestion in the immediate future is a key priority not only in Aberdeen, but throughout Scotland. The Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition is prepared to put in the investment for a massive expansion of public transport.

More than half of the transport budget is focused on public transport. In Aberdeen, for the first time in a generation, the number of bus passengers is growing. I do not doubt that that will continue with the introduction of free off-peak travel for our older citizens from Monday, which is another example of real delivery.

I also look forward to real change in Scotland's railways with, for example, the re-letting of the ScotRail franchise. There have been improvements, and extremely successful grants such as the rail facilities freight scheme. If we are to continue to move freight off roads, issues such as low bridges and making the necessary investment to improve the rail infrastructure to allow greater capacity, such as on the Aberdeen to Edinburgh line, must be resolved. I ask the minister to address that in his summing up.

As a rail passenger, I believe that we have to work harder at making travelling by rail a pleasure rather than an ordeal. At least Labour has a real commitment to keeping Scotland moving, unlike the Tories. In the last year of the Tories' most

recent Government they reduced grants to local authorities to zero.

We are making the necessary investment in public transport. We are helping Scottish businesses and industry by reducing congestion and we are improving the quality of many people's lives through schemes such as free travel for the blind and the new bus scheme for the elderly. In the coming decade we will see a transformation of transport in Scotland to give us a modern transport system for the 21st century. I call on the Tories to acknowledge that.

11:57

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): I, too, was tempted by the Tory motion, because everything is in it except the kitchen sink. However, I will support the amendment that my colleague Kenny MacAskill has lodged, because it recognises where the Government's plans and spending review and the Tory's concerns hit the buffers. Before anybody accuses me of talking only about constitutional niceties, I point out that I am referring to the powers that reside not with the Executive, but with what has during the debate increasingly been called the national Government in Westminster.

As evidence I refer to a written answer that the minister gave me on 18 September 2002. He said:

"Neither the Scottish Executive, nor any of its executive agencies, has carried out any detailed study focused on determining the comparative suitability of Glasgow and Edinburgh airports for a hub operation."—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 18 September 2002; p 1607.]

For goodness' sake why not? It is pathetic management of our economic development for the Executive not to have foreseen that it would have to come down on one side or the other and determine what its airport policy was to be. Is it going to be what is outlined in the strategic rail services review as determined by Westminster? When is the Executive going to decide that there is a priority for its spending review and for economic development?

I do not know whether to feel mad at the Executive or sorry for it for not deciding. It knows perfectly well that there is a limit to its powers and that the decision on the airport will be determined not by it, but by what I would call its superiors in Westminster—I do not doubt that the Executive would call them its senior partners. However, whatever the reason for the lack of a decision, will Lewis Macdonald undertake now to say what is likely to be the better option for Scotland's economy—a hub airport centred on Glasgow or one centred on Edinburgh? The Executive cannot afford to hang around on the matter.

Just before I press the case for the capital—as members would expect me to—will the minister consider what John Bowis, the Tory MEP, is saying today? Because of the strategic air services review, he is saying that there is the possibility of a central Scotland airport at Airth. We screwed up on that once before and missed the opportunity. Although it is unlikely that the minister will foresee a huge economic benefit to outweigh the environmental concerns of starting from scratch with a central airport, I still think that the minister should consider it.

However, the hub airport should be at Edinburgh for the reasons that are outlined in the strategic air services review. Edinburgh airport is in the right place when we consider the development of the business park—the fastest growing business park in the UK, never mind Scotland. There is room for a second, close-spaced, parallel runway. Believe it or not, there is potential for a reduction in noise pollution, because the two runways could have alternate take-off and landing directions. That is the way that I read it.

I have concentrated on airports, but the minister mentioned that it was in his power to reorder priorities. Will he listen to what James Douglas-Hamilton said about Edinburgh and congestion? The minister says that his own studies have identified congestion as the primary concern of transport policy and strategy in Scotland. Instead of concentrating on the rail link to the airport, will the minister concentrate on moving working people and tourists around within Edinburgh? Iain Gray has suggested that we may know by 2008 whether there will be a rapid rail transit in Edinburgh. We need to know much sooner than that, and we need Government help to move people around within Edinburgh. After that, the priority will be the rail link to the Borders, to ensure that people can get in to work in Edinburgh. The other big barrier to economic progress is the labour market problems that Edinburgh is experiencing. There are priorities other than airport links.

12:02

Angus MacKay (Edinburgh South) (Lab): It is a pleasure to speak after Margo MacDonald. I agreed with almost everything that she said about Edinburgh and with almost nothing that she said about the powers of the Parliament. That is no great surprise.

I want to turn first to the Conservative contribution. I am glad that Mr Mundell has returned to his seat in time to hear this, because I will begin by complimenting him. He was, as ever, an effective dispatch box performer. However, his skill at dressing mutton as lamb was evident again. Sadly, the Conservative contribution had

nothing of any substance. The Conservative group of MSPs—in fact, the party in its entirety—is a mixture of the mad, the bad and the dangerous to know.

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Angus MacKay: No—I will not be taking any interventions and I have much to say that I am sure Annabel Goldie will want to hear.

The Presiding Officer: I think that she wanted to know which category she was in.

Miss Goldie: Yes. Where is the mutton?

Angus MacKay: The Conservative party here has two groupings these days—and even today we can see some interesting seating arrangements. There are the mad privateers, who foam at the mouth at what they perceive as ideological dogma, but who have no other thought processes; and there are the camp followers, those who joined the party a very long time ago and sadly cannot remember why they are still there.

There is an old joke about how many such-and-suches it takes to change a light bulb. Usually the answer is a number between one and several hundred million. However, to the question, “How many Tories does it take to articulate a transport policy?” the answer is, “None.” No Tories articulate any transport policy of their own, and no Tories make any kind of effective attack on the Executive. That is a sad state of affairs for what was once regarded as the natural party of government.

The nationalists are no better. Kenny MacAskill opened by saying that it was hard to disagree with the Tory motion. Well, there is more evidence of the nit-nat pact that we have seen in the chamber week in and week out. When questioned—by George Lyon, I think—on SNP policy, Mr MacAskill said that he would talk about it in some detail later. The “some detail” turned out to be a short sentence that was something like, “We need the full powers.” What a blinding transport policy that is—a real vote-winner if ever I heard one.

Brian Adam: Will the member take an intervention?

Angus MacKay: No.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton made one useful contribution to the debate: he exposed the utter hypocrisy of the nationalists on this issue as on every other. They are in favour of congestion charging when it suits them, and opposed to congestion charging when it suits them—no matter in which part of Scotland or in which city.

Mr Monteith: What about the Liberal Democrats?

Angus MacKay: I will return to our Liberal Democrat colleagues in a moment. I am sure that the Conservatives will enjoy my contribution on that.

The job of a transport policy must be twofold. It must support our economy and our business growth, and it must support the delivery of social justice in every community in Scotland. To do that, two things must happen: we must have a meaningful dialogue with business and industry, so that priorities can be set and met; and we must have a transport framework that reaches every community. The Tories failed to do that in their 20 years in power because they did not want to serve every community in Scotland. However, such an aim is what we should expect from public transport policy.

A 12.5 per cent real-terms increase over three years has been announced in the budget. That is an enormous increase in transport spending and we should welcome it. Massive additional money will make a big difference. What response do we get to such announcements? David Mundell referred to local newspapers. I have some local newspaper comments that I would like to read to Mr Mundell. The *Edinburgh Evening News*—an august Edinburgh institution, as I am sure Mr Mundell would agree—on 12 September 2002 ran the headline: “City transport gets major funding boost”. I do not think that that is a denigrating headline. The article began:

“Edinburgh’s transport system was given a major boost today as the Scottish Executive announced where it would be putting its money over the next three years.”

The article went on to mention

“the prospect of the first new tram lines for decades”

and then quoted Neil Greig, the head of the Automobile Association in Scotland, as saying:

“This is a big step forward for motoring in Scotland after 10 years of under investment, and finally brings the prospect of a European standard transport system closer to delivery.”

David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Angus MacKay: No.

Mr Greig welcomed the additional money on roads and transport. Mr Mundell was slow in quoting that particular contribution.

As Lord James has outlined, congestion charging is the subject of the day in Edinburgh. The Labour Administration is at least trying to come to grips with Edinburgh’s transport problems, and it is doing so bravely. John Farquhar Munro had a kick at Labour in its first years in power, and I will have a kick at Liberal Democrats in Edinburgh—they cannot be environmentalist and anti-pollution in one part of

the country and in one debate, and then be against radical road and transport initiatives in another debate. It is one or the other.

I welcome the funding that has been announced for the Edinburgh airport link; I welcome the unprecedented increase in the transport budget; and I look forward to seeing Edinburgh trams on the road again as Labour’s national economic success becomes Edinburgh’s transport success.

12:07

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): It will not surprise members that I will talk about the Borders rail link. Years ago now, this Parliament voted unanimously to reinstate the line from Edinburgh to Carlisle. Since then, very little funding has gone towards the project. A total of £1.9 million has gone towards preparing a bill, and a pauchle—£250,000—has gone directly to the project. The project clearly is not a priority for the coalition, but it ought to be. It is a disgrace that a part of Scotland that has a family income that is £50 a week less than the Scottish average, and that has a growing elderly population, is not having its railway line reinstated as a priority to regenerate its economy.

Margo MacDonald said that we have an overheated city, from which there could be a dispersal of jobs and people to an environment that is pleasant to work in. That is not happening for want of £70 million to start the rail line to Galashiels.

Euan Robson recently welcomed the £250,000 and said:

“Once again, the actions of the Executive speak louder than words”.

Well, with £50 million a mile being spent for a motorway, the Executive’s actions do indeed speak louder than words.

The vision of my colleagues on the coalition benches is so limited that at a recent meeting in Stow—where people have been campaigning for a railway station that would reopen their village and connect it to other communities—a letter that Ian Jenkins had written was read out. It said that people should not go on about the Stow station or they might not get the line at all. My goodness, with fechtors such as that, no wonder the people of Stow have a failing economy and no railway station.

Ian Jenkins: Does Christine Grahame acknowledge that there are problems with the Stow station idea that could call the whole project of providing a half-hourly service into question? Does she also acknowledge that people were told at a meeting in Heriot the other night about what will happen to their houses because the line is

being directed there? Progress is being made. The time is not yet right for big investment. The big money should not be in the three-year spending review.

Christine Grahame: Just a minute. Mr Jenkins's party has been in coalition for three years, but there has not been a penny of commitment at any stage for that railway line.

Ian Jenkins *rose—*

Christine Grahame: Mr Jenkins has had his say.

The other point made at the Stow meeting was about the train taking longer. Mr Jenkins should ask himself why there are three stops in Midlothian and nobody quibbling about it taking time there. I shall tell him why: there are Labour votes in Midlothian. The Executive does not care about the two Liberal Democrats in the Borders. They have no clout, so no money is coming to the Borders railway line.

While I am about it, I shall have a go at Mr Jenkins's colleague, Euan Robson, who is not here now. If Mr Robson is welcoming £250,000 for the Borders railway line, how little will he settle for to have a stop at Reston, in his constituency? A lot less, I would suggest.

This Parliament unanimously committed itself to that railway line. What right has the Executive not to put any commitment in funding towards it? Why should it ask that railway line, above all others, somehow to pay its way? Nobody is asking whether the links to Glasgow or Edinburgh airports will pay their way. It is time now for the Liberal Democrats to get some money out of their Labour colleagues before it is too late.

12:11

Mrs Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): There is a lot to welcome in the Executive's comprehensive spending review statement on transport, which includes increased spending to £1.6 billion by 2005-06 and a number of priorities that will be welcomed by my constituents. Those priorities include a new 15-year passenger rail franchise, a rail link to Edinburgh airport, progress on the Borders rail link—I agree with Christine Grahame that that link is essential to the well-being not only of the Borders, but of Edinburgh—and a link to Glasgow airport. There is also progress on a modern public transport system for Edinburgh. I am sure that my Tory colleagues will be pleased to note that I shall return to that in due course.

Edinburgh has seen a 60 per cent rise in the volume of traffic in the past 20 years, and it is clear that real public transport alternatives are needed. That is where the Tories have failed in the

past, and continue to fail. TRANSform Scotland said of the 2001 Tory manifesto:

"The Tories have completely ignored the needs of Scotland's public transport users. Their manifesto makes specific commitment to £700 million of new road building yet fails to mention a single public transport project."

That would include a west Edinburgh tram system. TRANSform Scotland went on:

"With all transport investment squandered on new roads, there is no chance that public transport in Scotland could be improved. The Borders would still be deprived of its rail link while Scotland's cities would have no chance of seeing modern tram systems implemented."

I welcome the commitment to public transport from the partnership in power in Scotland. I also welcome the new concessionary travel scheme that will operate from next week. I agree with Kenny MacAskill and John Farquhar Munro that progress in through-ticketing must be made if the scheme is to progress. That is something that I would like the minister to address.

There is one thing that I agree with in the Tory motion. Whenever I speak to local businesses and ask what they want the Scottish Parliament to do to improve their business environment, they always say that transport infrastructure and education are their two main priorities.

I welcome the recent publication of the draft west Edinburgh planning framework, which focuses on an area of strategic importance and incredible economic potential. However, west Edinburgh is also an area of increasing congestion, so I am pleased that although the framework reinforces the green belt it says, crucially, that future development in seven agreed locations should go ahead only on the understanding that a public transport infrastructure is in place to support that investment and development. That is why I remain concerned about the council's recent decision on the Royal Bank of Scotland development at Gogarburn, which will add 800 more morning peak-time journeys to an already overloaded road network.

Margo MacDonald and Angus MacKay were right to say that Edinburgh needs Executive support so that we can tackle the transport problems that we face. Angus MacKay was right to highlight the investment that has already been made, through the crossrail project, the web scheme and the feasibility studies into the airport link and the west Edinburgh and central Edinburgh tram networks. Both the transport delivery report and the CSR support that, but I would argue strongly that, although the Executive must support the city in going ahead, those developments must not go ahead depending on road user charging. The city's transport problems are a challenge to the whole of Scotland, and it should not be left to the council taxpayers of Edinburgh to solve that problem.

David McLetchie: Will Mrs Smith give way?

Mrs Smith: No.

In July, I wrote to the First Minister to express my concern at the manner in which the City of Edinburgh Council was conducting its new transport initiative consultation, for many of the reasons that Lord James Douglas-Hamilton outlined, and asked that civil servants investigate the matter. The consultation has been a sham and a shambles. There must be a referendum on the issue in order to find out exactly what people in Edinburgh think. There should be no weighting.

Angus MacKay: Will the member give way?

The Presiding Officer: No. The member must wind up.

Mrs Smith: Over the past few years, I have had a number of meetings on the consultation with council officials and councillors, but I was never told that there would be weighting—there was simply to be one man or woman, one vote. Now we find that there is to be weighting. Where will that stop? Will there be weighting in elections? Will we give extra weight to the views of my constituents in South Queensferry, Kirkliston, Newbridge, Ratho and other villages that will be caught outside the cordon? I hope that the Executive will look favourably on the city's bid for funding to progress much-needed transport improvements, but I urge the minister not to support the council's plans for a double cordon, which received the support of only 33 per cent of those who responded in Edinburgh.

On 13 June, Jack McConnell told the chamber that the Executive would support tolls only if there was clear public support. That was always my private and public view as a transport spokesperson in the City of Edinburgh Council prior to election to the Parliament and has been my view since then.

The Presiding Officer: The member must wind up.

Mrs Smith: Clear public support is needed, but it is clear that public support does not exist.

The Presiding Officer: Brian Adam has four minutes.

12:16

Brian Adam (North-East Scotland) (SNP): I hope that the four minutes that the Presiding Officer has given to me are as long as those that he gave to Margaret Smith.

The Presiding Officer: I gave her that time with great reluctance.

Brian Adam: The Conservatives have lodged a worthy motion, but it lacks bite. It does not address

the fact that we do not have the power to act in respect of airports and railways, for example, or in other transport-related areas. Some members of the Conservative group favour greater powers for the Parliament, some favour greater powers in respect of transport and some certainly favour greater powers in respect of finance—I note that Brian Monteith is here today. In the past few days, even the Liberal Democrats have tentatively shown a willingness to increase the Scottish Parliament's powers. Perhaps we will have more converts before 1 May 2003.

I whole-heartedly agree with David Mundell's point about the Executive's transport policy being a series of wish lists. I want to highlight the position in Aberdeen, where there is no better example of there being only wishes. There is no commitment whatever. I refer the minister and his deputies to the letter that Lewis Macdonald sent to my colleague Andrew Welsh on 18 September. It states:

"At the heart of the MTS is the proposed Aberdeen western peripheral route."

It continues:

"This route would be a local road, and therefore the responsibility of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils."

That is clear and unequivocal and states exactly where the Executive stands on the western peripheral route. The letter says that it is not the Executive's responsibility and that the Executive will have nothing to do with it. The letter goes on to say that all the Executive is prepared to do is to help to finance studies. That is the Executive's position.

I take it that Elaine Thomson will dissociate herself from such suggestions by an Aberdeen MSP who is the Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning. He regards the road as a local road. Does Elaine Thomson regard the Aberdeen western peripheral route as a local road? I will give her the opportunity to speak, if she wishes to do so.

Elaine Thomson: What matters is delivery. Has Brian Adam seen the map? Before a road can be built, it must be known where it is going. There is consultation on where the northern route of the western peripheral route will go. Is that not a move towards delivery?

Brian Adam: There is no financial commitment in the spending plans. As recently as a week ago, the minister wrote to my colleague and clearly gave the Executive's view that the road is local, and therefore the responsibility of the two local councils. I am disappointed that Elaine Thomson did not dissociate herself from that statement. She has been given the opportunity to do so and I am sure that the people of the north-east will note

where she and her colleague, who also represents the city of Aberdeen, stand.

Despite the grand language that is regularly trotted out, I am concerned about whether the Executive will tackle the congestion problems. Since the western peripheral route is clearly a local road and the responsibility of the two councils, will the Executive care to tell us what plans it is working up as an alternative to that route, as part of a modern transport system? The word "modern" is thrown in to give the Executive some kind of credibility, but it does not do any good.

We have an opportunity to do something. The Executive has fluffed the opportunity and the Tories are not prepared to accept that we do not have the powers to tackle everything that is necessary. I support the SNP's amendment.

12:21

Lewis Macdonald: I am pleased to respond to some of the points that have been made.

The budget settlement is clearly good for business as it promotes growth and opportunity. It is a good budget settlement for public transport as it will help to bring about a public transport system that is a clean, efficient and reliable alternative for everyone. It is a good budget settlement for sustainable development as it will help to tackle congestion and lessen the use of fossil fuels. It is a good budget settlement for social justice as it will close the opportunity gap, widen access to transport services and maintain lifeline links with record sums of public support.

The settlement delivers a huge uplift in spending on transport infrastructure over the next three years. By the end of the spending review period, Executive spending on transport will exceed £1 billion each year. That is a step change in funding across the transport network. Those resources will enable a transformation of our transport infrastructure by the end of the decade. The M74 will be completed to Glasgow city centre, the A8 and A80 will be upgraded and new rail links will be created to Glasgow and Edinburgh airports. All those developments will be in place or significantly under way within that period. Our other priority projects will also be completed or well under way. The budget settlement provides the resources required in the period that it covers to take those projects forward. In some instances, where the value-for-money case has yet to be demonstrated, progress will also depend on the level of commitment from our partners. The injection of funds that the spending review provides is our statement of intent that our priority projects will be delivered.

I reaffirm what I said about Aberdeen. I agree with Elaine Thomson that north-east transport is

not only about the western peripheral route, important though that is. I remind north-east members about the Aberdeen crossrail project, which is among the priorities that we want to be brought forward. As with the western peripheral route, great progress has been made and further progress is expected in the next few months.

I will respond to Brian Adam's red herring about local roads and national roads. He and other members are aware of the timetable for making a full assessment of traffic in and around Aberdeen. That is the responsibility, as was made clear in the letter to Andrew Welsh and elsewhere, of the local partners—Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council. On that basis, discussions will be held between the Executive and the local partners on how to carry the matter forward.

Mr MacAskill: Why should the people of the north-east believe the rhetoric of the minister on the matter, when they have already seen the selling out of the A8000 in the central belt? That is clearly a Euro-route and a national route of significant importance to east and central—never mind north-east—Scotland. The Executive has passed the buck to the Forth Estuary Transport Authority. Will the Executive do exactly the same in relation to the western peripheral route?

Lewis Macdonald: Is it not a shame that, rather than welcoming the work that is being done by the City of Edinburgh Council through its partnership in the Forth Estuary Transport Authority, Kenny MacAskill wants to fight an old battle and use that as a diversion from the issues that are in front of us? What we are doing on the A8000, the M74, the A8 and the A80 is equitable across the board. We are working with the other partners who have an interest in carrying forward the projects in order to deliver them effectively and efficiently.

I want to say a word about aviation, which I was not able to address in my opening speech and about which a number of questions were raised during the debate.

I reassure John Farquhar Munro that we continue to pursue a public service obligation for the Inverness to Gatwick route. We recognise that that is a key priority for air transport in the Highlands. Within the framework of the air transport consultation, we are also considering other aspects of air transport that affect the Highlands and Islands as well as those that affect central and north-east Scotland. We are quite clear that the potential growth of air traffic from Glasgow and Edinburgh airports is sufficient to sustain both airports. That is why rail links to those airports lie among our priorities. The consultation that we are undertaking on air transport, in collaboration with our colleagues in the UK Government, will address those issues among others.

It is important that I make clear the basis on which the policy on concessionary fares has been introduced and will be implemented from Monday of next week. That social justice policy is designed to meet the vast majority of the local transport needs of elderly and disabled people, which is why it is being applied through local authorities' existing concessionary fare schemes. The policy is simply the most recent example of the Scottish Executive delivering on the priorities that we set out. From Monday, every pensioner in Scotland—that is, 1 million people—will be able to travel free on their local buses to shops and hospitals and to visit their neighbours. That is only one example; many others are coming through the pipeline. I look forward to announcing each of them to Parliament in the months and years ahead.

12:26

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): It is with great pleasure that I rise wearing the national colour of the Scottish Conservatives. Our choice of colour was in evidence long before the SNP's latest wheeze. I am delighted that the Scottish National Party sees the error of its ways—there is much that it can learn and borrow from the Scottish Conservatives. As I listened to Mr MacAskill's speech, it became clear that the opportunities for such learning are legion. We might have been prepared to listen to some of his arguments if he had communicated some enthusiasm for public-private partnerships or private finance initiatives to fund transport improvements, attempted to disguise the SNP's intrinsic hostility to the private sector or recognised that policies that have no costings or specification and that include higher taxation are unimpressive and unconvincing, but he did not do so. Instead, he tediously trotted out yet again the independence monologue. However, credit where credit is due. Mr MacAskill demonstrated one commendable piece of good sense: he did not talk about mutton dressed as lamb, whereas Mr MacKay was getting on to very dangerous ground.

It is my pleasure to wind up the debate on behalf of the Conservatives. David Mundell made a telling, eloquent speech. The motion in his name encapsulates the precise problems that surround the Scottish Executive's transport strategy and plans. As he said, it is evident from the proposals, strategies, announcements and initiatives that there is no commitment and no specification. He said that we need to

“flesh out reality and fact”.

He also pointed out that we look to the Liberal Democrats to conjoin with us on the issue of transport and to provide a degree of opposition and he was right to ask where the Liberal Democrat Opposition is in the Parliament. The

Liberal Democrats' sycophantic fawning over the Scottish Executive is eclipsed only by the political flatulence that seems to accompany their contributions to our debates—great volumes of gut rumbling, but nothing of substance, significance or relevance emerges.

David Mundell focused on the complete lack of specification on transport. This is not year 1, year 2 or even year 3 of the Parliament. This is year 4, and the Executive's performance on transport to date has been, frankly, lamentable.

I looked forward to Mr Macdonald's opening speech with anticipation, but not for long. I jotted down the phrases that he was to repeat with great regularity: “priority projects”, “partnership”, “missing links” and the “resources” that are to be identified for those priorities. When Mr Adam intervened to ask about the western peripheral route in Aberdeen, Mr Macdonald had to be specific, but that was as specific as he got. He quickly went back to talking about projects, partnerships and availability of resources. He then uttered a telling phrase: apparently, “over the coming months”, we are to get the detail of the grand plan that the Executive is hatching for transport. With that dynamic and rousing conclusion to a lacklustre and colourless performance, he sat down.

I thought that the minister's wind-up speech might afford some comfort, but it exceeded his opening speech in torpor, dullness and lack of specification.

I noticed that Bristow Muldoon criticised the Conservatives by saying that we do not want to discuss our record. I am happy to discuss our record. I suggest that Mr Muldoon should sit back—perhaps Mr McNeil will be able to provide comfort and support—while I tell him about our record. He will find the facts distressing. In the final four years of the Conservative Government, £907 million was spent on new construction and improvements. That figure contrasts with the figure of £603 million in the first four years of the Labour Government. It also contrasts with the figure of £617 million for the first four years of Executive responsibility, which includes the 2002-03 forecast.

Bristow Muldoon: Will the member give way?

Miss Goldie: No. I am responding to the point that Mr Muldoon made, which I think I am entitled to do.

If we extend our consideration to local transport network capital, the relevant figure for the final four years of the Conservative Government was £628 million. The figure for the first four years of Executive responsibility under the Labour Government is £381 million. I am happy to discuss

Conservative policy on transport whenever Mr Muldoon wants.

It was unusual that Elaine Thomson was similarly seized by amnesia. I am sure that the hard-pressed commuters of Aberdeen will derive enormous comfort from her robust contribution. If I understood her correctly, she referred to a move towards delivery on the western peripheral route, which must make it the longest pregnancy out.

I always enjoy John Farquhar Munro's speeches. He said that the Conservative motion was

"a vain and misguided attempt to discredit the coalition partnership".

The Conservatives do not need to utter one word to achieve that—the coalition is doing that magnificently all by itself. Where was Mr Munro's caustic and devastating exposure of the Executive's failures, ambivalence and prevarication? There was a deafening silence, which represents a damning acquiescence and self-condemnation.

Mr Munro's plaintive plea was for improved rail transport in the Highlands, which is unlikely to curry favour with his central-belt socialist friends.

Maureen Macmillan: Will the member take an intervention?

Miss Goldie: Mrs Macmillan should not interrupt me in the full flow of my rhetoric.

I am minded to advise John Farquhar Munro that sleeping with the enemy has seldom had a positive outcome for the sleeper, so there is not much hope for the railways. I must contrast Mr Munro's speech with the gutsy contribution of Christine Grahame who, with verve and aplomb, made a splendid argument for the Borders railway. Her effort was not matched by Margaret Smith's.

My colleague Alex Johnstone made an elegant plea for a specific commitment on the western peripheral route, which was articulately and ably supported by Stewart Stevenson. That issue illustrates what the Conservatives mean when they refer to the ambivalence, doubt, lack of certainty and lack of specification that characterise the Executive's approach to overdue, much-needed transport improvements.

I was struck by what Lord James Douglas-Hamilton said about the congestion-charge threat to Edinburgh. He rightly pointed out that a highly flawed consultation process has taken place. Margaret Smith was exposed in unusual U-turn gymnastics, which was a revealing spectacle.

The Conservative motion has exposed effectively the nakedness of the Executive's transport strategy. More than three years down the line, we are still looking for answers, projects,

outcomes, costings and delivery. The public of Scotland are entitled to ask, "Where are we going?" If the answer were left to the Scottish Executive, it would be, "Nowhere fast".

Business Motion

12:34

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): We have one other item of business, which is consideration of business motion S1M-3420, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Wednesday 2 October 2002

2:30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Stage 1 Debate on Local Government in Scotland Bill

followed by Financial Resolution in respect of the Local Government in Scotland Bill

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5:00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business - debate on the subject of S1M-3263 Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Development of RAF Turnhouse Site

Thursday 3 October 2002

9:30 am Standards Committee Debate on the Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament: Disclosure of Complaints

followed by Standards Committee Debate on its 7th Report 2002 on Replacing the Members' Interests Order: Proposal for a Committee Bill

followed by Standards Committee Debate on its 1st Report 2002 on Lobbying

followed by Business Motion

2:30 pm Question Time

3:10 pm First Minister's Question Time

3:30 pm Executive Debate on Action Against Coronary Heart Disease and Stroke

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5:00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business - debate on the subject of S1M-3276 George Lyon: Gourock to Dunoon Ferry Service

Wednesday 9 October 2002

2:30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Executive Business

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5:00 pm

Decision Time

followed by

Members' Business

Thursday 10 October 2002

9:30 am

Justice 1 Committee Debate on its 6th Report on the Prison Estates Review

followed by

Transport and Environment Committee's Debate on its 4th Report on Petition PE327 by the Blairingone and Saline Action Group on Organic Waste Spread on Land

followed by

Business Motion

2:30 pm

Question Time

3:10 pm

First Minister's Question Time

3:30 pm

Executive Debate on Closing the Opportunity Gap

followed by

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5:00 pm

Decision Time

followed by

Members' Business - debate on the subject of S1M-3407 Rhoda Grant: European Capital of Culture Bid - Inverness Highland 2008

and (b) that Stage 1 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Bill be completed by 13 December 2002, that Stage 1 of the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Bill be completed by 20 December 2002, that Stage 1 of the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Bill be completed by 20 December 2002 and that Stage 1 of the Proportional Representation (Local Government Elections) (Scotland) Bill be completed by 31 January 2003.—[*Euan Robson.*]

Motion agreed to.

12:35

Meeting suspended until 14:30.

14:30

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Rail Services (Laurencekirk)

1. Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has any plans to reopen Laurencekirk railway station. (S1O-5655)

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning (Lewis Macdonald): Proposals to reopen a particular station are for the local transport authority or transport partnership. In this case, it would be for Aberdeenshire Council or the north-east Scotland transport partnership to bring forward any such proposals.

Mr Rumbles: Is the minister aware of the difficulties in accessing public transport in the Mearns? Does he agree that reopening Laurencekirk station would do much to take traffic off the A90, to reinforce the Scottish Executive's transport policy and to stimulate the local economy? Will he contact NESTRANS to add the Executive's support to the proposal?

Lewis Macdonald: I am aware of the position that Mr Rumbles describes and the campaign for the reopening of Laurencekirk station. I reiterate my view that the appropriate step for Mr Rumbles, as the constituency member for the area, to take is to talk to the local authority and to NESTRANS. They are the appropriate bodies to implement a project of the kind that he suggests.

Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con): Following his answer to my constituent Mr Rumbles, and given that he has a connection with the ScotRail franchise for the east coast line, will the minister, in the talks that he is likely to have in future, discuss with the rail operators whether they will be flexible about timetabling? Without a change in timetabling, we cannot integrate Laurencekirk station into the crossrail project for Aberdeen.

Lewis Macdonald: Mr Davidson mentioned the Aberdeen crossrail proposals, which NESTRANS and other partners are carrying forward. The Strategic Rail Authority and Network Rail are involved in the discussions and are taking a close interest in the proposals. If the proposals present a value-for-money case, as they will, and that case includes Laurencekirk station, those responsible for timetabling and the operation of the infrastructure will be fully aware of that.

National Health Service (Grampian)

2. Alex Johnstone (North-East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what its position is on the comments made by the secretary of the Aberdeen local medical committee in the Aberdeen *Evening Express* on 10 September 2002 about the quality of the national health service in Grampian. (S1O-5629)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm): I agree that waiting times for hospital appointments are often too long. That is why systematic work to reduce out-patient waiting times will be at the heart of the Executive's health agenda. I disagree with many of the other comments.

Alex Johnstone: I take it that the minister was aware that, when Dr Ivan Wisely described the NHS in Grampian as

"a disgrace and a scandal"

and said that general practitioner morale was at its lowest level for 20 years, he was commenting on the minister's stewardship. Does the minister accept that the Arbuthnott formula has starved the NHS in Grampian of resources and will he take the necessary action to ensure that the formula is redressed?

Malcolm Chisholm: I cannot believe what I hear. That question comes from a member of a party which, in the mid-1990s, reduced the cash increase in Grampian to 2.6 per cent. For him to complain about a 6.8 per cent cash increase this year shows a brass neck, to put it mildly.

The reality is that Grampian is receiving funding increases that it has not had before. Obviously there are issues with the Arbuthnott formula, but the cash difficulties in Grampian are being resolved. Grampian NHS Board has a financial recovery plan. It will be in recurring financial balance next year. A more balanced view would be appropriate from Alex Johnstone.

Elaine Thomson (Aberdeen North) (Lab): Is the minister aware that Grampian NHS Board management has today warmly welcomed the extra health spending in Grampian that will come from the spending review and for extra health pressures? There is concern about whether the Arbuthnott formula works as well as it might for the north-east. Will the minister assure the people of Aberdeen and the north-east that the review of the Arbuthnott formula will address issues such as the impact of having a teaching hospital and factors such as the current method of measuring rurality?

Malcolm Chisholm: A standing committee continually reviews the Arbuthnott formula. A sub-group of that committee, chaired by Sir John Arbuthnott, is considering the additional costs of teaching hospitals. Work is being done on that,

and the technical issues that surround rurality can be considered in due course as part of that review.

Brian Adam (North-East Scotland) (SNP): Will the minister give us an idea of the time scale for the review of the Arbuthnott formula? Can he tell us with any degree of confidence whether the projected £7 million deficit in the NHS in Grampian will be retrieved?

Malcolm Chisholm: The figure of £7 million is inaccurate. As I said, Grampian NHS Board will be in recurring balance by next year. Brian Adam should know from my previous answer that a standing committee is reviewing the formula. It is an on-going process, so it will not have an end point. It will go on, and if new evidence is presented, that can be considered. Brian Adam should check with his health spokesperson, who represents Glasgow, whether it is Scottish National Party policy to shift money from Glasgow to Grampian.

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): Question 3 is withdrawn.

Criminal Justice (Fingerprint Evidence)

4. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): To ask the Scottish Executive what its policy is on the admissibility and reliability of fingerprint evidence in criminal trials. (S10-5632)

The Deputy Minister for Justice (Dr Richard Simpson): It is for the Crown or those representing the accused to decide whether to lead fingerprint evidence in criminal trials. Questions of admissibility are for the court. The assessment of reliability is for the judge in summary proceedings and for the jury in proceedings on indictment.

Dennis Canavan: Is the minister aware of petition PE544, from fingerprint specialists, which refers to the great international concern about the claim by the Scottish Criminal Record Office that

“fingerprint evidence is a matter of opinion”,

or, as the Minister for Justice put it, an “art form” rather than “an exact science”? Instead of using such statements to cover up mistakes by SCRO, will the Executive commission an independent fingerprint expert of world renown to investigate the matter, to ensure openness, accountability and the fair delivery of justice in cases such as those of Shirley McKie and David Asbury?

Dr Simpson: The member may be aware of the fact that I responded to committee members and supported my colleague, the Deputy First Minister, on the same day that he appeared before the justice committees. I reiterate: it is not an exact science. In Scotland, 16 points are used for fingerprint identification. I cite the case of Gilbert McNamee, the Hyde park bomber, in which 14

expert opinions were obtained. A range of opinions on the fingerprints was produced, from “identical” to “insufficient evidence”. If something is a science, that does not mean that it is an exact science. The Deputy First Minister clearly said:

“what should be said about fingerprint evidence is that it is not an exact science”.—[*Official Report, Justice 1 Committee and Justice 2 Committee (Joint Meeting)*, 17 September 2002; c 225.]

I reiterate that.

HM inspectorate of constabulary for Scotland has reviewed the situation with regard to fingerprints and has made recommendations on training, testing and quality assurance. Those have been adopted and have been followed through.

The Presiding Officer: I ask that no references be made to current cases in supplementary questions.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): In reference to the same petition and having listened carefully to the minister, I take it that he utterly refutes the petition’s claim that, by calling fingerprinting “a matter of opinion”—or an art form—ministers are wrongfully covering up errors made by experts. Is that the case?

Dr Simpson: I do not propose to comment on particular current cases, or on errors that may or may not have occurred. There is currently a civil action against the Scottish ministers, and the Presiding Officer has indicated that we should not comment.

I can say that I have confidence in the fingerprint division. There has been a re-examination of it and we have made certain changes in respect of quality assurance. At present, every fingerprint is examined by more than one fingerprint expert and is then quality assured by a third officer. These are not exact matters. Therefore, I support the Deputy First Minister’s view on the issue.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): Is the minister aware that, in the past, expert opinion was that there was at most a one in a million chance of clearly established fingerprint evidence being wrong? Is he saying that expert evidence that has been accepted in the past is no longer regarded as valid?

Dr Simpson: I am absolutely not saying that. I point out to Lord James, as I have already said, that we in Scotland use a 16-point identification system. In India, for example, identification is based on a 10-point system. In other jurisdictions, different levels of proof are accepted for identification. I repeat: this is not an exact science. Different jurisdictions approach fingerprint identification in different ways. There has been no challenge to fingerprint evidence that was

accepted in the past, and we do not expect any challenge in cases where there has been a 16-point identification.

Brian Fitzpatrick (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): Will the minister recognise the inanity of the proposition that these are matters simply of established scientific fact? If that were the case, it would not be possible to test or challenge expert opinion evidence. Judges and juries would be excluded from reaching conclusions about expert opinion evidence.

Dr Simpson: The member is correct. What would be the point of having experts debate evidence in court if it were never in dispute? There are disputes, particularly when there are fewer than 16 points of identification. Members should accept that this is not an exact science.

Child Psychology Services

5. Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans are in place to reduce the number of children waiting to see a psychologist. (S10-5617)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm): Mental health is one of our clinical priorities for the development of services in NHS Scotland. We have commissioned a review by the Scottish needs assessment programme of current provision of child and adolescent mental health services. A report is due by the end of this year. In the meantime, steps are being taken to increase the available number of clinical psychologists and to review the training needs of other relevant professionals.

Mr Ingram: Does the minister agree that the lack of mental health provision for children and young people in Scotland is a national scandal? Will he discuss with his colleague the Minister for Education and Young People early intervention, which is the key to tackling extreme behavioural problems such as depression, self-harm and violence? Will the Executive ensure that teachers are given the training that they need to identify children at risk for early referral? Will it press for the upgrading of child psychotherapy in the NHS in Scotland, as has happened in England, to ensure—

The Presiding Officer: Order. The member's question is far too long.

Malcolm Chisholm: In my answer to Adam Ingram's initial question, I acknowledged that problems exist. That is why we have commissioned a major review by SNAP and why we are very active in work force planning for mental health services. We have increased the number of those who are training to be clinical psychologists, but we know that that is not enough. We are examining the whole mental

health work force to see whether people in other dispositions can be skilled up to perform a wider range of tasks. That is how to deal with the problem that the member has identified. We need more clinical psychologists, but we also need to train people from other professional groups to work in this area. We are seeking to have more mental health services provided in the primary care sector, which will help to solve some of the problems that we face.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): An increasing number of the children to whom Adam Ingram refers are now being prescribed Ritalin. Will the minister assure us that adequate research has been carried out into the health effects that the drug may have on children in the short and long term?

Malcolm Chisholm: I am aware of the controversies surrounding Ritalin. Last year, the Scottish intercollegiate guidelines network produced a guideline on the use of Ritalin. It is important that clinicians follow that. The guideline recognised that Ritalin was not to be used on its own and that other interventions were important. I support on-going research into the issue.

Cultural Heritage

6. Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive how it is promoting Scotland's historical and cultural heritage. (S10-5638)

The Deputy Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Dr Elaine Murray): All of us in Scotland should be proud of our nation's rich and diverse historical and cultural heritage. That heritage is a key focus of the national cultural strategy, which was launched in 2000. Since then we have worked with many agencies to support and promote our heritage.

The first annual report on the implementation of the cultural strategy was published in October last year. The second annual report is due to be published in November. I commend those reports to the member, as they indicate the kinds of projects and achievements that we wish to promote.

Ian Jenkins: The minister knows that I supported the museums audit. I welcome the consultation that is in train following the audit. Will the minister acknowledge that there is real concern about the sustainability of the museums and galleries sector? As the minister made clear last week, funding has been earmarked for the sector in the comprehensive spending review, but there is concern that it will not rise in proportion with the increase in funding for other sectors.

Dr Murray: We spend considerable sums on the museums sector. This year, the national

institutions received about £44 million and the Scottish Museums Council received £1.9 million. Local authorities contribute about £32 million to the upkeep of museums.

I am happy to concede that there is a problem with the museums sector. Scotland has 400 independent museums and nine industrial museums, many of which are pressured financially. That is one motivation behind the current consultation and is the reason why we wish to produce an action plan on museums, to promote sustainable futures for museums.

Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP): I declare my registered interest as a member of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. I will ask the minister about the promotion of Scotland's literary heritage. Has she considered discussing with local authorities the need to consider making it a condition of the tendering process for library book contracts that Scottish titles are purchased from Scottish publishers, given the demise of Cawdor Book Services Ltd, the last independent Scottish bookseller?

Dr Murray: I am happy to agree with the member that the demise of Cawdor is a concern. The promotion of Scottish literature is one priority in the Executive's cultural strategy. Recently, my colleague Mike Watson met the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss local cultural strategies. I hope that local authorities bear in mind the importance of promoting Scottish culture in the library and education systems.

Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): I declare an interest as a trustee of the Scottish Mining Museum. Is the minister aware that a recent report highlighted the extremely dangerous state of some of the A-listed buildings at the Scottish Mining Museum in Newtongrange? Will she assure me that she will seek urgent action from Historic Scotland to preserve one of the most important industrial heritage sites in the world safely for future generations?

Dr Murray: I am aware of the report, having spent a pleasant couple of hours at the Scottish Mining Museum with the member on Monday. I saw at first hand some of the problems there. I understand that the museum's board met Historic Scotland yesterday and I intend to discuss with Historic Scotland the findings of that meeting. Industrial heritage is an important part of the museums sector and I hope that we will find a way of stabilising the situation.

The Presiding Officer: Question 7 has been withdrawn.

Home Adaptations

8. Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive how it plans to help local authorities to tackle the waiting list for home adaptations for elderly, chronically ill or disabled people. (S10-5652)

The Deputy Minister for Social Justice (Hugh Henry): The Scottish Executive will continue to encourage local authorities to give priority to the funding of adaptations from the resources that are available to them.

Mr Stone: The minister will be aware that about 50 people in the Highlands are on the urgent or high-priority list and need essential adaptations. Given the amount of money that the successful coalition partnership has put towards the health service, will the minister assure me that he will make every effort to ensure that the logjam is unblocked as soon as possible?

Hugh Henry: Two matters need to be addressed. One is the physical adaptations that are required to make living at home more appropriate for the individuals whom the member has identified. Much of the money for such adaptations comes from housing budgets, which are the responsibility of local authorities.

It is for local authorities to determine how much of their community care budgets is allocated to the provision of aids. Local authorities throughout Scotland have been given unprecedented resources, including additional funding last year from the Executive's community care budget. I hope that local authorities will face up to the growing need to use that money effectively to ensure that bedblocking ends and that people have the service at home that they require.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Will the minister explain the difference between community funds and development funding for housing associations? Does he accept that a query lies in the minds of many housing association tenants who cannot obtain adaptations while their associations extend their portfolios?

Hugh Henry: I am not sure whether I fully understand the logic of those questions.

Housing associations have again received significant funding from the Executive, but we should bear in mind that some of the needs of housing association tenants are met by the local authority social work department. The fact that a person is a housing association tenant does not mean that they are excluded from the support of the local authority social work department. On adaptations, we are providing record levels of investment for housing associations. We will continue to inject more investment through the housing stock transfers.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): The situation in Glasgow in relation to adaptations has reached crisis point. Two weeks ago, the Pollok area social work office informed me that it has already spent its whole budget—at this stage of the financial year. Whose fault is that situation? If the Executive is providing sufficient resources to carry out the adaptations, is it the case that Glasgow City Council is not spending the money appropriately? Alternatively, is it the case that the Executive is not providing enough money?

Hugh Henry: I cannot speak specifically about the community care and social work allocations within local authorities, but I point out that financial support to Glasgow City Council and to other local authorities across Scotland has increased significantly in recent years. In the Scottish budget, Andy Kerr announced that even more money will go to those local authorities.

I am sure that Tommy Sheridan will agree that, when the money is allocated to local authorities, it is right for those authorities to be left to make the decisions that they believe are the most appropriate for their local communities. We work in partnership—we provide the local authorities with the funds and the local authorities must decide what the relative priorities are in their communities.

Bus Services (Strikes)

9. Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what investigation has been undertaken into the effects on tourism and the economy of bus strikes in Edinburgh. (S10-5637)

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning (Lewis Macdonald): The Scottish Executive has undertaken no such investigation.

Ms MacDonald: I appreciate that the problem might appear to be a local issue. However, given the importance of the smooth running of the capital's economy to the entire Scottish economy, I ask the minister to join me in urging the management of Lothian Buses to spell out its demands for productivity changes, if the meeting that is taking place now does not result in an acceptable offer. I am told that those demands are the reason for the drivers having voted against the package that is on the table.

Lewis Macdonald: We want both sides in the dispute to use the talks that are being held today to avoid the kind of damaging dispute that the member describes. In a situation of free collective bargaining, that is the appropriate course of action. That is what we would expect to happen. We would encourage the resolution of the dispute to avoid the inconvenience that the member has referred to.

Homelessness (Priority Need)

10. Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how it will ensure that its plans to end priority need in homelessness law are achieved. (S10-5651)

The Deputy Minister for Social Justice (Hugh Henry): The Homelessness etc (Scotland) Bill provides the legislative framework to enable the phasing out of priority need by 2012. The bill requires ministers to publish a statement setting out an action plan for the abolition of the priority need test.

Helen Eadie: The Executive's plan to end the priority need categorisation and to acknowledge that everyone who needs a home has a priority case is welcome. In the light of the slow progress that is being made on regeneration projects such as the project in Lochgelly in my constituency, will the minister assure members that suitable resources will be released, so that local authorities will have enough housing available and will be able to fulfil their new obligations?

Hugh Henry: The Executive has taken housing provision seriously. We are making a significant commitment to addressing the supply and quality issues. We have exceeded our programme for government target to provide 20,000 new or improved homes in the three years up to 31 March this year. About 7,000 new or improved houses are expected to be completed in each of the years 2002-03 and 2003-04.

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): The minister will be aware that homelessness applications to Scottish local authorities were running at record levels last year. Never since records started have we had so many applications. Is it not about time that the minister stopped talking about action plans and actually took some action?

Hugh Henry: That is a fairly inane comment, which ignores what has been done. We have put record resources into tackling the problem of homelessness. The seriousness with which we have approached the debate about homelessness has been reflected in the actions that we are taking in our proposed homelessness legislation.

It should also be recognised that we have been more effective in making people aware of their rights and entitlements. In particular, we are ensuring that women who suffer domestic abuse do not sit suffering silently but are confident about seeking assistance, including the provision of alternative accommodation. One issue that we as a society will need to face is that, as we encourage people to be aware of their rights and as we provide greater assistance to those who have suffered silently in the past, greater pressure will be put on the resources that are available.

Instead of criticising that, we should reflect on the relative success that we have had over recent years.

Child Protection

11. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive, further to the answer to question S1F-1460 by Jack McConnell on 6 December 2001 and the launch of the Barnardo's stolen childhood campaign, what measures have been taken to protect children from abuse through prostitution. **R** (S1O-5630)

The Minister for Education and Young People (Cathy Jamieson): The abuse of children through prostitution is often a hidden problem. We need to raise awareness of this issue and I welcome the important work undertaken by Barnardo's.

We have established a working group to consider support for children, guidance for professionals and effective early intervention to prevent abuse and exploitation before they happen. The working group hopes to reach initial conclusions in October.

Pauline McNeill: Does the minister agree that we may need to look at the law to ensure that adults who commit dreadful crimes by attempting to lure children into prostitution can be dealt with under the law? Can the minister assure me that the review that is being undertaken of the facilities that are available for vulnerable children will consider places of safety as a way forward to ensure that we have the appropriate accommodation for vulnerable children?

Cathy Jamieson: I am happy to give the reassurance that the working group is addressing both those issues. I have said this in the chamber before, but I will say it again: any adult who tries to lure a child into prostitution or into any situation in which that child is then abused deserves to have the full weight of the law come down upon them. I am sure that all members share that view.

The question is whether the legislation needs to be changed or whether it is a matter of how the legislation is enforced. I have asked the working group to look at that. Let me also reassure members that the group recognises that many young people who run away from home can be lured into prostitution. The issue of refuges and safe houses is being considered as part of that process and will feature in the working group's report.

Mr Gil Paterson (Central Scotland) (SNP): Does the minister agree that to use the word "prostitution" is wrong, when we are really talking about child abuse? Although some have been accused of abusing children in the sex trade, almost no adult has been charged with doing so. Is it not time that we took real action to take these vile men out of the system altogether?

Cathy Jamieson: The answer that I have just given to Pauline McNeill makes my views on the matter clear, but I am happy to state again that we are talking about child abuse, which should be treated as such.

National Health Service (Low Pay)

12. Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): To ask the Scottish Executive what specific proposals it intends to make, either in the context of the UK national negotiations or in any other initiative, to eradicate low pay in the NHS in Scotland. (S1O-5636)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mrs Mary Mulligan): The Scottish Executive is committed to addressing low pay in the context of the UK national negotiations on pay modernisation. Negotiations on the new modernised pay system are currently taking place, so it would be inappropriate to comment further.

Tommy Sheridan: Does the minister agree that, even within the limited powers of our devolved settlement, she has it within her power to establish a minimum wage for health service workers in Scotland? That would eradicate the scourge of low pay among essential health workers, such as porters, cleaners and auxiliaries, some of whom are paid as little as £4.18 per hour.

Moreover, does the minister think that it is time that the Scottish Executive used its power to implement a higher minimum wage for health service workers in order to eliminate low pay within our health service and to pay those essential people the wages that they deserve?

Mrs Mulligan: As I have said, the Scottish Executive is committed to tackling low pay issues. For example, over the past three years, targeted measures have been aimed specifically at people on low pay, and pay increases over the period have been above inflation. However, we realise that there is still work to be done, and we will continue to work through the pay negotiation bodies to address the future needs of people on low pay and to tackle any problems that they encounter.

Building Communities

13. Elaine Thomson (Aberdeen North) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how the funding announced in the spending review will be used to build safe, strong communities. (S1O-5628)

The Deputy Minister for Justice (Dr Richard Simpson): The Minister for Finance and Public Services made a full statement to Parliament on 12 September, in which he gave details of the spending review. The thrust of our future programme is to improve radically the quality of life in communities across Scotland. The

substantial resources that we have announced across the range of Executive portfolios will help to build safe, strong communities.

Elaine Thomson: Is the minister aware of the considerable disturbance and distress that is being caused to my constituents in Bridge of Don and Aberdeen by large groups of young people involved in under-age drinking and abusive language and behaviour? Will he assure me that the new resources that have been announced in the spending review will tackle such issues through more effective policing and the provision of alternative activities for young people?

Dr Simpson: I thank the member for her question. As she knows, I have offered to visit her in her constituency and meet local representatives to discuss the issue of youth crime in that area, especially in relation to policing. Grampian police has already established some patrols on hotspots, one of which is in the Bridge of Don area. Local supermarkets have conducted campaigns on alcohol awareness and crime prevention, and I gather that off-licences are considering a voluntary agreement not to sell drink to the under-21s. Furthermore, there has been a joint event involving community education, health promotion and the fire brigade to raise awareness of under-age drinking. In addition to all that, City of Aberdeen Council, along with many local authorities, is about to introduce a ban on drinking in public places, which should also help the situation.

I should add that we provided additional money for community safety at the previous end-of-year spend. Councils received £94 million to use on quality-of-life issues, of which this is one. Furthermore, we have compounded the community safety budget to ensure that £12 million—£4 million in each of the next three years—is available to address the community safety agenda, which has been determined by community partnerships.

Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP): Will the minister confirm that effective prisons play a key role in building safer communities? In the light of the chief inspector of prison's damning report on Craiginches prison, will the minister also ensure that some of the new resources make their way to that prison? Its name was missing when Jim Wallace listed in his recent statement the prisons that will receive new investment.

Dr Simpson: We need to join up activities that are carried out in prison to treat offending behaviour with community resources. Under the Cranstoun Drug Services Scotland initiative, we have put additional resources—some £10 million over three years—into all prisons in Scotland, including Craiginches. Although we cannot yet see

the effects of that programme, I expect to see some improvements. That said, I have accepted in the past that there are some specific problems with drug treatment in the Grampian area. We are examining the matter and I hope to make an announcement at a later stage.

The Presiding Officer: Question 14 has been withdrawn.

National Health Service (Winter Pressures)

15. Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans there are to help the NHS in Scotland through the busy winter period. (S10-5639)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm): It is very important to ensure that the additional pressures that winter brings to health and social care services do not disrupt care for patients and clients. The NHS and its planning partners are now finalising plans that build upon the experience of previous winters. Those plans include extra staff, more beds, increased critical care capacity, additional nursing home places and co-ordinated action on delayed discharge. The measures are supported by a significant investment of £12 million specifically for winter pressures, which comes on top of £20 million specifically for the reduction of delayed discharge.

Rhona Brankin: I welcome the additional resources that are being committed to solving the problem. Will the minister reassure me that those resources will be specifically targeted at problems associated with the winter months? Will he also assure me that the Executive acknowledges the need for joined-up policies in order to tackle the winter problems that are faced by some of the most vulnerable people in our society?

Malcolm Chisholm: The advantage of allocating the money at this time is that it can be targeted on winter pressures. I am often criticised for allocating money to health boards in a general way and we cannot then guarantee that that money will be used for a specific purpose.

Allocating the money now has been done deliberately so that the winter plans, which have been worked on thoroughly using lessons learnt in previous years, will have the resources ready to be implemented. The extra money for winter pressures is on top of the campaign that we launched on Monday to encourage all older people over the age of 65, and younger at-risk people, to have the flu vaccination. That is not only critical to people's health, which is the main issue, but to reducing avoidable hospital admissions in winter.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Does the minister share my concern at today's news of the discovery of an outbreak of

legionnaire's bacteria at Perth royal infirmary? Does the minister agree that the public can have confidence in our hospitals this winter only if effective measures are put in place to prevent such outbreaks?

Malcolm Chisholm: Over the past year, I have been very concerned about hospital-acquired infections. That is why we are going to produce an action plan on that in October, which will be based on the national convention that we held at the end of June. At that convention, we took ideas from experts in the field in order to drive forward work in that area. The member will also know that, for the first time, we have national standards in that field and inspections against those standards are being carried out by the Clinical Standards Board for Scotland. A report is expected in December.

The Presiding Officer: Questions 16 and 17 have been withdrawn.

Urban Regeneration

18. Mr John McAllion (Dundee East) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what lessons it has drawn from the experience of the new life for urban Scotland initiative and its impact on local communities such as Whitfield in Dundee. (S10-5654)

The Minister for Social Justice (Ms Margaret Curran): An evaluation of the new life for urban Scotland programme that was commissioned by the Scottish Executive reported in 1999. A key conclusion was that the partnership approach to delivering the initiative had been successful, but that sustainability would depend upon the partnership's capacity for plugging into wider structures and networks, mainstreaming and increasing community capacity.

Mr McAllion: The shocking levels of child poverty in parts of Whitfield in 1998—a decade after the new life initiative was launched—were revealed recently by Save the Children. Does the minister accept that regeneration policies that are limited to small geographical areas, which are abandoned early without a proper exit strategy and which are confined mainly to physical and environmental improvements are not the answer for Scotland's poor? Does the minister agree that, without an irreversible shift in wealth and power in this country, and to use an old phrase, the poor we shall always have with us?

Ms Curran: I reassure the member that I am completely committed to an irreversible shift in wealth and power in this country and I do my best every day to try and bring that about. I also make it clear that we are committed on the need to maintain investment and support to communities that face concentrated levels of poverty.

Our recent community regeneration statement addresses the point that was made by John McAllion. It is not enough to go into areas and then move out of them. We need proper exit strategies. We need to maintain support for those communities and we must attack poverty.

The Presiding Officer: Question 19 is from Johann Lamont, who is not here. We move to question 20.

Congestion Charging

20. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether an effective, modern, 21st century public transport system for Edinburgh is conditional on the adoption of a congestion charging scheme implemented by the council. (S10-5611)

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning (Lewis Macdonald): No. The primary role of any congestion charging scheme is to tackle congestion. However, the scheme that is being developed by the City of Edinburgh Council would also raise additional streams of funding that could be used for additional transport enhancements.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The first part of the minister's answer is extremely welcome, if I may say so. Will the minister assure me that such vital development as the upgrading of Waverley station, the railway stop at Edinburgh airport and the upgrading of the A8000 will not be dependent upon the success of charging for entry to the capital city of Scotland?

Lewis Macdonald: The rail projects to which the member refers are both projects that are being implemented with rail partners. In that respect, the role of the City of Edinburgh Council is of less significance.

Clearly, the City of Edinburgh Council is the lead authority in relation to the A8000, which is its responsibility. The council is making progress in conjunction with the Forth estuary transport authority. I am pleased that that authority will be free, if it wishes, to use tolls from the Forth road bridge to assist to pay for that scheme.

First Minister's Question Time

15:10

Prime Minister (Meetings)

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): I call Kenny MacAskill. [MEMBERS: "Oh."]

1. Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): In view of the Pavlovian response, I assure the chamber that I am simply keeping the seat warm for John Swinney until next Thursday—a bit like the way in which the First Minister is keeping his seat warm for John Swinney until May.

To ask the First Minister when he next plans to meet the Prime Minister and what issues he intends to raise. (S1F-2110)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): First, I welcome Eric Clarke, the former MP for Midlothian, to the gallery. As a former general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers Scotland, he was a pivotal figure in the campaign for this Parliament. I welcome his first appearance in the gallery.

I talk regularly with the Prime Minister and I intend to meet him during the course of next week. The last time that we met, we discussed the importance of education, health, crime and growing the Scottish economy. I expect to discuss those matters the next time that we meet.

Mr MacAskill: Is the First Minister aware of the report on tourism by Professor Terry Stevens, which was commissioned by the Parliament, given the recent dramatic fall in visitor numbers? Professor Stevens said:

"Scotland will not be able to control this dynamic unless its tourism chiefs engage with the low-cost airlines ... Tourism equals travel and if people cannot get to a place then they will not come."

Does the First Minister agree?

The First Minister: It is important that we establish the facts. Visitor numbers in Scotland this year are increasing. We have turned round from the tourism difficulties of 2000. It is vital that we do so by investing heavily in marketing, visitor product and transport infrastructure and routes. Low-cost airlines are operating out of airports across Scotland. It is important that they do so, but it is also important that they pay their fair share for doing so. We want to attract low-cost airlines to Scotland, but they should pay their fair share of airline and airport costs.

Mr MacAskill: I am surprised that the First Minister is so blasé. Since the Administration came to power, the number of overseas visitors has gone down by more than a quarter and their spend has gone down by a third. Professor

Stevens says that low-cost flights are critical. The First Minister will be aware that Ryanair has sought to fly into Inverness. An analysis of airport charges by Cranfield University found Inverness to be the most expensive airport not in Scotland, nor in the UK, but in the whole of Europe. The First Minister is the sole shareholder in that airport. Why will he not address the urgent need? Will he get the charges reduced and let the flights take off at his airport?

The First Minister: Such matters are properly negotiated between the airport authorities and the companies involved. It is not the responsibility of the Parliament—I find it astonishing that a party that regularly condemns private companies and private profit believes that it is—to instruct or even allow Government agencies in Scotland to bend over and bow down to private companies that want to exploit low charges at our airports. It is important that companies pay a fair share for the services that they enjoy. That should apply to Ryanair as much as to any other company.

Mr MacAskill: I have never criticised private profit or private companies. Professor Stevens says that low-cost carriers—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order. Let us hear the question.

Mr MacAskill: Professor Stevens says that low-cost carriers are the key. Ryanair will not fly into the First Minister's airport. EasyJet will not expand at his airport. Even the chief executive of his airport wants those flights to come into Inverness but says that he cannot have them. Will the First Minister take action at his airport? Will he reduce the charges and let the Highland economy take off? The responsibility cannot be buck passed to anyone else. It is his airport, they are his charges and it is his responsibility.

The First Minister: Those are serious issues. People regularly ask, "What difference has the Parliament made in Scotland?" One of the areas in which the Parliament and devolution have made a difference is in the tripling of subsidy to Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd since 1999. The increase in subsidy has made a difference to maintaining and improving services not just in Inverness, but throughout the Highlands and Islands. Serious solutions such as that will bring about sustainable, long-term improvements in our air services in Scotland.

We do not need more slogans in Scotland; we need serious solutions. It has been quite a week for slogans. We have heard some new ones and perhaps this is another example of the Scottish National Party raiding our pockets and reducing our prosperity with their redundant old policies. The good news, however, is that the SNP will be rejected outright by the people.

Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)

2. David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland and what issues he plans to raise. (S1F-2117)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I speak regularly with the secretary of state concerning matters of importance to Scotland and plan to meet with her again tomorrow.

David McLetchie: I hope that the First Minister and the secretary for state might talk about some of the Executive's spending proposals that we discussed last week in Parliament. Will the First Minister confirm that the Executive's commitment in "Building a Better Scotland: Spending Proposals 2003-2006" to

"maintain the capacity of the police service"

means that there are no plans to increase the number of serving police officers in Scotland over the next three years?

The First Minister: The specific number of serving police officers in Scotland is a matter for chief constables in their budgets. The commitment is absolutely clear—we have achieved record levels of police officers in Scotland. We will maintain those numbers—they will increase and decrease slightly over time, but they will always be at those record levels. We will ensure that more of those officers spend more time in the community, more time catching criminals, less time in courts, less time transferring prisoners to and from prison and less time on other duties for which they should not have been responsible in the past.

David McLetchie: I hear the First Minister's answer, but I am afraid that the situation is not as simple as that. The First Minister must acknowledge that the Executive has been heaping more responsibilities on to police officers, such as the requirement to take victim statements and to monitor the growing number on the sex offenders register, which the Deputy Minister for Justice seems to believe will rise by over 5,000 in the years ahead. Does the First Minister recognise that those extra responsibilities need extra resources? Will he give a commitment to provide sufficient funding to put more police officers on the streets in accordance with the wishes and needs of communities? Will he make that the priority that it should be but is not at present?

The First Minister: There is an absolute commitment. If Mr McLetchie has read the document—I assume from his comments that he has—he will understand that that commitment has been driven right through those three years of budgets to secure increased resources to deliver for and improve the criminal justice service in Scotland.

It is also important that we change practice. It is my strongly held view that the people of Scotland welcome the fact that victim statements will be taken properly by the right officers. They welcome the fact that there is a sex offenders list and that that list includes more and more people who should be on it. They will also welcome the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill, which is currently passing through Parliament. It includes provisions that will take police officers away from duties that they previously had to carry out and it will get them back on the beat in the community. Only one party in Parliament voted against that bill at stage 1—the Scottish Conservative party.

Mr John McAllion (Dundee East) (Lab): Has the First Minister or the secretary of state had the opportunity to discuss with the Dundee-based company ABB its decision to halt the manufacture of electricity transformers and distributors in the city with the loss of almost 200 skilled jobs? If so, will the First Minister reassure me that they will both use all their power and influence to persuade that company that, if, as it admits, it can continue to operate successfully and smartly in high-cost centres in Italy, Sweden and Finland, it can and must do the same in Dundee?

The First Minister: I share Mr McAllion's disappointment over the announcement earlier this week about ABB. Although I have not spoken personally to the company, our officials are—as Mr McAllion might expect—seeking a meeting with the company to discuss the situation and any action that we can take.

Fluoridation

3. Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Executive will assess the potential impact of fluoridation on health. (S1F-2126)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): "Towards Better Oral Health in Children: A Consultation Document on Children's Oral Health in Scotland", which we published on Tuesday, outlines the extensive scientific assessment that has been undertaken into the potential impact of fluoridation on health. However, improving children's oral health is about much more, which is why we are giving free toothbrushes and toothpaste to pre-school children, expanding the supervision of toothbrushing in nursery schools and targeting the recruitment and retention of dentists as a priority.

Sarah Boyack: I welcome the First Minister's response and the commitment to tackle children's dental health. Will he consider seriously the grave concerns that many members have about the impact of fluoridation on public health? In particular, will he consider the research that shows a significant correlation between fluoridation and

increases in hip fractures and osteosarcoma? Instead of focusing on fluoridation, will the First Minister focus on supporting healthy eating initiatives and targeting action through health visitors, nurseries and schools?

The First Minister: I hope that there is a consensus in the Parliament and in Scotland that we need to pursue healthy eating initiatives. There is a wide range of programmes and projects. Some of them are already making a difference and others should be expanded. It is important that we have a proper consultation on fluoridation. The issue has been around in Scotland for a long time and it is time to have a debate and to make a decision one way or the other in the next few years. I agree with Sarah Boyack that fluoridation is not the only issue. It is not the only issue in the consultation document. The other programmes will carry on while the debate on fluoridation continues.

Local Government (Proportional Representation)

4. Mr Keith Harding (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the First Minister whether the introduction of a proportional representation system of voting for local government elections will improve the governance of councils. (S1F-2116)

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): Of course it will.

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Some may say that and some may not. Improving the governance of councils in Scotland is about more than electoral reform. The Deputy First Minister and I believe that it is right for the new Executive after May 2003 to be able to decide on the next steps on those important issues.

Mr Harding: I am sure that the First Minister's Labour council colleagues will feel reassured by that when they lose their seats. Does the First Minister believe that councils would be better run by a large influx of Scottish National Party councillors, given that, according to research, the SNP would be the greatest beneficiary of the single transferable vote system?

The First Minister: I put it on record earlier this year that I do not believe that the Parliament should establish an electoral system for local government simply to suit any one political party, which includes the Liberal Democrats and the Labour party. I stand by that comment firmly. The electoral system is far too important for party politics. As was revealed the last time that we debated the issue in Parliament, the SNP has repeatedly stressed in its private correspondence that it is interested in the issue only for party-political advantage. The SNP's actions and attitude to the issue are despicable. We must have

a proper debate that puts party politics second and the interests of Scottish local government first.

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): Will the First Minister nevertheless accept that there is a considerable democratic deficit in many council areas, where the opposition has been largely wiped out not by the vote of the people, but by the bizarre operation of the first-past-the-post system? Can the First Minister think of a democratic principle that justifies one party in Glasgow having 74 of 79 seats but only half of the vote? Is he committed to changing the system to revitalise local government?

The First Minister: On many occasions, I have stressed the view that there is a legitimate point to make about the difference between the percentage of votes that parties receive and the number of councillors from those parties who are elected in some areas. However, another legitimate point of view says that single-member wards whose representation is decided by a first-past-the-post system give direct accountability for individual councillors, which is important for the electorate in those areas. The debate is a legitimate one with two legitimate points of view. We must be open and frank in discussing them.

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): The Cabinet has agreed to publish a draft bill on PR for local government, although PR is not the stated policy of the Executive. Can the First Minister explain why taxpayers' money is being used to pay for the legal, civil service and drafting costs of a draft bill on an issue that is not the policy of the Executive? Does he agree that the cost of the proposed draft bill should be met by the Labour party and the Scottish Liberal Democrats?

The First Minister: This situation occurs all the time in the Parliament. The SNP manifesto calls for road tolls in Edinburgh, but when those tolls are going to happen, it criticises them. The SNP calls for tax cuts for Scottish business, but then it proposes increased spending that it will pay for from tax increases. Now, the SNP is campaigning for proportional representation, but it is criticising a proposed bill that might help to bring that about. If we are to have the confidence of the people of Scotland, there must be some consistency among all the political parties, not just three of them. I ask the SNP to grow up, please, and to keep the same policy from one week to the next.

Economic Growth (Population Change)

5. Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what impact population change will have on economic growth. (S1F-2124)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I believe that a growing population will contribute to the higher growth rate that we need for Scotland.

We wish to retain the talent that we have, attract former Scots back home and be open to welcome people from new cultures, nationalities and backgrounds.

Karen Gillon: I thank the First Minister for his answer. I am doing my bit to grow the population. Does he accept that we will attract more people back to Scotland only if it is a welcoming and inclusive Scotland, where racism has no place in society? Will he tell us what role the Executive's recently announced anti-racism strategy will have in developing such a Scotland?

The First Minister: It is vital that the Scotland that we show is a Scotland of which we can be proud. If we, as a nation, are to be successful in the global economy, we must show ourselves to be a nation that is welcoming without prejudice, racism or sectarianism and that can live, survive and prosper in the modern world. I hope that this week's anti-racism campaign—which I trust will have the support of all members—will allow us to stand proudly before the world and say that Scotland is a place where prejudice is a thing of the past.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Does the First Minister agree that the best way in which to increase Scotland's population is to encourage private enterprise to prosper, thus creating the jobs, wealth and security that give people the confidence to stay in Scotland and plan families?

The First Minister: That is one way in which to encourage a growing population.

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): Can the First Minister assure me that, as part of the programme to make Scotland a welcoming place and to ensure that we engage properly with the global technology marketplace, we will ensure that people in the far east are aware that they will be as welcome in Scotland as many of them believe themselves to be in silicon valley? I was astounded to discover that people in the far east prefer to go there because they think that it is a more welcoming place than Scotland.

The First Minister: That is not my experience. In my time in the Parliament, not just as the First Minister, I have met many people who have come to this country, been welcomed and had good experiences as a result. I have met a minority who have not and that is what the anti-racism campaign is all about. We must ensure that people who visit this country, who come to live here and take up citizenship, who come to study here or who trade with us believe that this is a country in which they will not experience prejudice. That is our challenge and I hope that we are about to meet it.

Child Poverty

6. Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what concerns the Scottish Executive has regarding child poverty. (S1F-2121)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I want to live in a Scotland that is full of opportunities and I want those opportunities to be open to all children. That is why we are investing in, among other measures, sure start Scotland, a child care strategy and the new community schools.

Christine Grahame: Given that one in three children in resources-rich Scotland lives in poverty and that we have the third-highest child poverty rate of 25 countries after five years of Labour rule, is the First Minister not ashamed?

The First Minister: First, I am pleased that the number of children in Scotland in absolute poverty has dropped so dramatically since 1997. I am disappointed that the number in relative poverty has not dropped more quickly and further. However, I acknowledge that that is because family incomes, particularly in middle-income families, have increased and prospered since 1997.

We must get the balance right. We want to ensure that ordinary working families in Scotland have an opportunity to grow their family budget and have the sort of successful family life that most of us would want them to have. We also want to ensure that those who start with disadvantage in whatever community in Scotland—rural or urban—have the opportunity to grow out of that disadvantage, take up opportunities, educational and otherwise, and have good health and a decent job. We are best equipped to succeed in that if we work in close partnership with the United Kingdom Government. If we work together, we will do the job well.

Dorothy-Grace Elder (Glasgow) (Ind): Some areas of the east end of Glasgow have pockets where child poverty goes up to 90 cent, which shames the nation. Some of those children were, with their parents, victims of the 30 July flood. The UK Government was good enough to give £100,000 to the Czech Republic flood victims, particularly because of the children. However, the First Minister's Executive and the UK Government have given nothing to the east end victims. Will he please now think again because of the children of the east end of Glasgow?

The First Minister: First, I am sure that Dorothy-Grace Elder will know that the minister responsible is developing a package of responses that will be of assistance in Glasgow. I also want to say—I hope that this is not misrepresented or taken lightly—that a situation in which people in

eastern Europe are dying because of flooding is a serious one and it is right and proper that Britain fulfils its international obligations to help out.

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Standing orders state clearly that the Presiding Officer should treat all members of Parliament equally, but the standing orders seem to be regularly ignored during First Minister's question time. Invariably, John Swinney is number 1 and David McLetchie is number 2. They usually take up at least half or more than half of the time allocated for First Minister's question time.

Today, John Swinney was not here and I noticed that the substitute, number 3 from the SNP benches, was put into the number 1 position. I also note that earlier the Presiding Officer chose Phil Gallie to ask a supplementary question despite the fact that the member was not even in the chamber to ask the question that he had lodged—indeed, he withdrew his question. What is going on?

The Presiding Officer: On the second point, I properly called Mr Gallie on an earlier question. He sent me a note explaining why he was withdrawing a later one. I do not have foresight; I was not to know that he was not going to be here later. However, his question was perfectly valid.

On the more general question, it is for the chamber to consider, as we move towards the end of this session of Parliament, whether the existing question time structure is a good one. However, the structure has been operating for three and a half years and I am surprised that Mr Canavan has just discovered that questions 1 and 2 are usually given to the leaders of the Opposition parties. That is the agreement.

I think that the leaders of the Opposition parties will not mind my saying that I have implored them on many occasions to keep their questions short to allow plenty of time for others to get in. In fact, we did well today. Not everyone was called, but nearly everyone who asked was called.

That is my answer at the moment. However, the structure of question time is a matter for the chamber to consider. I have views on how question time might be improved.

Dennis Canavan: With respect, Presiding Officer, it is not a matter for the chamber at this particular time. It is a matter for you to abide by the standing orders that have been agreed by the Parliament. The standing orders state clearly that you should treat all members equally.

The Presiding Officer: That is true, but there is a well-known saying that, although everyone is equal, some are more equal than others. That has always been the case with party leaders, as Mr

Canavan knows from his previous incarnation as well as his present one. I am quite open to suggestions for change, but that is the system that we have used and I am not proposing to change it.

Race Equality

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh): The next item of business is a debate on motion S1M-3423, in the name of Margaret Curran, on race equality, and two amendments to the motion. I observe that we are six minutes late in starting and warn members that that will affect the way in which I regulate time in the course of the debate.

15:36

The Minister for Social Justice (Ms Margaret Curran): I am pleased to be speaking in this debate. This has been a significant week for both the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament. I express my recognition of the courtesy that was expressed by the leaders of the other parties in their responses to the briefing on the subject and their warm words about the campaign. We share a common stance in our condemnation of racism and discrimination. I hope that we also share a common vision of a Scotland where we celebrate the diversity of our people and welcome the contribution that they and those who might come to Scotland from abroad can make to our economic prosperity and social fabric.

This motion is about the kind of Scotland that I believe we all want: a confident, successful country that is proud of its diversity, free of injustice and in which all can thrive regardless of who they are and where they live. This motion is about eradicating racism in today's Scotland as an essential prerequisite for securing that goal. Racism is an issue for all of us, whatever our party politics. If we care about Scotland and the people in it—all of them—this debate should be a positive affirmation of that.

This week, the Executive launched its anti-racism campaign in which we all sign up for a Scotland where we respect and value the diversity of our communities, harness and foster the skills and talents of all, welcome new blood and different perspectives and state clearly and loudly that there is no place for racism.

Regrettably, the day-to-day human experiences of exclusion, prejudice and antagonism deny those advantages to far too many people across the country. That discrimination can involve individual actions or institutional discrimination. Sometimes the discrimination is conscious but often it is unwitting. However it manifests itself, we need to act to create a change.

I do not believe that anyone in the chamber or in the country wants to live in a Scotland where a family or person's potential is determined not by what they have to offer but by their postcode, skin colour, ethnicity, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation or disability.

Mr Lloyd Quinan (West of Scotland) (SNP): While welcoming the campaign, I seek clarification on two issues. I note that the minister stated that she wants to tackle religious discrimination. What distinction is made in the strategy between racism and sectarianism? Does she recognise that the concept of sectarianism contains a clear anti-Irish racism?

Ms Curran: This campaign is specifically an anti-racism campaign. Mr Quinan will know that the Executive has set up a working group to examine the issue of sectarianism—I believe that Roseanna Cunningham is involved in that group. We do not necessarily think that the issue of sectarianism always relates to the issues of racism. We are focusing on race discrimination in the campaign. That does not imply that we do not take sectarianism seriously; we recognise that we have to take it seriously. We think that the appropriate way to consider issues to do with sectarianism that members have raised in the chamber is through the working group.

On anti-Irish racism, part of the research that underlay the nature of the campaign that we have proposed and implemented considered the nature of race discrimination in Scotland. I have to say that a touch of anti-English racism was picked up in the evidence that we received. We take any prejudicial judgment on another's nation seriously, but the overwhelming evidence that we received showed that colour was the key determinant of race discrimination. We decided to prioritise that, which is why the adverts are constructed as they are.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): I hope that we can get maximum unity around the campaign that has been launched. However, does the minister agree that politicians in particular have to be very careful about the language that they employ in politics and in public pronouncements? It is regrettable that the Home Secretary has used language that, quite frankly, is part of another era and which Thatcher used to deploy when she was stirring up racial tension. Does the minister agree that politicians have to be extremely cautious about the language that they use and that the Home Secretary should bear that in mind?

Ms Curran: Politicians should always be cautious about their actions and their language, and I do not hesitate to agree with that. I do not want to get into issues of personalities, because that would divert from the key messages of our campaign. I am responsible for how the Scottish Executive will conduct itself in these matters and I am explaining today how it intends to do that.

I was just about to talk about how deprivation, poverty and exclusion affect people's experiences. Poorer communities are often misrepresented in popular discussions of these issues. I have

substantial experience of our most excluded communities being the first to extend the hand of friendship to others. We need to begin to tackle the myths and assumptions that abound about people from different ethnic backgrounds and how those myths and assumptions are perpetuated.

I am sure that we are all keen to condemn other political parties that seek to exploit poverty and deprivation as a means of stirring up racist hatred. I should just mention that the only political criticism that we have received in our campaign so far has been from the British National Party. I am sure that I speak on behalf of everybody in the chamber when I say that that will not intimidate us or frighten us off our message.

The Parliament will reassert its condemnation of racism in Scotland. We know what the issues are. We know that in Scotland someone has more chance of being unemployed if they are a member of an ethnic minority community. We know that too many people from ethnic minority communities are under-represented in most occupations and continue to experience racism at work. We know that cases of institutional racism and racial harassment are still far too prevalent. The number of racist incidents that are reported to the police continues to rise to around 3,000 a year. That is the reality for our communities, but how do people in Scotland generally view the issues?

Our campaign has been forged in the light of research into behaviour and attitudes towards race and racism in Scotland. The results have been both heartening and depressing. People in Scotland say that they want to live in a country that is welcoming and friendly, where people all have equal opportunity to prosper and succeed. However, at the same time, they reveal that entrenched attitudes and prejudices cut across that. The research reveals that people recognise that racism is a problem in contemporary Scotland, but that they see it as something for which others are responsible. The reality is that racism is a problem at all levels of society and that it cuts across all geographical areas.

The campaign is therefore founded on hard facts, solid research and a need to demonstrate leadership. We should not forget that part of the genesis for the campaign lies in tragic events, such as the deaths of Firsat Dag in Sighthill and Surjit Singh Chhokar.

The Lawrence steering group, the race equality advisory forum and the Equal Opportunities Committee all called for an awareness-raising campaign in response to those and other incidents. The Executive is responding to that call. The Executive campaign aims to prompt debate, to challenge ingrained attitudes, and to get people to think more constructively about the sort of Scotland that they want to live in and the attitudes

and behaviours that get in the way of that.

The campaign rests on the key strapline: "One Scotland. Many Cultures."

I hope that members will see much of that strapline in the coming weeks. Scotland is multi-ethnic. We are the richer and the stronger for that. Our future prosperity should also benefit from the growing and attracting of talent from diverse communities in Scotland and beyond. We need to be a country that is confident with its diversity, a place that celebrates what we have in common, and a country that thrives on difference.

The key strapline is supported by three other slogans. The first is that there is "No place for racism" in Scotland. Racist behaviour is unacceptable in modern Scotland. Racist behaviour is not just about physical violence in housing schemes in big cities; it is about our language and our attitudes, and it is about how we live from Oban to Dumfries.

The second slogan is that Scotland may be "A small country" but "Not a country of small minds". A successful Scotland of the 21st century will need ever more innovation, interchange, energy and dynamism. Small-minded prejudice and narrowness of vision will hold us back from that goal.

The third slogan is "Don't let Scotland down." If we do not tackle racism, we let ourselves and Scotland down. Everyone can help to create a climate where racism is deemed unacceptable.

Our high-profile campaign is not just a cosmetic exercise; it is underpinned by concerted and practical action by the Executive. That action includes funding for racial equality work through the education service; projects that are aimed at supporting school staff to tackle racism; working with the police to develop a code of practice for racist incidents; working with the health service through the fair for all programme; funding a range of additional security measures for places of work; and working with the voluntary sector to ensure that we properly support minority ethnic organisations.

However, tackling racism and promoting race equality are not just the preserve of the Executive. I thank the Commission for Racial Equality for its engagement with the campaign from the outset and for its contribution to its development. I also pay tribute to myriad organisations and individuals for their untiring commitment and invaluable work, often in very challenging circumstances. They are the underpinning of this campaign and, indeed, the great unsung heroes of much work on behalf of the Executive.

I have a list of other activities that the Executive is undertaking; perhaps they will be spoken about during the debate.

Racism is unacceptable. It makes no sense socially, politically, morally or economically. Let us assert categorically that we are a multi-ethnic society—one Scotland with many cultures. We will respect our diversity. That is the message that we hope to get across in this campaign. We have to build a smart, successful Scotland. We can take our place with pride in the 21st century if we tackle racism in Scotland.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the importance of tackling racism, prejudice and inequality as integral to promoting an inclusive, confident and prosperous Scotland that retains and attracts talent from different cultures and backgrounds and welcomes the anti-racism and race equality work being done by the Executive and other national and local bodies.

15:48

Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP):

The SNP amendment is in the name of Kenny Gibson. I welcome the opportunity to have this debate today. Most of us recognise that one of the biggest enemies of a successful campaign to tackle racism would be complacency about the extent of racism in our society and in our communities across Scotland.

Research figures that were released this week indicated that some 25 per cent of Scots considered themselves to be racist. The headline news was along the lines of, "How can there be so many people in Scotland who consider themselves to be racist?" The danger with such a result is that some people will think that the figure suggests that too many people are racists, while others, sad to say, will think that the figure suggests that not many people at all are racist. Some would argue that the majority of people in our society are racist in some way, irrespective of their ethnic background. The challenge to us, in tackling racism, is to ensure that those who harbour racist views are challenged as to why they harbour such views.

I welcome the Executive's campaign and its decision to bring it forward in the way that it has. The Minister for Social Justice will be aware that John Swinney wrote to party leaders back in April on this issue, looking for a united campaign against those who would seek to create racism in our communities.

Given the recent events involving parties such as the BNP—including its attack on my parliamentary colleague Roseanna Cunningham—it is essential that all democratically elected members of the Parliament should be united in campaigning against such organisations and abhorrent views. I particularly welcome the fact that the First Minister has been so positive in acknowledging the need for a united campaign to

tackle racism. I am sure that the minister is looking forward to chairing her working party, which will have cross-party representation.

Although I welcome the campaign, I have some concerns. If we are to tackle racism effectively, it is essential that we address it at a grass-roots level. That message must be taken into every home, classroom, workplace and community group throughout Scotland. There is a danger that, if we have an apparently media-led campaign, it will be perceived as a top-down approach. It is essential that local organisations that are actively involved with local groups in local communities—such as the race equality councils—are part of the implementation of the campaign. The minister may wish to intervene on that point. It is essential that such local organisations feel as though they are partners in delivering the campaign and that they are provided with the resources to do so effectively.

Ms Curran: I will clarify the situation, as I had to speed up at one point in my speech. I assure members that the campaign was developed in close partnership with a number of organisations. We take the point that a top-down, one-off approach would have only limited impact. We intend to work closely in partnership with organisations. I can defend my position: we give substantial funding to a range of organisations to ensure that anti-racism work is conducted in Scotland. I am sure that we will talk about that as the debate goes on.

Michael Matheson: I welcome the minister's response. However, only last week, I received representations from members of race equality councils, who expressed concern that they had not been provided with any additional resources to deal with a possible increase in direct inquiries. A number of race equality councils throughout Scotland are having funding problems just now because of the changes that may occur as a result of the CRE's review. We must ensure that they have at their disposal the resources to ensure that the increased inquiries that they may receive as a result of the campaign are tackled effectively.

It is also important that the campaign should not be regarded as a one-off. It must be a sustainable campaign. It must continue. It must continue to challenge racism. To think that a one-off campaign would be the magic wand that could eradicate racism in our society would be wrong. We know how deep-rooted it is. The minister mentioned the 3,000 incidents that are reported to the police every year. We also know from research about the racism that exists in institutions in Scotland. For example, the average Asian person is probably paid around 15 per cent less in some types of jobs in Scotland as a result of their ethnic background. That institutional racism is unacceptable.

Tommy Sheridan has already raised my next point. Last week, I shared a platform with Doreen Lawrence, the mother of Stephen Lawrence, at a race awareness conference in Grangemouth, which was set up by central Scotland race equality council. One of the clear messages that came across from the organisations that were present at the conference was that we need to have political leadership in implementing any campaign to eradicate racism. They were concerned that every politician should show that political leadership, irrespective of whether they are at Westminster or in the Scottish Parliament. The organisations noted their concern about David Blunkett's comments, because such comments do not help those within our communities who suffer from racism. Those to whom I spoke were disappointed that the Scottish Executive did not show political leadership in Scotland by distancing itself from David Blunkett's comments. I hope that the minister will reflect on that at some point and consider distancing the Executive from those comments.

Scotland is a rich society because of its diversity, and our diversity is something that we as a society should celebrate. I close with a quotation from last Friday's conference:

"In our difference lies our strength; in our unity lies our future."

I move amendment S1M-3423.2, to insert at end:

"and recognises the importance of fully resourcing these bodies in order to sustain their efforts over the long term."

15:55

Mrs Lyndsay McIntosh (Central Scotland) (Con): Despite the fact that I have lodged an amendment to the motion, I hope that the minister will accept that our intent is to encourage those organisations and individuals who are working to tackle racism, prejudice and inequality to ensure that Scotland has no place for racism and to empower people from whatever country or culture to pursue and partake of every opportunity that our nation offers.

One only has to look at the statistics to contemplate the scale of the project that the Executive and others have taken on. In 1999, 1.6 per cent of the Scottish population were from ethnic minority groups, more than a third of whom came from Pakistani or Bangladeshi communities. Crucially, 57 per cent of the ethnic minority population were aged under 30, compared with only 38 per cent of the indigenous population. If anything, that encourages me.

I think of my own experience at school. When I attended Radleigh School, I was exposed to a variety of children from a host of backgrounds and

cultures. For me, that was a broadening experience, which has shaped my attitudes in adult life. My progress to a senior secondary school was a bit of a cultural let-down, however, as I found myself in a homogeneous group without the advantages that I had come to know. Such was the benefit to me that I sought just such a culturally and racially mixed school for my own children, and I see in their attitudes and in the mix of their friends that they too have developed attitudes of which anyone would be proud.

It is undoubtedly through our youngsters that attitudes will change, and I hope that that will reverse the increase in the number of racist incidents which, as the minister and Michael Matheson have said, is currently more than 3,000 a year. It is timeous that, as Scottish public bodies move towards compliance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 on 30 November, the Executive has highlighted the issue. We are happy to support its endeavour. The minister will be aware of my support for previous awareness-raising campaigns, even in the face of criticism when the Executive's numbers were found wanting—but I do not want to end on a sour note. I am concerned, however, that the Executive is spending £1 million of taxpayers' money on an advertising campaign, and that we have no way of measuring its likely success. Will the Executive measure success by a rise in the number of reported incidents, as more people become aware, or are we seeking a marked decrease in the number of reported incidents? Perhaps the minister will tell us how the effectiveness—

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

Mrs McIntosh: Surely.

Mr Rumbles: I was not clear about this: is the member criticising—

Mrs McIntosh: I was asking the minister a question, but—

Mr Rumbles: Well, I am asking Lyndsay McIntosh a question. Is she criticising the allocation of £1 million and the effort that is going into the advertising campaign?

Mrs McIntosh: We are not criticising it at all; we are merely questioning how we are to measure the effectiveness of the campaign. That is my question to the minister, and perhaps she would like to respond.

Ms Curran: Lyndsay McIntosh raises a significant point about how we measure changes in racist attitude and behaviour. There are many ways to do that. One is to monitor increases or decreases in the number of racist incidents, but there are many other ways of doing it. We decided

that measuring attitudinal change should be done over the long term, although we note that attitudes are not easy to measure. That does not mean to say that we should not engage in the awareness-raising campaign. The fact that any such campaign is hard and that a long period and a variety of instruments are required does not mean that we should back away from the need for leadership in tackling racism in Scotland.

Mrs McIntosh: The minister has dealt with the issue that I was about to raise.

As I am a member of the Equal Opportunities Committee, it would be remiss of me not to mention our concerns about institutional racism and the unfinished business of the committee's proposed meeting with the Chhokar family. Unfortunately the continuing ill health of Mr Chhokar has prevented the committee from fulfilling its offer to meet the family to hear its views, following the report of Dr Raj Jandoo. I sincerely hope that Mr Chhokar's health will improve and that we can honour our pledge to meet him.

In the light of the minister's comments about measuring success, I will not move my amendment. I commit my full support to the effective success of the "One Scotland. Many Cultures." campaign.

16:01

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): I associate myself with the speeches that colleagues have made in introducing the debate. I do not want to repeat their comments, which related largely to attitudes. From professional experience, I know that attitudes can be changed. The drunk driving campaign that took place several years ago produced a significant change in attitudes, with the assistance of techniques such as television advertising.

Today's debate about race equality is important and challenging. From their different perspectives and with their different philosophies, all the political groups that are represented in the chamber are strongly committed to fighting racism. I do not know what happened to the word "racialism", which was used in my youth—over the years it seems to have mutated to become "racism".

Liberalism approaches the issue on the level of the individual. We believe that everyone should have equal opportunity and be treated according to their merits, without regard to the colour of their skin, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation or other aspects of their personality. Racism is offensive because it belittles individual worth. It strikes in a very corrosive way at the heart of the liberal society to which the Parliament is committed.

In recent years it has been recognised that discrimination must be tackled across institutions. Margaret Curran mentioned the 3,000 racist incidents that are reported each year. That is a worryingly high figure, but it is as yet unclear whether it reflects growing intolerance or a growing willingness on the part of those who are affected to report such incidents.

I want to move on from the question of attitude to the issue of leadership. It is open to public authorities, ministers and the Parliament to lead by example. I would like to highlight three issues. First, I will not say anything about the incidents that took place in Blackhill, but in Castlemilk, which recently received a large number of refugees, the infrastructure of community groups, support mechanisms and the like was extremely successful in producing an integrated response to the refugee issue. It is a classic example of how such matters should be approached.

Secondly, we need in public services to recognise and to help to meet different cultural and personal needs. Those include the dietary needs of patients in hospital, the need for women-only swimming facilities at Govanhill, and the need to set aside rooms in secondary schools so that Muslim students can conduct their religious devotions suitably and privately.

The third issue that I want to highlight is the empowering importance of English, particularly—but not exclusively—for women. Professionally, I have seen a number of instances of marital break-up in which problems of unemployment, social isolation in communities that disapprove of divorce and lack of access to necessary services have been given a whole new dimension by the fact that the person concerned did not speak English. Access to English is important not only in family break-ups, but throughout the range of social situations. Command of English is both a facility and a confidence-building mechanism. It gives people greater access to society—mother and toddler groups, community groups and so on—and to education and employment.

Lack of knowledge of English is not a diminishing problem, partly because of the practice of arranged marriages with non-English speaking partners from people's countries of origin. It is right and proper—as the First Minister might say—that there should be recognition of and support for minority languages, but English is the lingua franca of the country. We should make every effort to ensure that people can learn it and that they are strongly encouraged to do so. That might mean providing facilities not only in colleges, but in the community. Such facilities should take account of child care and transport needs, and should run with the fabric of ethnic minority communities.

Using public transport is a horror for people who do not speak English—it has its moments even for those who do. It is not uncommon, for example, for the wife of a shopkeeper to be left with young children at home, fairly isolated from other community members, unable to speak English and without the car, which is away on business with her husband. Going to the doctor, participating in school parents nights and getting to English language lessons present major problems in such situations. We must be careful to put facilities in place throughout the country—not just in population centres such as Glasgow and Edinburgh.

There is no single answer to tackling racial inequality and prejudice. Many of us—including me, as an Englishman by birth—have come to Scotland for a plethora of reasons and choices, whether personal, parental, employment-related or economic. It is in all our interests that our country is inclusive, confident and prosperous. Scotland needs the diverse talents and experiences of all our citizens. I support the motion.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That speech was superbly timed.

16:06

Kate Maclean (Dundee West) (Lab): I am happy to support the Executive's motion. I am grateful that the minister mentioned the Equal Opportunities Committee, because, along with the organisations that have supported us for the past three and a half years, the committee has worked hard to ensure that race equality issues are high on the agenda. We have done everything that we can to promote valuing diversity.

As the minister said, one recommendation of the Equal Opportunities Committee's civic participation event on race relations was that the Executive mount a high-profile campaign to challenge all forms of racism with a zero-tolerance approach. The campaign cannot be described as having a zero-tolerance approach and criticism has come from some quarters.

I was grateful to receive a briefing about the campaign. We must give the campaign a chance, because it is not an end in itself. It is part of an armoury, which includes the important Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, that we can use to tackle racial discrimination.

The message that we are trying to get over in the campaign will be useful. It will not stop people who are knowingly and maliciously racist acting abusively. Those people must be subject to the full force of the law. However, the campaign will stop people who do not intend to be racist and who do not realise that they are acting in a racist way from continuing with hurtful and damaging behaviour

that allows true racists to justify their behaviour. I welcome the campaign.

We in the chamber need to set an example. I was interested in the Tory amendment and glad that Lyndsay McIntosh did not move it. That amendment says:

“and realises that real and lasting reform must start by giving ethnic minorities the freedom of choice to pursue their own chosen avenues.”

What does that mean? I do not know. The amendment is mince.

The minister said that the campaign has had no political criticism other than from the National Front and the British National Party, but Phil Gallie criticised the campaign yesterday on the Lesley Riddoch show. I hoped that he would be in the chamber to give his views, which are always the antithesis of mine and of those of anybody else who is committed to equal opportunities. On the Lesley Riddoch show yesterday, Phil Gallie said that he uses the word “Chinkie” and that he does not mind his kids or anybody else using it. He did not think that the people who own the Chinese restaurant that he visits regularly would mind his using that word.

Mrs McIntosh: I did not hear Phil Gallie talking to Lesley Riddoch, which is probably just as well. I know of people from ethnic minority communities—I am thinking of a family who have a business where I stay—who revel in references to the “Paki shop”. They wear that as a badge of pride. I take the member's point, but some people consider that an innocent remark and we ought to challenge that.

Kate Maclean: I doubt very much whether anybody revels in being called a Paki. They might pretend that they did for the sake of peace and quiet and they might not protest, but such words are used as terms of abuse. How can an Asian child be expected to distinguish between the words “go home Paki” scrawled on a wall and their family being referred to as Pakis? That is the whole point of the campaign. Lyndsay McIntosh seems to be missing the point. We are trying to teach people who are being hurtful and damaging by being unintentionally racist not to continue with such behaviour.

The political parties must get their acts together. Phil Gallie said that he did not believe that institutional racism existed, that the £1 million campaign was a waste of money and a publicity stunt and that people do not mind being referred to as Pakis and Chinkies. Every political party in the Parliament should commit itself to obtaining race awareness training for all its members, to ensure that members of the Parliament can lead by example.

16:10

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):

The recently published report into racism in Scotland claimed that one in every four Scots admits to being racist. That is a hard fact for us to accept, but we must accept it if we hope ever to make progress towards ridding our society of racism. For many years, we in Scotland deluded ourselves by believing that racism was not a problem here.

Kate Maclean mentioned the need for political parties to get their acts together. For many years, the Scottish National Party has had a policy whereby anyone found guilty of racist remarks or behaviour is expelled. I would like the other parties to make a similar commitment.

Over the years, many people have made the journey to Scotland. Some have come to make new lives for themselves and their families, some have been forced to flee their homelands and many have come because of poverty, hardship or violence. They have chosen to settle here and to make Scotland their home. Many members of the Parliament are first or second-generation Scots.

Many people have enriched our country and have brought a diversity to Scotland that makes it the country that it is. Scotland is a warm and welcoming country and we must not allow a minority to blight our society with racism. All Scotland can come together on the issue. I welcome the campaign to stamp out racism in all forms, whether intentional or unintentional.

Racism takes many forms, including taunts in the playground, job discrimination, physical attacks and the use of derogatory words such as Chinkie and Paki. It is the responsibility of all members, at all times, to refuse to accept racism and to attempt to put a stop to it.

The number of racist incidents that are reported to the police continues to rise. At present, there are more than 3,000 such incidents a year. Many members of ethnic minority communities feel frustrated when no action is taken after they have reported incidents, which leads many members of those communities not to report such incidents at all.

Victims of racist crime must be supported and, more important, must feel that they are supported and that the authorities take their experiences seriously. The Parliament has been shocked by the Chhokar case and by the experience of the Stephen Lawrence case. We have a responsibility to learn from those experiences to ensure that, in three or four years' time, we do not receive further reports about how badly people have been treated.

There must be monitoring of the relevant authorities to maintain correct procedures. Support

for victims must be implemented. Measures such as the use of interpreters in trials and feedback from the court system are an absolute prerequisite. There must be action and support at grass-roots level. Michael Matheson referred to the need to give organisations on the ground the resources and the support that they need to do their jobs.

We support initiatives in our schools to educate our youngsters and to inform them that racism is not to be tolerated. We must encourage our children to learn to appreciate the diversity of our Scottish nation. We have a responsibility to ensure through positive and sustained action that all Scotland's citizens—those who are here and those who have yet to come—feel that they are part of Scotland.

Racism has no place in Scotland. The eradication of racism from our land could be one of the Parliament's greatest achievements.

16:14

Alex Johnstone (North-East Scotland) (Con):

I take the opportunity to welcome the Executive's anti-racism campaign. Scotland is truly a multi-ethnic community, but we sometimes forget how Scotland is affected by certain aspects of that.

We have a long tradition of being a multi-ethnic community. Much of what we are going through today reflects the experiences of the Italians who immigrated to this country 100 years ago. At that time, there were problems in many of our seaside towns. There was a degree of misunderstanding of the new race that was entering Scotland and which was becoming integrated culturally with the Scots who lived in those areas. We ought to learn from the lessons of the past. The descendants of that community who are with us today and who contribute at all levels of Scottish society have a great deal to tell us.

During the course of the debate, we have seen all the usual posturing. Some members have a tendency to feel that they are less racist than others, and have told us so during the course of the debate. However, I would go so far as to say that a great range of views have something to contribute. I would like to expand on one or two issues that I am concerned have not been included in the debate so far. Lloyd Quinan mentioned sectarianism and racism towards the Irish community and people of Irish descent. That question was ably answered by the minister. However, I would like to hear the minister reflect on the position of Scotland's Gypsy Traveller community. Perhaps more than any of our other traditional communities, Gypsy Travellers are treated as if they were immigrants.

During an investigation that the Rural Development Committee carried out over a year ago, the question was raised whether racism exists in our far-flung rural communities. From personal experience, my answer is yes. However, identifying racism in such communities is difficult for two reasons. First, the immigrant communities in many rural parts of Scotland are very small indeed, often consisting of a single family. Secondly, families that are so isolated can find themselves far from the kind of back-up services that are necessary. I am interested to hear from the minister how some of the £1 million might be made available to those who find themselves a long way from the support that they require.

Mr Alasdair Morrison (Western Isles) (Lab): I listened carefully to what Mr Johnstone said about people of Irish descent, Gypsy Travellers and people who live in rural Scotland. Does he include those who belong to an indigenous linguistic and cultural minority in that short list?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You do not have much longer, Mr Johnstone.

Alex Johnstone: Given Scotland's tradition in higher and further education, it is important that we support those who, having come to this country from abroad, become part of our ethnic immigrant community when they arrive here. It is essential that we defend their rights within the educational establishment.

I support what Robert Brown said about the importance of English. It is absolutely essential that support and encouragement be given to those who are immigrant to this country, so that they become able to speak the language. There is no greater isolation than that of those who cannot speak the language that is spoken around them. I also support Robert Brown's call for provision to be made for the observance of religious beliefs.

Having said all that, I will take the hint that the Presiding Officer is giving me and sit down.

16:19

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): I welcome this opportunity to place on record my support for a culturally diverse Scotland in which racism and prejudice have no place.

Like the Executive, I recognise that there is still a great deal to be done to create such a society in Scotland. No one in the chamber would disagree with Margaret Curran's assertion, which she made when she launched the Executive's welcome £1 million campaign to tackle racism in Scotland, that

"Scotland has some way to go before it is free of prejudice and discrimination."

If that needed to be brought home to me, it was brought home this week by the arrival of one

odious little e-mail from the British National Party. It confirmed my view that tackling racism and prejudice remains central to every democrat's objective of the creation of a more egalitarian Scotland.

In the 1970s, when I became involved with socialist politics, people of all parties and none subscribed to a strategy that no platform should be provided for racists or fascists. I agreed with that approach then and still do. However, the advent of information technology has meant that the latter-day spawn of the National Front—the BNP—can peddle its poisonous message at the flick of a switch. What is even more worrying is that, although its message is as unpalatable as ever, the organisation has grown more cunning, professional and insidious. It talks about the "invasion of our country" and a plan

"to undermine the social fabric and culture of Scotland's homogeneous population".

As a result, although the product is packaged more professionally, it remains fundamentally racist, fascist and evil no matter how it is dressed up. Our task as democratic politicians is to say clearly that diversity is to be celebrated, not feared; that racist behaviour such as physical violence, use of racist language and other attitudes is unacceptable; and that promoting anti-racism is everyone's responsibility at all times and in all places.

Scottish Labour is clear that refugees who settle in Scotland bring not a threat but skills, energy and commitment, all of which carry the promise of future economic benefit. I know that the Executive will seek to support programmes that enable refugees to contribute to Scotland's future prosperity.

In my Glasgow Anniesland constituency, the real work of building a tolerant, inclusive Scotland goes on. The reality is not the caricature that is painted by tiny racist cells. For example, in Drumchapel High School, the real work of co-operation and integration is being undertaken. In a recent letter, the head teacher—Mr Wilson Blakey—was able to provide me with an accurate portrait of what is happening in his community comprehensive. He said:

"I work, as you know, in Drumchapel High School in your constituency where 10% of the pupils are asylum seeker children. We are not swamped. Their impact on the school has been tremendous. For the most part, their behaviour is impeccable. Their attendance is almost 100% ... They have been, almost without exception, an enrichment to the school. Their impact in raising the consciousness of Drumchapel children has been a valuable educational and social experience for them and many friendships have been formed."

That is the reality of what is happening in Scotland.

Before I conclude, I must mention Anniesland College of Further Education, where more than 80 different courses have been run in the past two years to provide appropriate levels of support for refugees, from those who have little or no English to those who come to our country with medical qualifications. Those courses have provided all students with much improved ability to contribute to the life and work of our nation. I want to put on record my admiration for the college staff involved, including Linda McTavish and Brian Hughes.

We cannot be complacent. We face real difficulties and must meet daunting challenges. Nevertheless, through the hard work and commitment of the majority of Scotland's citizens, we can create a tolerant, vibrant Scotland—a Scotland of many cultures.

16:23

Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): My colleague Robert Brown focused on the Liberal Democrat philosophy of treating people as individuals. My Liberal Democrat card contains a quotation from a preamble to our constitution, which says:

"The Scottish Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community and in which no-one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity."

The focus on tackling ignorance is of particular importance to me. Racism is the result of the worst kind of ignorance: the failure to treat people as people, regardless of the colour of their skin or their racial characteristics. Prejudice and ignorance exist in Scottish society—[*Interruption.*] I welcome Phil Gallie to the chamber. There is no doubt that prejudice and ignorance exist in Scottish society.

Although I am not complacent about the 25 per cent of respondents to the survey who admit to some kind of racial prejudice, the fact that 75 per cent feel that they are not prejudiced in any way is a hopeful sign. It is up to all of us in the chamber, not just the Executive, to take the lead in combating ignorance.

Racism, prejudice and inequality occur because of ignorance and it is up to everyone to help in the process of removing them. The language that we use in our everyday speech and in the chamber is important. The equality agenda must be exactly that, and there must be no room for inequality in the language that we use when we are talking about racism and in all other spheres, whether it be racial or gender-based inequality.

I know that the Deputy Minister for Social Justice is well aware of my views on equality in gender issues and subjects such as domestic violence. I

am disappointed that Hugh Henry is not here—he was here at the beginning of the debate—because he continued to use the same sort of exclusive rather than inclusive language when he referred to domestic violence at today's question time.

Kate Maclean talked about race awareness training for MSPs. I would like ministers to be given sex equality training sessions.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Perhaps you could stick with the subject of the debate, Mr Rumbles.

Mr Rumbles: The debate is about the importance of tackling racism, prejudice and inequality and that is what I am focusing on.

I hope that the Scottish Executive is as committed to ending racial and gender inequality and all forms of ignorance on which inequality is based, so that we can all live in a society that values the rich diversity that we have, and where no one is

"enslaved by poverty, ignorance and conformity."

I was about to talk about the Conservatives' amendment. I am glad that Lyndsay McIntosh did not move her amendment because it was negative and not very helpful. Most of the contributions in the debate have been quite consensual and I am therefore pleased that the amendment to the motion has not been moved.

16:27

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): We should be aware that homo sapiens is not a rational animal; he is a rationalising animal. Therein lies the challenge for each and every one of us.

I say to Alex Johnstone that I doubt whether we have all reformed our actions, thinking and instinctive responses. That applies to each and every one of us in the chamber.

On this topic, as in so much else, the community will judge us politicians not by what we think, nor by what we do, but by what they think we do. It is important that we communicate on that basis. Challenging, changing and consolidating new attitudes is not a quick fix. We must start by recognising that we are all part of the problem. Similarly, we must all be part of the solution.

Over recent months, I have asked parliamentary questions that aimed to identify how employment in the public service is doing. The proportion of ethnic minority employees in the Scottish Parliament is less than half of the proportion of ethnic minorities in the wider community. In the Scottish Prison Service it is less than one third, and its recent employment has not shown any particular improvement. We clearly have much to do throughout the public service.

I do not say that in a carping, critical way. I say it simply to illustrate the challenge that we face. We must make our public services—as we must make our wider community—more welcoming so that more people from a wider range of backgrounds feel that they can apply for jobs. In our discrimination policies we must ensure that those people succeed and join in employment. That is how we join society. That describes some of the challenges.

The media is a major part of the Executive's campaign. However, the media is also potentially part of the problem. We might spend £1 million on a campaign, only to have it overturned by 1,000 foolish words written by a single careless journalist working for a sloppy editor. The editorial choices that are made by some in the media are distinctly unhelpful in promoting inclusion and equality, and negating racial discrimination.

I ask ministers to publish the success criteria for the campaign, which I hope will be successful, as we all do. How will the success of the campaign be judged? That is particularly difficult, because inevitably it is a long-term campaign. If ministers feel that publishing the criteria might compromise the integrity of the campaign because the results will be discussed at an early stage, I invite them to give the criteria in confidence to the working group that is being set up. I would be content with that.

I am glad that the Tories have withdrawn their amendment, because my commitment to equality is absolute, and the words "but" and "tokenism" were unfortunate proposed changes to the motion.

I close by telling members about the first law of genetics, which states that the more highly optimised an organism is for one environment, the more it will be damaged by a change in that environment. There is diversity of opinion in this Parliament. That is of value. I tell Robert Brown that there is diversity of language outside. That is of value. There is diversity of origin in our society. One Scotland needs many cultures.

16:31

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): It is disturbing to look round this chamber and see an absence of black and ethnic minority members. The picture was different about a year ago when the Equal Opportunities Committee event, to which Kate Maclean referred, was held in the chamber.

I congratulate the Executive on the launch of its campaign to tackle racism in Scotland through raising public awareness. It is essential that we recognise the importance of the campaign, in particular because it might serve as one of the ways in which to challenge people's preconceptions. Given some of the comments that have been made this afternoon, that is important.

In a country where around only 1.3 per cent of the population of 5 million comprises people from minority ethnic backgrounds, and where many people lack personal experience of different cultures, it is all too easy for misunderstandings and preconceptions to prevail. On the issue of race, we all have a duty—a personal accountability and responsibility—to examine our own preconceptions and assumptions.

Margaret Curran has stated:

"Through this advertising campaign we are stating clearly and loudly that there is no place for racism in Scotland."

Of course, that message is welcome, but it is also important that rhetoric is turned into reality. We should use the spotlight that the Scottish Executive's campaign provides to convert such positive statements and pledges into action that will lead to a change in Scottish society.

We all know that children are not born racist. By actively reinforcing anti-racism messages throughout children's education, and by promoting understanding of the potentially profound consequences of prejudice, we can move closer to eradicating racism in 21st century Scotland. Education plays a fundamental role in the prevention of racism, as does the provision of other key services. Given that such services are the responsibility of local authorities, we must ensure that local authorities are fully involved in the development and implementation of Scotland's anti-racist policies. It is disturbing to reflect on the fact that around only 0.5 per cent of our councillors in Scotland are from ethnic minorities.

We must also accept that the Executive's awareness-raising campaign, race equality policies and new duties will lead to more demands being made of local authorities. For example, they will have to set targets and monitor; provide training in race awareness, not only for teachers, but for housing and social work staff; provide translating and interpreting services; and mainstream and promote race equality. It is therefore important that local authorities are provided with the necessary resources and adequate funding, as well as with continually revised and updated guidelines, to ensure that there is an impact at grass-roots level and genuinely inclusive engagement between the wider community and excluded groups.

We need people to examine their own positions and prejudices. They should imagine what it must be like to come from a minority ethnic background, to be ridiculed, to be spat on, to be physically attacked, to have one's self-confidence damaged, to be denied the chance to achieve one's potential and, as is the case in some instances, to be born in Scotland and speak with a Scottish accent but be treated like a second-class citizen.

We have heard examples of that kind of treatment throughout this week since the campaign was launched. Perhaps it is difficult for some people to put themselves in another person's shoes, but everyone must at some time have had the experience of feeling lonely, picked on and isolated. That is part of life. However, to have those feelings and to experience negative attitudes from those around you day in and day out is something that few people can imagine if they have not experienced it.

We must do more than pay lip service to the aims of the campaign. Through political action, we must turn our condemnation of racism into reality. The message is clear: racism in any form is unacceptable in a modern, 21st century Scotland. I associate myself with the Executive motion.

16:35

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): I also associate myself with the Executive motion. Its heart is in the right place and it has put its money where its mouth is. Unfortunately, there is not quite enough money to overturn the steady drip of venom and distortion that is fed, not only through badly edited newspaper articles, but through nightly television news. For example, if one listens closely to how news of the Sangatte camp is reported, the reporter makes the assumption that it is a bad thing that refugees should have come via that camp to this country. No attempt is made to analyse who came and why they came. No attempt is made to analyse why they would want to stay here, but I will return to that later.

The Executive's £1 million will not be enough to change attitudes in the way that everyone in the chamber wants. What Michael Matheson said—and what Bill Butler said eloquently—must be listened to: it is local organisations that can use the minister's advertising campaign to kick-start a change in attitudes. Those organisations must be funded and listened to. If anyone wants to evaluate the £1 million—incidentally, that is less than well-known comedians get for advertising the lotto—ask the people who organise the neighbourhood anti-racist groups. They will tell you whether the kick start has achieved its objective.

I understand that it is difficult for the Scottish Executive to disown the Home Secretary. Behind the scenes, however, he should be advised that his choice of language has done harm. The Executive is trying to create positively the sort of atmosphere in which people who are refugees in this country for a short while, and for whom English is not a first language, will not have their confidence swept away because of reported tales of what the Home Secretary has said. We all know that and it does us no good to ignore it. When

someone of good standing, such as Robert Brown, says the sort of thing that David Blunkett was trying to say about the use of English in the home and the access that it can give a refugee or immigrant to the services that we have to offer, and not one of us thinks that there is anything wrong with that, then it must be that there is something wrong with David Blunkett, because when he talks about the use of English in the home of an immigrant family, we automatically assume that he has in mind the immigrant family whose children swamped schools in England. As Bill Butler pointed out, there is no such phenomenon in Scotland. We should not shy away from saying such things if they are the truth.

I wanted to talk about the global market in people and their skills moving all over the place. Most Government ministers who are concerned with enterprise and the economy might use that language too. However, when the Home Secretary says that he has no sympathy with young people in their 20s who do not get back home and rebuild their country and their families, it undermines everything we say about a global economy and an inclusive society. I am a nationalist: I am supposed to want Scotland only for the Scots. I want Scotland for everybody who wants to come and live here. Therefore, I welcome the Executive's initiative to try to get rid of racism, but I warn ministers—they will need a lot more than £1 million.

16:39

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): "One Scotland. Many Cultures." That is a good campaign and I commend the Executive on it. As a slogan, it is preferable to the term "mongrel nation", which is a bit risqué, but as the Opposition has had a hard enough time with slogans this week, I will not rub it in.

The debate is a challenge to all members. I am sure that many members grew up believing, somewhat complacently, that Scotland was more tolerant than other parts of this island. In recent days, through some of the evidence that the campaign has brought to the fore, that has been shown not to be the case.

One of the joys of not being in ministerial office is that I have time to read in the summer. This summer I read a newly published book called "Being Scottish", which is an anthology of 80 Scots talking about their experience and what it means to be Scottish. A depressing feature of the book is the entries of black Scots and members of ethnic minority communities as they record their experiences of intolerance in the past 10, 20, 30, 40 or more years. The intolerance that is highlighted in the recent statistics is not a new phenomenon; it is simply something that people are beginning to talk about more openly.

The issue was brought home to me this year. I first spent time abroad in Canada in 1979, when I was in my teens. I went there believing that Scotland was a great place to live. One of the first friends that I made there was a Pakistani, who was the same age as me at the time—he is the same age as me today—and who had been born in Pakistan, but who had come to Scotland in 1967. His family lived here for three years, but they found life in Glasgow so difficult that they emigrated to Canada. That shattered my perception of Glasgow as a tolerant and warm city.

In January this year, that friend came back to Scotland to visit. I went with him to the primary school that he had attended in 1967. We were able to walk into the primary school, although I thought that there were meant to be laws to prevent that. On a Saturday morning in that school, which is in a mixed part of Glasgow, five or six different classes in English as a second language were going on. That brought home to me something that we have heard in the debate—from the Executive and the Opposition—that Government, politics and political leadership matter. The Executive has taken some important steps. When I was Minister for Communities, I was encouraged by civic Scotland's desire to be involved in the equalities agenda.

People often say that the true test of Government is how it deals with the elderly and the most vulnerable in society, but sometimes the true test is how we cope when things go wrong. I will give two examples from the past few years. The Chhokar case brought home many truths about Scotland, but the openness and transparency with which we handled the process, although not perfect, was superior to anything that there would have been in pre-devolution days, when the establishment would have wanted the issue to be swept under the carpet.

The same is true of the incidents at Sighthill, which Bill Butler mentioned. None of us can be proud of the way in which asylum seekers or immigrants were welcomed into our communities. Good people, such as the principals of Anniesland College and Stevenson College, told the Executive that it should change the rules to make it possible for people to study and acquire English as a foreign language and to contribute to Scottish life. We responded to that. Politics matters.

Stewart Stevenson discussed the measure of success of the campaign. I suspect that the measure of the campaign will not relate to politics, but to people. Every single one of us, every time we hear on a term of racist abuse, whether it be on the bus, the street, from our grandchildren or from our grandparents, should recognise that we have a personal responsibility to say that that is not how we live in a tolerant Scotland. The

measure of success of the campaign should be whether discussions about the issue take place in living rooms throughout Scotland. Well done to the Executive.

16:45

Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con): The minister made a thoughtful and caring speech, which should give the people outside the chamber the sense that we are all onside. To be onside, we must recognise that there is an issue to address. What we have heard from members from all parties has illustrated that, and two or three points have been made extremely well.

Michael Matheson started off with the simple comment that we cannot have complacency. That is one of the root issues that we must address. He also talked about grass roots, and I shall return to that. Lyndsay McIntosh spoke of leadership in the community, and about five other members, including Robert Brown and Wendy Alexander, mentioned leadership. We have a responsibility in that context, and we must define what we mean by leadership.

Lyndsay McIntosh also talked about sending children to schools with a multicultural base. My children were lucky enough to be able to do that in most places. However, when we came back to Scotland I was disappointed that the two who were born in England were discriminated against because of their accent—in one school, by two English children who had been through the same hell and were just passing it on down the line. Children can be cruel. In another school, the discrimination was short lived and other children gave support. We all have such stories to tell.

Robert Brown spoke about language as a uniting force in our community and a tool for ensuring opportunity for all. That should be the same for all people, whether they are young, Scots and deaf and have to learn with some support, or somebody who comes from abroad and does not have the language as a natural basis. That was an important point.

One or two members talked briefly about institutional racism. I worry about that phrase. It is bandied about a lot without having any real definition. It puts pressure on our public services and our police force, who are almost guilty before they start. Nobody is saying that everybody in the world is innocent of everything; nevertheless, the Executive must address that.

Bill Butler talked about celebrating diversity, and that is what Scotland has done. We need think only about the clan history and Alasdair Morrison's comment about ensuring that Gaelic speakers are treated the same as anybody else.

Alex Johnstone brought up the issue of the Gypsy community. I heard a good speech by a member of that community at a seminar here.

I have a problem with some of the language that we use. I do not like the unhelpful definition of people as black or Asian. It is pejorative and bureaucratic, and it does not assist the recognition of racial and cultural diversity. I have many friends from the Caribbean and from Africa who cannot be defined simply by that phrase.

I am at one with the minister, who talked about not tolerating discrimination in any of its forms, whether on the grounds of race, religion, culture, or whatever.

Comments were made about the skills shortage here, but we need only think of the example of Australia. Lots of Scots went there expecting to be helped to integrate, and in return they contributed to the growth and prosperity of that country. We are experiencing a skills shortage, and we must consider how best we can deal with such things.

I talked earlier about education. Legislation is not enough. Racial equality starts in the home, with the example of parents. If it does not start in the home, and if it does not come from parents, with the best will in the world we cannot legislate to get rid of discrimination. I hope that the ministers will do their best to encourage parents to get involved in the anti-racism campaign and not just talk to children.

If we are to make a change in this country, we have to look at one thing. If a loved one is ill and we go to get help from someone in a white coat, we do not notice the colour of their skin; we just need their help. We should take that attitude into the rest of society.

16:49

Mr Lloyd Quinan (West of Scotland) (SNP): It is important that we have this debate, and the SNP associates itself with the campaign. More important, we must understand that we do not discuss these matters in isolation, but that events in the wider world impact directly on our ability to deal with the issues of race equality in this country. The Muslim community in this country is living in fear because of the actions of the United Kingdom and United States Governments. We must take that fact into account and fully appreciate and understand it.

Research into discriminatory practice shows that discrimination and oppression operate at three levels: the personal, the cultural and the structural. That model claims that those levels are interrelated and that one influences the other, but the impact is on a sloping scale: the greatest is at the structural level, there is less at the cultural level and less again at the personal level.

Therefore, we must argue that a lack of policy and investment from the Government is having a knock-on effect throughout Scottish society, particularly on how people from minority ethnic backgrounds are treated. Further, the racial equality action forum set up by the Executive identified that the majority of services that are received by minority ethnic communities are delivered by the voluntary sector, but that sector is persistently disadvantaged by a lack of resources, involvement, a political voice and influence.

Research shows that links between mainstream agencies and the black and minority ethnic agencies are not well established. Those facts must be seen as further structural oppression and exclusion. Other research indicates that there are large areas of hidden and unmet needs, particularly in social work, health and housing. Processes often fail to take account of or are insensitive towards and may discriminate against the particular needs of people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The introduction of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 placed an enforceable duty on local authorities and registered social landlords to promote racial equality. That should have been seen as an opportunity to consider the housing needs of minority ethnic people in Scotland. However, a review of published and unpublished research concluded that minority ethnic people in Scotland have suffered substantial restrictions on their housing choice because of direct and indirect discrimination.

The lack of appropriate-size housing in the social rented sector—in housing associations and in local authority housing—has been highlighted as a problem on several occasions. Indeed, only 3.7 per cent of registered social landlords in Scotland provide houses larger than a five-apartment house. Household sizes are much larger in most of the minority ethnic population in Scotland. Therefore, they are discriminated against. The lack of awareness of and delivery for their specific needs has meant that many minority ethnic households are reluctant home owners who have been forced into the private sector because of the lack of affordable, suitably sized accommodation for larger households.

Specific research shows that as many as a quarter of minority ethnic households surveyed reported that they would have preferred an alternative option to home ownership. Positive Action in Housing's recently published annual report shows that nearly 10 per cent of its cases last year were extended families facing discrimination and harassment. The under-representation of minority ethnic people in the local authority sector has ultimately led to that group missing out on the opportunity to enhance

capital gain through the purchase of heavily discounted council homes.

The evidence undoubtedly demonstrates the need for a wide range of house type and size that takes into account demands for larger accommodation, particularly from the Pakistani community whose households are the largest of any minority ethnic group in Scotland. There is also a need for greater sensitivity from housing providers in relation to the housing needs of other minority ethnic people.

Minority ethnic people in Scotland continue to experience substantial racial discrimination in housing and in other basic needs of life, which is wholly unacceptable. It is necessary to educate about race equality. The Executive's advertising campaign is admirable, but positive policy making across Scotland is the only way in which we will be able to deliver a fair and inclusive Scotland. However, in terms of dealing with eradicating racism, we must be clear about its definition.

People of colour suffer the majority of racist incidents, but we must be aware that many incidents that are defined as sectarian are actually incidents of racism. We must understand that the eradication of racism requires the uprooting of an entire philosophical concept that exists in the UK because of its imperial past. We cannot ignore the fact that, having conquered and exploited peoples and cultures across the world, the continuing myth of the greatness of empire is a major obstacle to the eradication of racism in our society.

We cannot teach our children that the empire brought civilisation and democracy where none existed then assume that those children will respect non-British culture. At every opportunity we remind our children that those non-British cultures are subservient to Great Britain's culture. It is from those roots that anti-Irish, anti-Scots, anti-Welsh, anti-Muslim, anti-Sikh and anti-African attitudes arise. It is essential that any campaign fully understands that premise and acts accordingly.

16:55

The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Nicol Stephen): This has been a full and wide-ranging debate and I am heartened that, across the chamber, there is unity on the importance of tackling racism and celebrating Scotland's diversity.

The debate has highlighted the significant contribution that people from a range of backgrounds have made and continue to make to Scottish life. We are emphasising that, for our current well-being and our future prosperity, we need to understand each other better, respect our differences and encourage and foster greater

collaboration and engagement between our communities. If we are fully to realise our shared vision for Scotland, we need also to tackle the prejudice and discrimination that are experienced by many in our communities.

In a good speech, Michael Matheson emphasised the need for a united campaign and, appropriately, talked about some of his concerns. I agree with him that our efforts should be seen as a vital part of a grass-roots campaign. We require other initiatives; an advertising campaign alone will never be enough. Further, the campaign should not be a one-off as that would be a waste of funds. We support a variety of initiatives and have been taking action. We have allocated more than £300,000 a year to the black and ethnic minority voluntary sector and we have shown support for the ethnic minority grant scheme, the race equality development unit and Volunteer Development Scotland and some of the work that it is doing in black and ethnic minority communities. To be frank, I would have been inclined to recommend that members support the SNP's amendment were it not for the fact that it calls for those bodies to be fully resourced. However, I had great sympathy with what Michael Matheson said.

The evaluation of the campaign was mentioned by several members, all of whom made fair points. In the short term, we want to conduct a follow-up survey. We conducted detailed attitudinal surveys as we developed the campaign. The results of those surveys formed the basis of some of the shocking statistics that were announced at the launch of the campaign. We intend to repeat the exercise at the end of the campaign. What is of key interest to us all is not change that can be measured in days, weeks or months but longer-term and radical change that takes place over a number of years. That is the process that we are starting. We have to be committed to the long road on this issue and be determined to carry on tackling the racism that we know exists in Scotland.

Mr Quinan: I would like to ask the deputy minister the question that I asked the minister earlier. At what stage does the Executive separate the anti-racism campaign from the anti-sectarianism campaign? Does the deputy minister accept that sectarianism, in its many different forms, contains elements that are primarily motivated by racist, not sectarian, attitudes?

Nicol Stephen: I accept that those issues are linked and must be tackled. Today, however, our main focus is on racism. That is the aspect of the wider issue that Lloyd Quinan rightly raises to which we want to give the greatest emphasis at this stage. Later, we intend to give appropriate priority to other areas that require to be tackled.

I welcome the fact that the Conservative amendment will not be put to a vote. It is better that we unite on this issue. As I have said, we are, in the main, united, although I was disappointed in the amendment and I would have appreciated it and the points that Lyndsay McIntosh made more if the Conservatives had a track record of initiating anti-racism initiatives during their time in office.

I welcome Robert Brown's speech, on which I will remark briefly. I thought that it was a wholly liberal contribution and I agreed with it. I was glad that Kate Maclean tackled some of the tough issues and took on Phil Gallie's comments, which I had not heard. Phil Gallie was not present to listen to them then, but he is present now. We have to be conscious of the insidious nature of racism and of some of our prejudices. Some of that is not intentional and some of it is institutional rather than personal, but it is all unacceptable racism and we must tackle it.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Will the minister give way?

Nicol Stephen: I would give way to Phil Gallie, but I am about to conclude my remarks and I am on my final couple of sentences.

It is all unacceptable racism and that is what the campaign aims to tackle. Scotland is a small country but, in the words of the campaign slogan, we should not be a country of small minds. Neither should we be a country of small ambition. To achieve our ambition we need all our many talents, from wherever they may come.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Euan Robson to move motion S1M-3421, on the approval of statutory instruments.

17:01

The Deputy Minister for Parliamentary Business (Euan Robson): I was asked specifically by the business bureau to explain what the Scotland Act 1998 (Cross-Border Public Authorities) (Adaptation of Functions etc) (Amendment) Order 2002 is all about. It makes provisions in relation to the financial arrangements, control and accountability of the Meat and Livestock Commission. It was considered by the Subordinate Legislation Committee on 3 September and approved by the Rural Development Committee on 17 September.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the following Orders be approved—

the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002 (Amendment) Order 2002;

the Scotland Act 1998 (Cross-Border Public Authorities) (Adaptation of Functions etc.) (Amendment) Order 2002; and

the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (West Coast) (No.11) Order 2002 (SSI 2002/388).

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. Will you also move formally motion S1M-3425, on substitution on committees?

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following nominated committee substitutes for the Labour Party as permitted under Rule 6.3A—

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Karen Whitefield | Equal Opportunities Committee |
| Wendy Alexander | Finance Committee |
| Trish Godman | Procedures Committee |
| Scott Barrie | Public Petitions Committee |
| Jackie Baillie | Subordinate Legislation Committee |
| Janis Hughes | Audit Committee |
| Marilyn Livingstone | Education, Culture and Sport Committee |
| Kate Maclean | Justice 1 Committee |
| Angus MacKay | Local Government Committee |
| John McAllion | Rural Development Committee |
| Elaine Thomson | Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee |
| Tom McCabe | Health and Community Care Committee |

Sylvia Jackson Justice 2 Committee
 Sarah Boyack Social Justice Committee
 Karen Gillon Standards Committee
 Helen Eadie Transport and the Environment
 Committee—[*Euan Robson.*]

Points of Order

17:02

The Presiding Officer: Before we come to decision time, I want to refer back to the point of order that Mr Canavan raised earlier this afternoon. It is quite serious to suggest that the Presiding Officer is not following the standing orders. I therefore went to read the standing orders and I have to say that Mr Canavan did not refer to them quite correctly. Rule 3.1.3 states:

“In exercising any functions, the Presiding Officer and deputy Presiding Officers shall act impartially, taking account of the interests of all members equally.”

I think that Mr Canavan will accept that most members, himself not included, belong to political parties and that the members in those parties expect their leaders to have an adequate opportunity to question the leader of the Administration, as happens in any Parliament. That is why we have the question arrangements that we have.

I keep the second matter—the length of time members take—under constant review and I am in constant discussion with members on it. I am quite clear that that is within the standing orders, contrary to what Mr Canavan suggested.

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): Further to the point of order, Presiding Officer, will you tell us what discussions have taken place within the party groupings in the Parliament to see whether the people in the Parliamentary Bureau are in fact speaking on behalf of back-bench members? The Parliamentary Bureau sits like a secret society without any accountability whatsoever.

The Presiding Officer: Order. With great respect to the member, he is raising a completely different issue, which has nothing to do with what we were discussing earlier. The Parliamentary Bureau is appointed by the Parliament and I naturally assume therefore that the Parliament and its members are happy with the members who sit on it.

Dorothy-Grace Elder (Glasgow) (Ind): On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: Is this the same point of order?

Dorothy-Grace Elder: Yes, it is on the same point. I would not criticise you or the other Presiding Officers over this, but it has happened by habit and repute that the system is undemocratic in relation to the same two members—I do not refer to the personalities involved—getting the starring role in “Swan Lake” absolutely every week and going on and on. Some of us would like the system to be democratised a

bit more, regardless of whether the standing orders point comes into question.

The Presiding Officer: Let us not spend too much time on this. The choosing of questions is entirely at my discretion. The parties have agreed that what we have been doing so far has been sensible. However, I am concerned about the length of time the first two questions take, although we have improved in recent weeks and have been getting as far as questions 5 and 6 to the First Minister. That improvement has taken place through the co-operation of questioners and answerers. I am grateful for that. We keep the situation under review. Members are always welcome to discuss this—I have no problem with that.

Decision Time

17:05

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): I have 10 questions to put to members as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S1M-3418.2, in the name of Allan Wilson, which seeks to amend motion S1M-3418, in the name of Alex Fergusson, on business sustainability in rural Scotland, 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)
 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)
 Jenkins, Iain (Tweeddale, Etrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)

Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 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)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 53, Against 31, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S1M-3418.1, in the name of Richard Lochhead, which seeks to amend motion S1M-3418, in the name of Alex Fergusson, on business sustainability in rural Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (Ind)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)

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)
 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)
 Fergusson, 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)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 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)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 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)
 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)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)

Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 15, Against 70, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S1M-3418, in the name of Alex Fergusson, on business sustainability in rural Scotland, 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)
 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)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)

Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 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)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 53, Against 30, Abstentions 2.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament endorses the Scottish Executive's significant plans for investing in Scotland over the next three years to support economic growth, including sustainable rural development; notes that a strong economy provides the foundation for meeting social justice objectives in respect of increasing opportunities for all, first-class public services and infrastructure, and further endorses the key priorities and long-term actions set out in *A Smart, Successful Scotland*, the enterprise strategy for urban and rural areas, of helping businesses and communities grow, building global connections, and improving Scotland's skills base.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S1M-3422.2, in the name of Lewis Macdonald, which seeks to amend motion

S1M-3422, in the name of David Mundell, on the impact on transport of the comprehensive 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)
 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)
 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)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 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)

Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGregor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 53, Against 29, Abstentions 2.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S1M-3422.1, in the name of Kenny MacAskill, which seeks to amend motion S1M-3422, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (Ind)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)

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)
 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)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 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)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 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)
 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)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 13, Against 70, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S1M-3422, in the name of David

Mundell, on the impact on transport of the comprehensive spending 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)
 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)
 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)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 53, Against 18, Abstentions 12.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament welcomes the increase in spending that the Scottish budget settlement for 2003-06 provides for transport as one of the Scottish Executive's five key priority areas and recognises that these resources lay the foundation for priority projects set out in the *Transport Delivery Report* that will transform Scotland's transport infrastructure over the next decade, delivering a sustainable transport system fit for the 21st century, which supports business and economic growth and meets the needs of all in society.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S1M-3423.2, in the name of Kenneth Gibson, which seeks to amend motion S1M-3423, in the name of Margaret Curran, on race equality, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (Ind)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)

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)
 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)
 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)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 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)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (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)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (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)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

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)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 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)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 16, Against 51, Abstentions 19.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: Amendment S1M-3423.1, in the name of Lyndsay McIntosh, was not moved. Therefore, the next question is, that motion S1M-3423, in the name of Margaret Curran, on race equality, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament recognises the importance of tackling racism, prejudice and inequality as integral to promoting an inclusive, confident and prosperous Scotland that retains and attracts talent from different cultures and backgrounds and welcomes the anti-racism and race equality work being done by the Executive and other national and local bodies.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My point relates to the withdrawal of amendments.

The Presiding Officer: Amendment S1M-3423.1 was not moved.

Tommy Sheridan: The point is that another amendment was lodged and perhaps the fact that that amendment existed had a bearing on your choice of which amendments to select. I ask that, in future, you ask parties to move amendments to which they speak.

The Presiding Officer: I may be omnipotent, but I am not omniscient: I have no idea what members will do once the debate is under way. Anyone has a right not to move an amendment in the light of the discussion. I understand that that is what happened. I understand Mr Sheridan's point. It is an interesting one, but it is not really valid.

The next question is, that motion S1M-3421, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the following Orders be approved—

the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002 (Amendment) Order 2002;

the Scotland Act 1998 (Cross-Border Public Authorities) (Adaptation of Functions etc.) (Amendment) Order 2002; and

the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (West Coast) (No.11) Order 2002 (SSI 2002/388).

The Presiding Officer: The last question is, that motion S1M-3425, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on substitution on committees, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees the following nominated committee substitutes for the Labour Party as permitted under Rule 6.3A—

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Karen Whitefield | Equal Opportunities Committee |
| Wendy Alexander | Finance Committee |
| Trish Godman | Procedures Committee |
| Scott Barrie | Public Petitions Committee |
| Jackie Baillie | Subordinate Legislation Committee |
| Janis Hughes | Audit Committee |
| Marilyn Livingstone | Education, Culture and Sport Committee |
| Kate Maclean | Justice 1 Committee |
| Angus MacKay | Local Government Committee |
| John McAllion | Rural Development Committee |
| Elaine Thomson | Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee |
| Tom McCabe | Health and Community Care Committee |
| Sylvia Jackson | Justice 2 Committee |
| Sarah Boyack | Social Justice Committee |
| Karen Gillon | Standards Committee |
| Helen Eadie | Transport and the Environment Committee |

Cancer Services

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh): The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S1M-3387, in the name of Brian Fitzpatrick, on the new CancerBACUP Scotland centre, which has been opened in Glasgow. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament congratulates CancerBACUP Scotland on opening its new centre in Glasgow to provide information and support to anyone affected by cancer; recognises that cancer is one of Scotland's biggest public health problems; notes that CancerBACUP's specialist nurses answer more than 50,000 questions a year on all types of cancer and that the new centre will enable the charity to answer an extra 18,000 enquiries every year, and applauds the efforts of the *Sunday Mail* and people all over Scotland in raising funds for this initiative to support cancer patients and their families and friends.

17:15

Brian Fitzpatrick (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): I am very pleased to have secured this debate—it is the first time that I have secured a members' business debate. The debate is prospective, looking forward to what can be achieved. It unashamedly advertises the work of CancerBACUP in helping people to live with cancer. It also lets me avoid what is some politicians' favourite pastime: kicking out at the print media before or after they kick out at us. Instead, I congratulate the *Sunday Mail* on its campaigning support for what I trust everyone agrees is an innovative, worthwhile undertaking, which offers hope, support and, most important, help and advice.

We often welcome visitors from organisations that we mention in members' business debates, but to do so this evening would effectively have closed down CancerBACUP's service. The Minister for Health and Community Care will officially open the new CancerBACUP centre in Glasgow on Friday 4 October, at 2.30 pm. Interested members will be most welcome there, although it would help if they could give some advance notice, which will help with the catering arrangements.

Cancer is the leading cause of premature death in Scotland. It affects everyone—I suspect that we all know someone who has or had cancer. Every year, there are 15,000 deaths from cancer in Scotland and more than 25,000 people are diagnosed with cancer. Every day, about 70 people are told that they have cancer. Sadly, those figures are on the increase. In the past 10 years, cancer among Scottish men has increased by 5 per cent and by 10 per cent among Scottish women. By the time that they are 74, about one in

three Scottish men and one in four Scottish women will have been diagnosed with cancer. The incidence of cancer is higher in Scotland than the European average and survival rates are lower than the European average.

CancerBACUP's mission is to give cancer patients and their families up-to-date information and the practical advice and support that they need to reduce the fear and uncertainty about cancer. That is why, in August, CancerBACUP opened a new information centre in Glasgow, increasing its ability to meet the needs of people affected by cancer.

CancerBACUP was set up in 1985 by a young doctor, Vicky Clement-Jones, who was diagnosed with inoperable ovarian cancer. Despite being a doctor, she found it very difficult to get the information about her illness that she needed. She was determined to end what she called "the conspiracy of silence" surrounding cancer, and she said that her aim was to

"kick cancer out of the closet".

CancerBACUP exists to answer any question on any cancer from people with cancer and their families and friends. It does that in a number of ways. First, it has a freephone helpline, which is staffed by specialist cancer nurses, including one of my constituents. Secondly, it publishes a wide range of booklets and fact sheets on all types of cancer and in response to all types of questions. They include responses to such basic questions as "What do I tell the children?" "How do I talk to someone I know who has cancer?" "How do I cope with cancer?" "How do I travel with cancer?" and, sadly, "How do I die with cancer?" The charity also offers its services via an award-winning interactive website, www.cancerbacup.org.uk. It provides that service freely to people with cancer and their families and friends.

The word "cancer" still causes real fear. Not so long ago, its very mention hushed people's words—it was even seen as shameful and not to be talked about. Even now, people do not always understand the information that they are given when they are told that they have cancer. In many cases, they think only later of the questions that they wished they had asked at the time. Sometimes they just want to talk to someone about how they are feeling, which is where a service such as CancerBACUP comes in.

CancerBACUP helps not only cancer patients, but their relatives and friends, who often feel anxious and, sometimes more important, powerless to help a loved one with cancer. The service helps them to know what to say and how to listen. The telephone helpline gives sufferers from cancer and their relatives, carers and friends the opportunity to talk to a specialist nurse for as

long as they like, to ask any question that they wish and to get emotional support and up-to-date information from a skilled team of specialist nurses. Those nurses are supported by around 200 cancer specialists, who help them to provide the highest-quality, most up-to-date information about cancer. CancerBACUP's database is the most comprehensive list of resources, organisations and support groups for patients in the United Kingdom.

The new centre in Glasgow will enable CancerBACUP to help 18,000 more people every year. Last year the service answered more than 54,000 inquiries from people affected by cancer—that is more than 1,000 inquiries a week. We know that demand for the service is and should be high, but we also know that it is not being met fully. In Scotland, there is a great deal of unmet need for information and support among cancer patients, their families and their friends. The new centre will help to meet that need and will be integrated fully with the London centre. Callers dialling the single freephone number may have their calls answered either by a nurse in Glasgow or by a nurse in London.

The work of the Glasgow centre represents a continuation of the hard work of the previous Glasgow office. The number of specialist cancer nurses employed at the Glasgow centre will be augmented by fundraising from five to around 10. The campaign will have the sterling support of the *Sunday Mail* and, I hope, of people throughout Scotland. Recently, the *Sunday Mail* launched an appeal to raise £1 million to enable CancerBACUP to employ the extra nurses. I know that the charity and its supporters throughout Scotland and the United Kingdom are grateful to everyone in Scotland who has given—and is giving—money and who has organised fundraising events to help the new centre in Glasgow. I have great pleasure in commending the new service to the chamber.

17:21

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

As joint convener, with Kenneth Macintosh, of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on cancer, I welcome this debate. I welcome in particular Brian Fitzpatrick's emphasis on living with cancer. We must try to communicate the message that many more people are now living with cancer.

All members are likely to have had a friend or relative who died of cancer. Around 20 years ago, my mother-in-law had lung cancer. We were told that she had the disease, but she was not. That was the way in which things were done at the time. We had to pretend that she was fine. Eventually she discovered that we all knew—her response was not good.

I am thankful that we now treat cancer patients with more dignity and respect. I am also delighted that in February next year Maggie's will start to build in the Highlands and that the Macmillan centre at Raigmore hospital is under way. Both Maggie's Centre and Macmillan Cancer Relief are very supportive organisations. With the assistance of those organisations and with the expansion of CancerBACUP, the conspiracy of silence that was referred to is ending—cancer is being kicked out of the closet.

On behalf of the Conservatives, I welcome the opening of the new CancerBACUP service in Glasgow. Many patients do not take in the information that consultants and nurses give them. Some patients tell me that they did not hear anything after the word "cancer" was mentioned. When they get home, the nagging questions that they wish they had asked arise—that applies not just to cancer patients, but to their families. CancerBACUP's freephone helpline is welcome throughout Scotland, especially in remote and rural areas.

It is a cause for concern that the incidence of cancer in Scotland is higher than the European average and that survival rates are lower. It is important that patients are given new drugs that specifically target cancer cells, rather than healthy cells. Many people are frightened to come forward for treatment because of the horrendous side effects that used to be associated with it. We have moved on from that situation. That is why information is so crucial.

I hope that CancerBACUP information is now available in all general practice surgeries and cancer treatment centres throughout Scotland, so that all patients have the opportunity to use the service quietly and peacefully, in their own home, with their own list of questions.

CancerBACUP has recently given the assurance that there is no link between abortion and breast cancer. I am sure that many women phone the helpline to ask for advice about the scare stories that we all hear. I was concerned by the prediction this week that cases of breast cancer will increase by 28 per cent in the next 10 years. We need more information and advice on the alleged link between hormone replacement therapy and breast cancer. We are for ever being told of an alleged link. Women deserve to be treated with dignity and to be told whether a link exists.

The Sunday papers outlined the alleged link between fluoridation of the water supply and cancer. That may be erroneous, but it is enough to make people worry and wonder. In welcoming CancerBACUP, I ask that all is done to help to give advice on cancer prevention as well as curing cancer and advice to reassure women and men who phone up having seen such scare stories in the press.

17:26

Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP): It gives me great delight to congratulate Brian Fitzpatrick on securing the debate. It also gives me great delight to know finally that CancerBACUP has secured its extended premises in Glasgow. That is because I used CancerBACUP in a previous life as the librarian at Huntershill Marie Curie Cancer Care centre.

Brian Fitzpatrick talked about the fear and the panic that envelop people when they get cancer. Mary Scanlon told us that people often say that, as soon as they hear the word "cancer", they hear no more. In such a situation, information and knowledge about the illness is power, not only for the patient, but for their extended family and friends. That helps the patient to cope with and combat their illness as much as they can.

Information gives people understanding of their illness and does not make them part of the myth of what their illness might be. It also gives people the power to understand the treatment that they are being given and therefore to become fully a part of that treatment and to overcome the myths. As Mary Scanlon said, many folk turn down treatment for fear that the treatment will be worse than the illness.

It is increasingly important that patients know that they have greater chances of living with and beyond cancer and of more years of living with cancer. They must understand what is happening to them throughout those years. Patients and their families need to overcome fear. When I used CancerBACUP in a professional capacity all those years ago, I obtained information not only for patients, but for their families, who often had more fear than the patients. I thank CancerBACUP for the help that it gave me in supporting my patients all those years ago. I give CancerBACUP great congratulations and wish it well in Glasgow.

17:28

Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): I welcome the motion and the opportunity to discuss some of the issues that relate to the c-word. As politicians, it behoves all of us to keep talking about that, because it is fundamental to getting across the message that politicians like us keep raising the issues. I thank Brian Fitzpatrick for raising the issue.

Cancer is a disease that affects all of us in one way or another, whether it affects us, members of our family, a neighbour or someone whom we hear about in the news. We need to dispel the terror that continues to surround the word.

We must have openness and access to high-quality information. That is what makes CancerBACUP's development in Glasgow so

important. I welcome the increase in high-quality information that will be made available to many cancer sufferers, their families and their friends.

We also need access to high-quality services. I hope that the minister will talk about cancer services, because we are beginning to improve them. We still have a long way to go, but we are making an improvement.

I will talk about breast cancer. That obviously concerns me, as someone who had breast cancer and who is hopefully clear of the disease now. We must continue to get over the message about breast cancer and to encourage women to examine their breasts regularly. If they find anything untoward, they should go to their doctor immediately. It cannot be stressed often enough that if they go to their doctor immediately, nine times out of 10 anything that they have discovered might be benign. It is important to go to the doctor straight away and, if cancer is found, it is important to get early treatment. Women must not be afraid to do that. We must dispel some of the myths and the terror that surround the issue.

I think that Mary Scanlon mentioned the article that appeared in *The Scotsman* today. I have seen the article and have read about the concerns of Mike Dickson, who is a breast cancer consultant at the Western general hospital. I am familiar with that gentleman. The link between HRT and breast cancer is a difficult question for all of us. When I went to the Western general, the first question that I was asked was, "Are you on HRT?" I was indeed and I was told immediately to stop.

The problem is that the information that is coming through as a result of the research is difficult to quantify. It now looks as if there is clear evidence of links between certain forms of HRT and breast cancer—a couple of research reports have indicated that. The challenge is to reassure women that the research that is being done does not relate specifically to the forms of HRT treatment that are being prescribed in Scotland. We must be careful not to frighten women unnecessarily. I ask the minister to reassure us that women will have access to the highest quality, most recent research information and to the highest quality advice, because many women feel worried.

Many women go on HRT because they have severe symptoms. I do not advocate women to stop taking their HRT, but I urge them to talk to their GPs and their consultants. The Executive has a firm responsibility to give guidance to the health service on the need to make accessible the highest quality information. We must examine closely the research that is being done and invest in commissioning large-scale research in this country on the use of the kinds of HRT that are being prescribed. Women need to know as soon

as possible about any link between HRT and cancer.

I congratulate CancerBACUP and I applaud the *Sunday Mail* for its great campaign, which will benefit many cancer sufferers and their families and friends. Finally, I congratulate Brian Fitzpatrick on securing a debate on his motion.

17:33

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mrs Mary Mulligan): I congratulate Brian Fitzpatrick on securing the debate. As Rhona Brankin said, it is essential that we continue to talk about cancer and the issues that surround it and that we do not avoid an issue that is sometimes difficult, but tackle it head on and support those who are affected most closely by it.

Cancer is a top priority for the Scottish Executive and for NHS Scotland. There is no doubt that cancer affects us all—either through personal experience, or through family and friends—at some time during our lives. More than 26,000 Scots are diagnosed with cancer each year. Although that figure is predicted to grow, it is important to note that deaths from cancer are not expected to increase at the same rate, which means that more people will survive cancer. That is good news, but it means that more people will live with cancer, so there will be a need for more services at primary, acute and tertiary level. Those services must be centred on the needs of the patient.

Scotland's cancer strategy, "Cancer in Scotland: Action for Change", is being implemented with the backing of £60 million over the three years to the end of 2003-04. The strategy recognises that patients and their carers must be involved as equal partners in decisions about care and treatment. They must be provided with the information that they need, when they need it. As Mary Scanlon said, we must not hide from people the difficult facts and information that they require and should be given. The situation to which Mary Scanlon referred should be something of the past, and I hope that we are more responsive now.

The patient information sub-group of the Scottish cancer group is developing a plan for better access to information. The sub-group itself is not developing more information—there is a lot of that out there, in the form of papers, books, leaflets and so on—but people still do not get the information that they need when they can best take it in. A commitment to patient focus and public involvement in developing a quality assurance framework for patient information will complement the work of the patient information sub-group.

Providing information and advice for patients, as well as securing their input to the continuous development of services, must become a way of life for the NHS in Scotland so that we truly involve people. "Our National Health: A plan for action, a plan for change" states:

"A patient-centred NHS must not just be a slogan: it must become a way of life."

If we are to improve patients' experiences of their care, we must ensure that health care professionals communicate effectively. We need to ensure that appropriate advice is provided throughout the patient's journey, between and across different care settings.

Rhona Brankin mentioned HRT, which is an important issue that needs to be examined. The research that is available needs to be analysed further. I will ask the department of health to produce sound advice for those women who are at present in that situation.

The topic of this evening's debate is CancerBACUP, which is recognised as a leading national charity in the provision of information and support both to people who are affected by cancer and to their families and friends. CancerBACUP is an invaluable additional complementary source of help for cancer sufferers. As has been said, it provides information on all types of cancer through a freephone number, as well as through booklets and factsheets. It also has an interactive website.

CancerBACUP hopes that its new Glasgow centre will mean that, every year, 18,000 more people from across the UK will be able to access its services. Together with NHS 24—the national NHS service that is coming on stream to provide the public with a 24-hours-a-day health or health care advice service via the telephone—the new CancerBACUP centre will help to ensure better access to information and support for cancer patients, their families and friends. NHS 24 is currently available in Grampian NHS Board area and will eventually operate from three sites across Scotland.

All that work, together with the access framework document that is being prepared by the Scottish cancer group, has the common aim of ensuring that people who are affected by cancer are provided with the information that they need, when they need it.

Mary Scanlon: Will the minister give an assurance that she will advise the people of Scotland about the research that has been done on the potential impacts on health and on cancer of fluoridation of the water supply?

Mrs Mulligan: Mary Scanlon will be aware of this week's release of the consultation document on children's oral health, which raises the issue of

fluoridation. That is one part of a package of measures that could be introduced to improve oral health throughout Scotland. I believe that this is a time to look at the information on fluoridation. The information is sometimes confusing, but this is an opportunity for us to try to get through that confusion and offer people the right advice on the issue.

I pay tribute to everyone involved in developing cancer services throughout Scotland; congratulate CancerBACUP Scotland on its new centre in Glasgow; and recognise and applaud the Scottish public's generosity in fundraising in this area and in others. I also join Brian Fitzpatrick in commending the role of the *Sunday Mail* in co-ordinating that fundraising. We can all be proud of the generosity of the Scottish people. Together we can mobilise talent and investment to secure real and lasting improvements in services for people who suffer from cancer, their families and their friends.

Meeting closed at 17:40.

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