

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 10 September 2003  
(*Afternoon*)

Session 2

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## Scottish Parliament

*Wednesday 10 September 2003*

*(Afternoon)*

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

### Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Good afternoon. The first item of business today is time for reflection. We welcome Father Chris Boles from the Edinburgh Jesuit Community.

**Father Chris Boles (Edinburgh Jesuit Community):** Good afternoon. Anniversaries mean a great deal to us. We go out of our way to mark them and they serve to keep us attentive to the person or event connected to the anniversary. When we think of anniversaries, we usually think of happy events—wedding anniversaries, birthdays and so on. In my religious tradition, the Catholic Church, it is more commonly anniversaries of the dead that are remembered—perhaps anniversaries of family members who have died, or feast days of saints. Our society in general also marks anniversaries, and the many columns that appear in newspapers telling us what happened “on this day in history” keep us aware of anniversaries of things long past.

Tomorrow sees an anniversary that many people the world over will remember and mark in one way or another. The date 11 September will be forever tied to the terrible events in New York and Washington two years ago. The date has great significance, but we also mark another tragic anniversary tomorrow—one that predates the twin towers by 28 years and which that event ought never to overshadow.

For millions of people in Chile and throughout Latin America, 11 September was already a dark day in their memory. Following General Pinochet's coup d'état on that date in 1973, 11 September is referred to as “the day democracy died”. We would do well here in this young Parliament to keep that in mind. We may also remember that the referendum on whether to establish the Scottish Parliament took place on 11 September 1997. In Chile, democracy died that day in 1973. In the days and years to follow, thousands of Chilean people also died. Those anniversaries are each as precious as those of the victims in the twin towers, which we will remember tomorrow.

There are countless other anniversaries tomorrow as well, involving people and places the world over. On 11 September or, for that matter,

on any other date that you care to name last year, more than 5,000 Africans died from AIDS and more than 2,000 children died from measles. Deaths such as those are not simply anniversaries; they are current events as well and tragic ones, at that. Certainly, we remember those who died in the World Trade Center and of course we pray for them and their families, but let us not forget all those others—from Chile, from Africa and from Scotland, too—whose anniversaries are also tomorrow but who will have little or no memorial.

In the Catholic Church, a very common prayer for the dead is one in which we ask for their eternal rest and for perpetual light to shine upon them. It strikes me that it is not just the dead who need a perpetual light; we could ourselves make good use of it. Politicians in particular, since your decisions here in the chamber affect the lives of so many people for good or for ill, may be in need of perpetual light more than most. So here are two prayerful thoughts today: I pray for all those everywhere whose anniversary is tomorrow, and I pray for perpetual light to illumine all of you and to guide the decisions that you make here in Parliament. Thank you.

## Point of Order

14:34

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. In the Environment and Rural Development Committee this morning, there was a debate on a motion to annul a statutory instrument—SSI 2003/371—which relates to the scallop industry. A regulatory impact assessment was supposed to have been lodged on the day when the instrument was laid at the end of July.

It is a matter of agreement that the RIA was not laid until today, thereby depriving the industry of the opportunity to give its views about an instrument that it says might jeopardise the livelihoods of at least 17 boat owners as well as hundreds of employees.

I appreciate that, under standing orders, it is the Executive's responsibility to decide whether to pursue an instrument in such circumstances and that it decided to do so, but would you echo the convener of the Environment and Rural Development Committee, whose opinion was that such practice is utterly unacceptable and must never be repeated?

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The guidelines for the Executive—I repeat that they are guidelines—lay down a timetable for regulatory impact assessments to be placed in the Scottish Parliament information centre. I understand that that did not happen on this occasion, but that is a matter for the Executive rather than for me. Mr Ewing should follow up the matter with members of the Executive.

## Aquaculture

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-310, in the name of Allan Wilson, on “A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture”.

14:36

**The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Allan Wilson):** Today's debate provides a welcome opportunity to re-emphasise the importance of aquaculture to the Scottish economy and its contribution to improving the lives of Scotland's people. I see that a number of members from the Parliament's first session, in which we discussed such matters, are present; I also welcome new members of Parliament to the debate.

In “A Partnership for a Better Scotland”, the Executive committed to supporting an aquaculture industry that is sustainable, diverse and competitive. The industry has grown steadily for about 25 years and today provides more than 6,000 jobs throughout Scotland through its farming and downstream activities. Those jobs are the life-blood of many of our communities, especially in the Highlands and Islands, but also in many other parts of Scotland, where trout farming, processing and smoking activities take place. We cannot and should not forget the numerous essential service providers throughout the country, which include the feed manufacturers, the hauliers, the net suppliers and the engineering and maintenance teams. The industry sustains a tremendous amount of employment and economic activity and is therefore important to the economy as a whole.

As we all know, the aquaculture industry has had, like any developing industry, to face—and continues to face—many challenges. During recent years, the structure of the industry has changed. Our small to medium-sized businesses, which are so important to the industry and the communities in which they are located—which are among the most remote and fragile communities in the country—must operate effectively. Many smaller businesses have given way to, or become part of, much larger multinational companies, which have demonstrated enormous commitment to investing in and developing aquaculture in Scotland.

Whether large or small, such businesses face the common challenge of operating and succeeding in a highly competitive, international or global marketplace. That is not easy. The Scottish industry must, in order to compete effectively in such a highly competitive environment, take a number of steps.

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP):** I am grateful to the minister for giving way. We share his view that the Scottish industry should be competitive. Does he agree that the imposition by the Crown Estate of about £2 million per annum for rental of the seabed is an anti competitive charge, such as virtually no other competitor country faces?

**Allan Wilson:** As the member knows, different producing countries face a variety of competing pressures, regulations and charges. Our regulatory regime is on a par with the regimes in those countries; indeed, regulation here is probably as comprehensive as it is in any of those countries. I am not convinced that simply bearing down on production costs, investing in modern, efficient plant and equipment and having a highly trained and motivated work force are sufficient.

The European salmon market is renowned for its volatility. If salmon prices are badly hit, the trout market tends to suffer, too. Like many in the chamber, I have been particularly concerned by the decline in salmon market prices that has occurred over many months and which has had a negative and adverse knock-on effect on company results.

My concerns took me to Brussels—it was actually during the election campaign in April—for talks with the cabinet of Commissioner Lamy, who is the trade commissioner. I argued that the Community should continue to maintain an active role in the European salmon market, because there was otherwise a real risk that the market might be pushed deeper into trouble. We did not then, and I do not now, share the Community's optimism for an early upturn in market fortunes.

**George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD):** The minister will be aware that, approximately two months ago, the Norwegian fisheries minister announced that Norway's voluntary feed-quota regime, which had been in place to restrict production in order to meet the requirements of Europe's minimum import price scheme, was to be abandoned. That is perhaps a sign of the competition that is to come. The grave worry of the industry is that that could result in dumping back into the European market, further depressing prices. I hope that the minister is aware of that.

**Allan Wilson:** I was going to come to that very point. I share George Lyon's concern; I was about to say that it is my intention to raise with the Norwegians issues about Norway's market changes and the direct impact that their approach to the market has on our salmon farming industry. In addition, I hope that the industry will maintain a dialogue with the other salmon-producing countries, including Norway.

The Norwegian fisheries minister was in Scotland last November for what proved to be very

constructive discussions with ministers and representatives of the industry. We agreed that, although we are in competition, we should also co-operate wherever possible. As George Lyon pointed out, Norway recently announced a number of changes to its control regime, such as the winding up of feed quotas from the end of 2004. Those are important issues that could have a bearing on future market trends, so we should be clear about their likely effects.

Despite the poor trading conditions, the Scottish industry enjoys certain important advantages. Consumers associate Scottish aquaculture produce with quality—correctly, I believe—and are currently prepared to pay a premium. Scottish farming operations are also closer than their competitors to the main markets, which are principally the European markets, which means that the industry can supply a fresher product. What we need is a return to market stability. In such circumstances the Scottish industry is well placed to compete with its competitors, whether within or outside the European Union.

The industry has had to face up to challenges of another kind. It is not universally liked. Public disquiet about aquaculture has increased as the industry has developed and expanded. Particular concern has been expressed about the interactions between farmed and wild stocks. Other issues have also been raised about the industry's operations and their impact on the wider marine environment.

It was against that overall background that the Executive decided that the issues surrounding aquaculture in Scotland should be closely examined. Then, as now, the Executive was committed to sustainable development.

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)** *rose—*

**Allan Wilson:** We wished to ensure that an industry that is as important as is aquaculture to the Scottish economy was placed on a sustainable footing, so that it could realise its full potential in the future, gain greater public acceptability and continue to contribute to the sustenance of the economies in the fragile and remote areas such as those that Mr Stone represents.

**Mr Stone:** That is very much the case, minister.

Does the minister agree that the industry has taken itself some distance forward? In particular, one thinks of the fallowing regime that is being introduced and that is widely recognised. We are beginning, possibly as a result of that, to see the return of some wild salmon stocks to the west coast of the Highlands.

**Allan Wilson:** I agree. The industry has done that responsibly and voluntarily, as I said in

response to a question from one of Mr Stone's colleagues only last week. The furtherance of the area management agreement process, in conjunction with both industry and wild salmon interests ensures that a responsible approach to synchronisation and fallowing is able to cut the sea lice problem that can affect wild salmon. It is to the industry's credit that it has done that.

I turn to focus on "A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture". We always intended the process to be open, transparent and inclusive and I believe that we succeeded in that. The task took longer than expected—some 15 to 16 months—and we were criticised for that by some, but I took the view that it was better to take time and to do it correctly than it was to rush the task and, perhaps, get it wrong.

We spent the first six months in bilateral discussions with a range of public sector and private sector bodies, environmental non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders. It was a listening exercise: I wanted to hear first hand the views and concerns of the industry about aquaculture and the issues that a strategic framework should tackle. We also invited a range of other organisations to submit their views in writing, and many did.

That consultation exercise proved to be invaluable to the production of the final document. We established a working group, the members of which were drawn from a range of regulators and key stakeholders. The group met seven times between June last year and February this year. Again, I take the opportunity that is afforded by today's debate to thank those who took part in an historic process, not least my colleague Maureen Macmillan, who represented the committee with responsibility for the environment on the working group.

The working group proved to be a vital stage in the development of the strategic framework. As one would imagine, there were—because of the different views that were represented on the group—lively exchanges; however, our differences were invariably resolved or led to identification of priorities for action, 33 of which are contained in the strategic framework.

Although the working group's members regularly consulted their constituents on the various emerging drafts of the framework, a full public consultation was conducted during the six weeks between last Christmas and early February. The final consultation attracted 134 responses, which were all considered by the working group. It was therefore with a sense of achievement that I was able on 24 March to launch "A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture". It was an achievement because although it had been a long time coming, it meant that we now had in place a

long-overdue framework. Those who helped to prepare it, and who were committed to it, will share full responsibility with me for its future development.

If I may paraphrase Winston Churchill—

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** Oh, here we go.

**Allan Wilson:** It is only

"the end of the beginning",

but we are not going to

"fight them on the beaches".

Mr Johnstone is safe enough.

The framework contains a challenging agenda for the months and years immediately ahead. There are 33 action points and the Executive has taken responsibility for implementing 15 of them. A range of stakeholders will lead on the others.

Some observers, one of whom is present in the chamber, have already accused the Executive of a "lack of urgency" in implementing some of the more important priorities. I reject that criticism; it is unfair and uncalled for. It is barely six months since I launched the framework document. We should remember that some of the issues are extremely complex. In that short time, the various lead bodies with responsibility for implementing the action plan have made excellent early progress. I will give some examples.

Four new working groups have been established and are already tackling issues such as carrying capacity, which is vital to our understanding of our marine environment, location and relocation issues involved with sea lice, improvement of our waste infrastructure and development of the first ever farmed-fish welfare code of practice. The Scottish aquaculture research forum has had its inaugural meeting. The Executive has committed £100,000 per annum to the budget. Other organisations have made varying and not inconsiderable financial commitments to the research programme.

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Fergus Ewing** *rose*—

**Allan Wilson:** We have already heard an intervention from Fergus Ewing.

**Rhona Brankin:** The minister mentioned a variety of different approaches that have to be taken to improve the environment. Does the minister agree that bolstering consumer confidence is essential to the development of Scotland as a country that produces for the quality end of the market?

**Allan Wilson:** Yes; ultimately the consumer will be the real regulator of the market. If we cannot



sell in Scotland or more widely to consumers in European and other markets, the industry cannot succeed. Producing a quality product and ensuring consumer confidence in that product are vital to the industry's success.

**Fergus Ewing:** Paragraph 3.4 of "A Framework for Scottish Aquaculture" states:

"the Crown Estate and the Scottish Executive will ... consider whether an independent study should be commissioned to look at the costs which regulation imposes on aquaculture businesses in Scotland".

Has the consideration period terminated? Has a decision been made? If so, what is it?

**Allan Wilson:** I do not know whether Fergus Ewing is trying to be facetious. That was an important consideration that was entered into freely by the Executive, the industry, the regulators and everybody who is involved in the industry, not least the producers, because we want to compare regulatory costs in this country with those of regulatory regimes elsewhere and to see what we can do to slim the volume of regulation and to improve the industry's cost base and competitiveness. That is what the Executive, the industry, local authorities, regulators and everybody who is involved in the process are doing. We urge the member to join us in engaging positively in that process.

The Executive is monitoring the effectiveness of the various sea-lice management initiatives, particularly those that are under the auspices of the tripartite working group process. Steps to minimise the number of escapes represent real action on the environmental front.

The industry is well advanced on the development of an exports action plan and on plans for a healthy seafood eating campaign. Members might have seen other Executive campaigns to encourage the eating of fish for the health benefits of the omega oils that are found in salmonids and other oily fish.

The industry is also well ahead with the development of the new codes of practice, which cover issues such as fish health, best environmental practice, containment on fish farms and health and safety. The industry is consulting on its draft proposals.

With the help of trade associations and the enterprise network, Lantra—the sector skills council—has produced an excellent overview of the labour and skills position in the industry, and an action plan for tackling gaps and weaknesses. If members have not seen that document, I commend it to them.

Only last week, in the latest financial instrument for fisheries guidance round, the Executive awarded almost £1 million to aquaculture projects

and, as part of the programme's mid-term review, we are working closely with partners and stakeholders to ensure that aquaculture derives maximum benefit from the availability of the considerable sum of £1 million for development.

Work is taking place on extending local authority planning powers to marine aquaculture. My officials have visited all relevant local councils for initial discussions about the implementation process. The Parliament sought to have that extended and we are acting on that. The Highlands and Islands aquaculture forum has agreed to be the main stakeholder group that will help the Executive to prepare detailed proposals for subsequent public consultation. The first meeting is scheduled for 2 October.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** I waited some time before intervening, because I hoped that the minister might comment on the sustainability of food stocks for our growing aquaculture industry. The Danes took 1.463 million tonnes of industrial fisheries from the sea last year. For the benefit of our aquaculture industry, it is important to develop a strategy. What progress is the Executive making on ensuring sustainable food stocks, to which paragraph 3.60 of the framework refers?

**The Presiding Officer:** The minister should start to wind up.

**Allan Wilson:** The feedstuffs industry was an active participant in developing the framework, and dialogue continues with Executive officials. In conjunction with the Crown Estate, we are funding research into ensuring that the industry's capacity does not exceed environmental limitations. Part of that work involves developing alternatives to natural feedstuffs and finding out how we can supplement the diet of farmed salmon to ensure that they continue to generate the omega oils that make them a healthy foodstuff, while avoiding an adverse impact on wild fish stocks. I say to Stewart Stevenson that that work continues apace.

It is a bit early for specific conclusions and outcomes and, ipso facto, to be criticised for not producing them. However, I trust that colleagues will agree that what I have outlined in the 19 minutes or so of my speech is an impressive start to implementing the framework's action plan. There is certainly no lack of urgency on my part. I repeat that this is only the beginning of the process. All of those who are involved in implementing the priorities for action must keep up the momentum. There is a long way to go.

When I close the debate, I will explain how the Executive intends to monitor and report future progress and keep the framework alive and refreshed in years to come. I am happy to listen to

members' contributions and to respond to points that they might raise during the course of the debate.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the Scottish Executive's commitment, as set out in *A Partnership for a Better Scotland*, to support an aquaculture industry that is sustainable, diverse and competitive; endorses *A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture*, prepared in collaboration with, and supported by, a wide range of stakeholders and launched in March 2003 and notes the progress already achieved in addressing the priorities for action listed therein, and further welcomes the Executive's continuing commitment to work in partnership with industry and all the other key stakeholders in regularly reviewing and reporting to the Parliament progress with the monitoring and implementation of the full programme of work contained in the strategic framework.

14:56

**Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP):** The SNP welcomes this long-overdue debate on an industry that is vital to Scotland. Many members who serve, or have served, on the parliamentary committees that were and are concerned with rural development and with the environment over the past few years have been lucky enough to visit fish farms, shellfish farms or similar facilities the length and breadth of the Highlands and Islands. Like me, they realise how important a role the industry plays in providing local employment and supporting rural communities.

I visited fish farms in Lochaber and the Shetland Islands. One of my recent visits was to a mussel farm in Yell in the Shetlands. Such visits bring home to us how important those aquaculture operations are. The minister mentioned fragile communities in which fish farming or shellfish farming can represent 30 per cent of local employment. That is the case not only in the Highlands and Islands, as most people think; the industry is also responsible for supplying many of the fish processors throughout Scotland, from the north-east to the south. Hundreds of jobs in Fraserburgh, Buckie, Moray, Annan and elsewhere are involved in processing farmed fish. I mention those examples to give people an impression of how important the industry is to the whole of the country.

Today marks the first debate on aquaculture in the four and a half years of the Parliament and yet Scotland is responsible for 90 per cent of United Kingdom production, 30 per cent of European production and, according to the minister's foreword to the framework document, 50 per cent of Scottish food exports. The ministers are questioning those figures—I see them speaking to each other—but I say to them that the Scottish Parliament information centre has checked them.

We have to bear in mind the size and importance of the industry when we consider the fact that it is struggling as a result of cheap imports and other issues. In recent weeks and months, in the Western Isles and elsewhere in Scotland, there have been job losses not only on the farms, but in related industries such as packaging, which are also suffering. The product does not command the niche market that it once did; it is now a commodity product. Massive levels of production, both in and outwith Europe, are making an impact on the Scottish economy.

The economic contribution that the industry makes has been overshadowed by the heated debate that is taking place about the industry's impact on Scotland's environment. The industry went unchecked for 30 years. It has developed over the past three decades and yet Westminster, when it was in charge, took virtually no interest in supporting the industry or looking after Scotland's environment. The lack of support to make the industry more competitive and to protect the environment means that, now that we have a Scottish Parliament, we need a strategy that will protect and develop the industry and protect our environment.

We are beginning to address the issues, but I have to say that the Executive's record is extremely poor. Members will remember the call for an independent inquiry into the impact of fish farming on the environment, which was rejected despite the fact that two parliamentary committees called for such an inquiry. The call was rejected despite the fact that the debate on the impact of fish farming on the environment is one of the biggest that has taken place in the Scottish media and in our rural communities in recent years. The Government is only now beginning to address some of the issues and that is simply not good enough.

I pay tribute to the parliamentary committees that took up the issue because the Government refused to do so. Four and a half years into devolution, we are speaking to the third minister with responsibility for fisheries. However, all we get in the framework document is a damp squib.

**Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab):** The member mentioned the importance of sustainability. Moreover, the SNP amendment says that

"the regulatory framework must be guided by well-resourced science".

He will know that the framework document contains a section on research priorities and that the University of Stirling is at the forefront of aquaculture research. If he thinks that all that is too limited, will he tell us about the other research that we should be doing?

**Richard Lochhead:** I will come to the issue of science. However, as a graduate of the University of Stirling, I know all about the fine work that is carried out at that fantastic institution.

The minister's speech reminded me of Tony Blair's speech to the unions yesterday. However, in this case, although the minister talks tough, nothing in his paperwork lives up to expectations. The document ducks just about all the important issues on which people seek action.

There has been some progress. For example, the area management agreements are welcomed all round the chamber. However, the heated debate to which I have referred continues. The tens of thousands of anglers in Scotland, environmentalists and many other people are expressing genuine concern about the lack of attention to the impact that might be—

**Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** Is the member aware that the membership of the working group did not consist only of members of the Executive? There were representatives from environmental groups, world fisheries groups, retail groups and banks. Every stakeholder that we can think of that has any connection with the aquaculture industry was represented on the working group. When the member criticises what came out of the group, he is criticising all the stakeholders in the industry.

**Richard Lochhead:** If the member will be patient, she will hear some of the SNP's criticisms.

Escapes from fish farms are giving Scotland's communities much cause for concern. It is fair to say that such escapes are not good for the environment. Interbreeding and many other issues that we all know about pose dangers, which is why the minister should rule out the introduction of genetically modified fish. However, he does not do so in the document. He should protect our environment and the industry's good name by not allowing such a development in Scotland at any stage.

The importance of science is highlighted by our need to get to the bottom of issues such as the impact on our river systems of the introduction of diseases and sea lice and nutrient pollutions from salmon waste and chemicals to control disease and pests. The SNP and I totally agree with the Scottish Executive's priorities on scientific work as laid out in the document. There is an immense amount of confusion in the public arena. In fact, it is no wonder that people who consume salmon and other products are confused. That is why we need a Government that will commit resources to ensure that objective scientific research is carried out. Such research is lacking.

**Dr Jackson:** Will the member give way?

**Richard Lochhead:** No—I have given way too many times.

Even a headline in *The Press and Journal* this week says, "Global warming blamed for collapse of salmon runs". That suggests that the fish farmers are not to blame for the situation. Another headline from the week before says, "Research 'clears' fish farms". However, another headline says, "Fish farming increase a serious threat to Scotland's water system" and a further story is headlined "Decline in wild salmon attacked". In those stories, the industry is blamed for what has happened.

Such headlines highlight the confusion in the public arena and illustrate why we have to get the bottom of the problem. However, the Government has not made any substantial commitment as far as such research is concerned and although it makes several references in its document to the need for research, it does not back them up with any commitments.

**Allan Wilson:** Is the member seriously suggesting that the Executive and all the stakeholders that Maureen Macmillan mentioned who had an input into the working group should determine their research priorities with direct reference to newspaper headlines?

**Richard Lochhead:** No. I am saying that we all agree with the research priorities. However, we should not have had to wait for four and a half years after the introduction of devolution for resources to tackle such issues.

The issue of fish feed has also been raised. We are discussing the expansion of the aquaculture sector, which I think is something that we would all want to happen. However, that expansion must take place on a sustainable basis. We cannot just move into white-fish farming, because such species will require even more feed. That raises a lot of questions about the lack of sustainability of current sources of fish feed.

**Mr Stone:** The member will be aware that, since the beginning of 2003, the market price of salmon has fallen by 15 per cent. All of us in the chamber would be very interested to hear the SNP's proposals. I suggest to Mr Lochhead that the fall in the price of salmon is one of the biggest threats facing the industry.

**Richard Lochhead:** The minister indicated his current lack of progress in European negotiations. Perhaps if we had more power in Europe, we would have more influence on what happens there.

I commend the work that has been done by Scottish Quality Salmon and others in the industry, which have made a great deal of progress in improving their environmental record. However,

there will always be rogues. I suggest to the minister that we must move the licensing system from the farm sites to the operators and, in that way, become able to cut the rogues out of the industry. Relocation of farms might be necessary. If that happens, there should be public funding to back it up.

Four and a half years into devolution, we are still puzzled about why the code of best practice will not arrive until December 2004. Five and a half years after devolution, we will only just be getting round to ensuring that all the players adhere to a code of best practice.

I turn briefly to the main issues for which the Executive has proposed no action in its document. The Crown Estate, which has been mentioned already, is an issue that has been ducked by the Executive. "A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture" says at point 2.24:

"Additional costs imposed uniquely on Scottish producers should be avoided wherever possible."

The document goes on to say that nothing much will be done about taking power away from the Crown Estate, which leaves our industry at a competitive disadvantage. As Fergus Ewing said, that situation costs the industry about £2 million a year.

Streamlining and simplifying bureaucracy is another issue that has been ducked by the Executive. The document says that the Executive tried to reach an agreement, it could not do so and therefore there is nothing that it can do about it.

**George Lyon:** If Mr Lochhead reads the partnership agreement, he will discover that it says:

"We will reduce the number of bodies involved in regulating and controlling the aquaculture industry."

That is a commitment to do just what he says the Executive is not doing.

**Richard Lochhead:** If that commitment is in the partnership document, why is it not in the strategy document that we are debating today? Perhaps it should be there.

We have to learn from the Norwegian example, because our people have to deal with 10 agencies.

Four and a half years into devolution, although the primary legislation is in place, we are being told that we must wait until 2005. Although there are many agencies that the industry must consult, we are leaving it until five and a half years after the establishment of the Parliament before we give local communities a say in where fish farms are sited.

Many people have told the Scottish National Party that the strategy framework should be called

the fish-farming strategy, because it virtually ignores shellfish farming, which has huge potential for Scotland. There are few references in the document to organic fish farming or shellfish farming, yet those methods have less impact on the environment and huge potential for the Scottish economy, given the consumption of shellfish products throughout Europe.

I will conclude, Presiding Officer, because I see that you are about to intervene. We recognise that the Parliament has made a good start. The Executive has not made a particularly good start, but at least we are beginning to address some of the issues that I have mentioned. However, the industry and the environment require more vision and leadership from the Executive. We have to work out why the Norwegian industry is more indigenously owned and why it is doing extremely well. It has a streamlined regulatory framework, but at the same time, its wild fish stocks are increasing. We must also protect the industry for the sake of Scotland's health record, because although we produce so much fish, the strategy document states that fish barely features in the Scottish diet.

The industry needs more protection and it has huge potential, but we have no confidence in the current Executive to develop it. I urge Parliament to support my amendment.

I move amendment S2M-310.2, to leave out from first "welcomes" to end and insert:

"expresses support for sustainable aquaculture and recognises the sector's vital economic contribution to Scotland; urges the industry to strive continually to achieve the highest environmental standards and welcomes progress already made; believes that the regulatory framework must be guided by well-resourced science; further believes that lessons must be learnt from other countries on the streamlining and simplification of the regulatory framework and is disappointed that this is one of many issues that the strategy fails to address adequately; calls for the powers currently exercised by the Crown Estate to be transferred to the Parliament, and further calls for the early introduction of legislation transferring planning control to local authorities in order to enhance openness and accountability to ensure that local communities have a say over the siting of fish farms."

15:09

**Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Like the previous speaker, I offer my credentials for talking about fish farming. In a previous incarnation, I made a series of television programmes for Channel 4 that examined Scotland's fish-farming record. The programmes considered specifically what we might learn from Norway. Although some lessons can be learned from Norway, we would not want to copy certain aspects of Norwegian practice here in Scotland.

Scotland's aquaculture industry is under-resourced, under-promoted and massively over-

regulated. At a time when the latest round of decommissioning of white-fish boats could cost the Scottish economy up to £250 million a year—that is on top of the £40 million that Ross Finnie is giving to skippers to abandon the sea—the Scottish aquaculture remains a sad Cinderella industry in terms of investment and development.

Scotland's farmed salmon industry—which is the most important sector—is worth £300 million a year at the farm gate, which soars to a staggering £900 million in added value or retail terms. As we have heard, salmon farming provides 6,500 vital jobs throughout Scotland, mainly in rural communities, and contributes £2 million a week in wages alone. However, the young and potentially successful salmon farming industry, which, as we have heard, already provides 50 per cent of Scotland's food exports, is in deep crisis.

Last week, Ross Finnie announced £4 million of grants to support fishery developments in Scotland, which is part of on-going funding of around £55 million—the minister will correct me if I am wrong. Of course, that money is welcome, but only a tiny percentage of it—£1 million of the £4 million—is being invested in aquaculture. Compared with the amount that is being lost to the Scottish economy as a result of cuts in the white-fish sector, that money seems to be the merest drop in the ocean.

**Fergus Ewing:** The member said that the industry is under-resourced and he condemned the £1 million aid as paltry. According to Tory policy, what level of aid should be provided to the industry? What aid did the previous Tory Government provide?

**Mr Brocklebank:** A Tory Government would not have seen £250 million going from the economy in respect of white-fishing cuts. An incoming Tory Government will fully and adequately resource the research and development aspects of fish farming.

During the recess, I travelled in some of Scotland's remoter fishing communities. The rock-bottom morale in the sea-fish sector was matched only by that in the sea-farming sector. As we have heard, the dumping of farmed salmon from Norway, Chile and Iceland on to the European market—which was initially denied by the European Union—has seriously impacted on prices this summer. Prices have collapsed to an all-time low. The average farm-gate price per kilo for a Scottish farmed salmon is currently around £2—that compares with £2.30 last year, which was itself a historic low. In Shetland, where 600 jobs in salmon farming are at risk, prices slumped as low as £1 a kilo this summer, which is below the cost of production. A number of salmon farms are already staring bankruptcy in the face. It is essential for financial viability that fair national and international markets are achieved for such a young, fledgling industry.

To make matters worse, there appears to have been a complete failure by the Executive to defend the Scottish quality brand name on European markets. Scottish Quality Salmon is the Rolls-Royce of the industry. The trade association that bears that name is controlled by no fewer than 10 statutory bodies, 63 pieces of legislation and 43 European Community directives and has won the coveted French Label Rouge accolade for culinary excellence and quality control. However, farmed salmon that is sold on the continent at bargain-basement prices this summer with none of our expensive quality guarantees is still loosely described as "Norwegian-Scottish".

Vital marketing opportunities are being lost because of the Executive's apparent negligence in protecting such a prime brand. Confidence is being eroded as well as prices. There are huge projected markets for Scottish Quality Salmon, especially in the United States, French-speaking Canada and elsewhere, but it is essential that we protect that brand.

**George Lyon:** The member criticised the Executive for the money that it has put into the industry to help to promote that industry abroad and to help the fish-farming industry. Will the member tell us exactly what finance his party intends to make available, given that his party's manifesto committed no money whatever to help the aquaculture industry?

**Mr Brocklebank:** I have already responded to the same question from Fergus Ewing. The member will hear more if I may proceed.

We urgently need a public sector that delivers solutions that pre-empt problems. The Scottish Executive should apply more pressure to companies that are not members of trade associations to adhere to the voluntary initiatives for controlling sea lice, for example. Problems relating to sea lice are being largely overcome through area management agreements, which have been largely successful, and by synchronised treatments, but trade associations such as Scottish Quality Salmon cannot control companies that do not adhere to voluntary codes. It is concerned that its members will suffer as a result of the activities of a few outside companies that might not adhere to such codes.

**Allan Wilson:** Ted Brocklebank has confused me. First he asked for more subsidies, then he called for a free and competitive market. He said that we should have less regulation and he now says that we should regulate more to bring fish farms into compliance with the existing regulations.

**Mr Brocklebank:** No, minister. As I hope will become apparent as I go on, we are talking about regulations on quality, not the kind of regulations that the Executive has introduced.

**The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie):** What regulations?

**Mr Brocklebank:** We can live with regulations on quality. I suggest that we need less of the kind of regulations that the industry is currently suffering under.

The framework document sets out action points to be undertaken by the industry as either lead or supporting players, but the strategic framework offers no costings for those action points and there is no indication of who will pay for them. Trade associations should not bear the financial burden as they would effectively be subsidising the whole industry, including non-members who have chosen not to accept membership standards. The Executive seems to be blind to the massive potential of the Scottish sea-farming industry, which one day might well shore up the gaps in the wild-fish sector. That is an achievable ambition.

We hear much about the collapse of cod stocks, but worldwide the tonnage of farmed salmon now equals the tonnage of cod stocks that has been lost over the past 14 years. Cod is another species that can be farmed successfully, but far more investment in research is required. Other high-value species such as halibut and turbot are being farmed successfully. I am especially disappointed that Seafish, the industry's promotional authority, is pulling out of the direct funding of aquaculture research at the marine farming unit in Ardtoe because its limited levy funding means that it is no longer affordable. That is exactly the kind of research facility that the Executive should be resourcing if it is serious about Scotland's reputation as a world-class aquaculture centre.

The minister said that £100,000 per annum is being allocated for aquaculture research. That is again a drop in the ocean. Although we are, as I said, very much in favour of regulations where they impact on quality, the strategic framework is seen by many people as a straitjacket when it comes to developing and promoting the industry.

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

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):** No. The member is over time and should wind-up.

**Mr Brocklebank:** I will do so.

There is currently a plethora of studies, initiatives, consultations, working groups and priorities—many of which will not be completed until 2006. In the current economic climate, there may well be no aquaculture industry left to study by 2006. What is needed, vitally, is imaginative and resourceful leadership from the Scottish Executive, backed up by an aquaculture bill that seeks to free a quality-regulated industry, rather than appear to stifle it by unnecessary and meaningless regulation. Where the Executive has

got it wrong is in over-stressing the bureaucracy and doing nothing like enough to invest in and promote what could still be the most important new industry that Scotland has had for generations.

I move amendment S2M-310.1, to leave out from "endorses" to end and insert:

"but regrets that the strategic framework for Scottish aquaculture increasingly looks more like a straitjacket, with no fewer than eight bodies currently overseeing it, and further regrets that the Executive has failed to make meaningful financial provision to the industry in terms of research and development, especially of new species and has failed to protect the quality "Scottish" brand for farmed salmon and failed to safeguard the 6,500 Scottish jobs in salmon farming by its inadequate approach to dumping of inferior foreign product on the European market with the subsequent collapse in Scottish prices."

15:18

**George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD):** I am bemused as to how to follow the completely contradictory speech that we have heard from the Tory front-bench spokesman. It was even more dire than the speech that was given by our colleague and friend, Mr Lochhead of the SNP.

This is a serious issue. Fish farming is vital to the economy of Argyll and Bute and to the economy throughout the Highlands and Islands. Fish farming provides, directly or indirectly, 1,750 jobs in my constituency of Argyll and Bute. Those jobs are located in some of the most remote parts of my constituency and they are irreplaceable. They help to sustain small communities and keep their schools and shops open, and they provide opportunities for our young people, who otherwise would be forced to move away to seek employment elsewhere. However, those jobs are under threat because there is no money in the industry. As other members have highlighted, the price of salmon today is at or below the cost of production and it has been that way since the beginning of the year. That situation is unsustainable for the Scottish industry and could trigger industry restructuring, thereby threatening many small communities and jobs.

The aquaculture strategy maps out some laudable aims for the industry, which include

"increasing employment, especially permanent and skilled employment in rural areas and remote communities ... increasing the value of sales throughout the supply chain ... increasing the volume and value of exports"

and

"the encouragement of start-up companies".

I hope that all members support those aims. However, the cold, hard reality of the economic situation of the industry in Scotland means that none of those ambitions can even be contemplated or achieved without better economic

returns. That is the fundamental challenge facing the Scottish industry.

Given the low prices that are being experienced in the industry, I—and, I am sure, many of my colleagues—found it incredible that the European Commission terminated its anti-dumping measures in May, which triggered another significant fall in the price of salmon in the European market. It was no surprise to me that, on the back of that decision, the Norwegian Government abandoned its voluntary feed quota scheme, which had restricted production in Norway. Clearly, the Norwegian Government saw the opportunity to place more produce on the European market. When Alex Fergusson and I went on a study tour to Norway with colleagues from across the parties to examine the industry there, we met the Norwegian Minister of Fisheries and industry leaders, who argued consistently for the removal of the EU anti-dumping measures. That issue came through time and again in meetings with politicians and industry leaders.

The Norwegian minister also revealed that his Government intends to quadruple production in Norway from the present level of 250,000 tonnes to more than 1 million tonnes in 10 years, which is a huge jump. The Norwegians do not hope to expand only salmon production, but production of many other species, with cod leading the way. The Norwegians' strategic aim is to use the revenue to replace the revenue from oil, as oil production in Norway starts to ease back. That proposed increase in production in the next few years poses a huge threat to the Scottish industry, if the produce starts pouring into the EU markets and further undermines the prices that are paid to Scottish producers.

It is vital that the minister should continue the good work that he has done on behalf of the industry in demanding that the EU set up a surveillance system to monitor and detect dumping by other countries before any further market collapse. He must also get a commitment from the Commission to take urgent action to stop dumping if it is detected in other countries. The Commission's argument for the removal of the anti-dumping measures was that, because prices are lower outside Europe, any extra production from Norway would fill those markets. However, the results of the first few months indicate that fish are pouring into EU markets and undermining prices. I ask the minister to continue to press that point. It is essential that the Commission takes the matter seriously and deals with it.

I ask the Green party members to distance themselves from some of the wilder and more extreme members of the green movement, led by Don Staniford, whose sole objective appears to be the closure of aquaculture in Scotland. That would

result in the destruction of jobs and communities in places such as Mull, Islay, Gigha and many other remote communities throughout the Highlands and Islands. It is time for Robin Harper and the Greens to come clean about whether they support that objective. I am sure that many of my constituents would be interested to hear what their position is.

I am delighted that the partnership agreement states:

"We will reduce the number of bodies involved in regulating and controlling the aquaculture industry."

I ask the minister in his summing up to clarify when in the next two to three years the Executive will start to make progress on that commitment.

I turn to the Crown Estate. I know that Fergus Ewing is very interested in that matter, as am I and as is my colleague Tavish Scott. The Crown Estate takes approximately £15 million a year from the aquaculture industry in Scotland and puts peanuts back in. It is the only body that consistently makes profits from salmon farming. Every year, without fail, it takes its profit from the industry. It is time that that came to an end. It is time that the powers of the Crown Estate were transferred back to Scotland.

**John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP):**

I am not a fisheries expert, but I point out that marketing has not been mentioned so far. George Lyon has been critical of other members' speaking critically, yet all that he has done so far is bleat about a lot of fish being dumped in this country. Surely, an excellent marketing exercise to make everyone aware of the benefits of salmon as part of their basic diet would be a far better road to go down than asking people to stop putting more salmon into this country. Cannot George Lyon be more positive than he has been?

**George Lyon:** I suggest that Mr Swinburne speak to Brian Simpson of Scottish Quality Salmon, who will tell him what is going on in the marketplace on behalf of the Scottish industry and what is being done to promote the product not only in the United Kingdom, but abroad.

The European Court of Justice has decided in favour of the Scottish Executive, in regard to compensation for infectious salmon anaemia. I ask the minister to consider working up some sort of compensation or an insurance-based scheme to help the industry to deal with another outbreak of the disease if one ever occurred.

The aquaculture industry is vital to Scotland's more remote and rural areas, both for employment and for sustaining rural communities. The industry has made mistakes in the past—let us not be in any doubt about that. Its environmental record is not perfect. Nevertheless, it is a young industry that is now responding to the challenge of

delivering an environmentally sustainable industry in the future. That is being driven by the marketplace as well, with the supermarkets insisting on high environmental standards. However, I find it rather hypocritical that major supermarkets insist on the industry not using copper-coated nets, yet they are perfectly willing to import fish from other countries that use such nets.

There are tremendous opportunities for the industry to grow, with world demand increasing by 3 per cent a year. Nonetheless, the fundamental challenge is to ensure that the industry survives the current financial climate. I encourage the minister to do everything in his power to ensure that the industry survives, grows and prospers in the future. I support the motion.

15:28

**Mr Alasdair Morrison (Western Isles) (Lab):** What George Lyon said about the importance of aquaculture to his constituency rings true for the Western Isles and many parts of the Highlands and Islands as well. The issues that he detailed are ones that I was going to address; therefore, I shall move on and touch on other areas.

On four occasions, Richard Lochhead, the Scottish National Party's senior spokesman on issues relating to rural development and the economy, bemoaned the fact that this is the first debate on aquaculture in four and a half years of the Scottish Parliament. I wonder whether it occurred to Mr Lochhead that the SNP would be better off spending its own allocation of parliamentary time debating matters that are devolved to the Scottish Parliament rather than holding meaningless debates on issues that are reserved to another chamber.

As in Argyll and Bute, which George Lyon mentioned, in the Western Isles fish farming and aquaculture are hugely important to the economy and to social well being. Some 700 people are involved in fish farming in the Hebrides and the industry is worth an estimated £60 million to the islands' economy. As in Argyll and Bute, in the Western Isles the industry employs people in some of the remotest places. Without fish farming, the viability of many villages in my constituency, and the related life in those villages, would be seriously compromised. I could cite many examples of that. The most recent example to be presented to me by the Western Isles Aquaculture Association involves the island of Harris, where one in four of the working population is employed in fish farming.

It is also heartening to note that not only are the numbers of jobs significant, but that the jobs are varied and skilled, including farm labourers, fish

processors, personnel managers, accountants and biologists. That situation pertains throughout the islands.

The minister and members of other parties mentioned regulation. Certainly, the subject is constantly raised by the industry and the Executive's commitment in the partnership agreement is welcome. In the interest of bringing Richard Lochhead up to date, I inform him that while "A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture" was published in February, the partnership agreement, unsurprisingly, was published after the election in May. I ask the minister, in his closing remarks, to detail how he proposes to streamline and improve the regulatory burden, a goal that is set out in the partnership agreement.

In the foreword to "A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture", the minister wrote:

"the industry has been bedevilled by often ill-informed criticism of its operation which has not served in any way to advance debate."

Allan Wilson was absolutely correct when he wrote that in February and, sadly, his comment is still true. Such ill-informed comment dismays not only representatives of those who work in this important industry, but the thousands of people across Scotland who are employed by it. Sadly, people who should know better wade into debate and offer comment on an industry that they evidently know little about and in a way that demonstrates that they care little about the people whose livelihoods depend on the industry. There are far too many people circling fish farming and doing their utmost to destroy it.

In that regard, I listened with interest to George Lyon's plea for the Green party to make clear its exact position on fish farming. Mr Lyon may not have heard, but, today, the Green party assumed a peculiar position on the issue of scallop conservation when it voted to annul an eminently sensible piece of legislation relating to scallop conservation.

**Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands) (Green):** I should make it clear that the Executive has to do more than simply place the word "conservation" in the title of a bill or a statutory instrument if it wants us to support it. We have to be convinced that the measures would actually work.

**Mr Morrison:** The fishermen of the Shetland Islands, Orkney Islands, the Western Isles and the Clyde have all told us that the legislation would conserve stocks, yet the Green party, peculiarly, could not bring itself to vote for such a conservation measure. I do not know how the Green party MSPs will explain that to their party and I am bewildered about how to explain it to my constituents.



It is a well-established fact that fish farms do not alter the ecosystem beyond their immediate locality. Salmon need the highest standards of water quality and, indeed, are sensitive indicators of changes in the environment. Salmon farmers are the first to recognise that they must work to the highest possible standards in order to prevent undesirable or long-term changes to a loch's ecosystem.

As George Lyon outlined, the practice of illegal dumping by Norwegian salmon producers has devastated the price of Scottish-produced salmon and has had a detrimental effect on our industry. I know that my colleague in Westminster, Calum MacDonald, has been working closely with the Department of Trade and Industry on this hugely important area. The European monitoring system has to be robust. If it is not, our industry and our country will lose out.

We all appreciate that it is essential for the Scottish Executive and the UK Government to continue to support this industry in driving forward new initiatives that will help to cut costs, improve efficiency and aid sustainability. "A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture" is helpful in that regard.

15:34

**Mr Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** The SNP's amendment talks about support for a "sustainable aquaculture industry" and recognises the sector's

"vital economic contribution to Scotland".

We should pause for a moment or two and recognise that the past 30 years have seen development of the "let it rip" sort.

The industry is a classic example of the free market in action, in which there has been consolidation into larger and larger companies and the price has been forced down. The quality of the brand has been jeopardised by the fact that it is a mass-produced product, which we cannot keep marketing as an elite brand if other countries are using similar methods. Scotland can only protest as a marketing organisation.

Brian Simpson was in charge of the Scottish Quality Beef and Lamb Association at the time when the BSE debate took place. Nothing in the quality arrangements related to the health of the animal. The quality was about marketing. I know: I was the SNP spokesman at the time and I examined those matters carefully. We must combine the sustainability questions that relate to the health of the animal and the value of the products concerned. The questions about sustainability in the debate must be much more carefully drawn.

The debate has considered most of those matters with regard to fin fish. It concerns me deeply that previous speakers have overlooked a whole area of sustainable activity—the shellfish industry. It gets the occasional mention, but the fact is that much of that industry does not require the kind of feed input that salmon farming does and which has led to the controversies about the implications of the salmon food that we use.

I would like to hear from the minister exactly what he will do to try to create the take-off point for the sort of community organisations about which he talks in the strategy and which could benefit from shellfish development. It is essential to know that such developments could happen on a small scale and in the hands of local communities and small firms in a way that salmon farming could not in global thinking.

The quality of such operations would rely on our having extremely clean water. It is therefore also reliant on our cleaning up the issues relating to the siting of fish farms. That has been a long and detailed debate, which has taken into account many different aspects of where fish farms are placed and the regulatory framework for that. When I notice that a body such as the Crown Estate lists the seven or nine steps that somebody must take before they can set up a salmon farm, I have to ask myself whether there should not be an easier way for the Government to prepare a one-stop shop for opening new companies, whether in salmon or shellfish.

Having fought against the Crown Estate for longer than most members in the Parliament—indeed, Fergus Ewing's mother, I and others were out campaigning about the matter some 20 years ago—SNP members know that no progress has been made up to this point. In the four and a half years of the Scottish Executive's existence, there has been no progress in dealing with the question. We know that the Executive is talking about doing something in future. However, the money that the Crown Estate takes out is a drain, and the fact that local authorities should have been given the appropriate planning powers years ago is another complicating factor. The SNP would like some connection between the strategy and the stating of dates for when the transfer of those powers will take place.

On salmon and other fish as food, we must bolster public confidence in a fashion that says to people that they cannot always get the best-quality food by paying the cheapest prices. I listened with interest to George Lyon's comments about the way in which the supermarkets play on both sides: they want the quality produce, but are prepared to take cheaper imports. We must do something that shows the Scottish population the value of being able to buy something that has a quality standard

in terms of health, as well as of the branding that has been used before. That might mean that we require much clearer labelling and a good deal more regulation on what is allowed to be imported into this country.

It is interesting that people are concerned that the Norwegians are “dumping” salmon here, to use their words. Europe and the United States of America have been dumping food in the developing world for decades. One of the major debates taking place at the World Trade Organisation this week involves trying to stop that sort of approach. As far as I am concerned, we must be consistent.

We need European regulations that allow us to practise fair trade in shellfish and salmon, rather than free trade, or even the backstairs trade that has taken place with regard to Norwegian salmon. I ask the minister for answers to the questions that I have put and ask the Parliament to support the SNP amendment.

15:40

**Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con):** I apologise to the Presiding Officer and to the minister for my late arrival in the chamber this afternoon. It was not intended as a discourtesy—I regret that I was unavoidably detained. I have a fair idea—probably—of what the minister was hinting at during the part of the speech that I missed, so I do not feel particularly disadvantaged by having been absent for a few minutes.

As George Lyon said, I undertook with colleagues a study tour of aquaculture in Norway, as a guest of Ewos Ltd. Two memories of that visit remain firmly embedded in my mind as examples of what we can learn from that country. I was surprised when Jamie Stone said, or at least hinted, that we have no lessons to learn from Norway. I believe that we must always learn lessons from other countries. Compared to ours, the Norwegian attitude towards the aquaculture industry is something from which I believe we can learn.

The industry has attained considerable economic importance to the rural economy of all Scotland, as has been acknowledged from all sides of the chamber. I say that with some feeling because, as Richard Lochhead said, the impression is often given that the issues relate purely to the northern half of our country. I was delighted to notice, during the summer recess, that a freshwater fish-farming operation in my constituency of Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, which has lain dormant for several years, is to be reopened. Indeed, interest in aquaculture, in both the north and the south, seems potentially to be on

the verge of another great leap forward, economic considerations aside.

The Norwegian Government's attitude is, as George Lyon mentioned, based to a degree on a report that suggests that aquaculture could overtake oil in terms of economic importance to that country within 15 years. The Norwegian Government has accepted that with a focus and a vigour that I dearly wish could be visited upon our Scottish Executive, but an examination of the strategic framework gives me little faith that that will occur.

**Allan Wilson:** I agree with Alex Fergusson's basic premise that we should learn from the experience of other countries but, during the period of the 1990s when the Tory Government was in power, the Norwegians held something like a 75 per cent share of the farmed salmon market. That has deteriorated to about 50 per cent, while the Scottish market share has increased. We must have been doing something better to have created that greater market share, which is now possibly threatened by Norwegian dumping in the euro zone.

**Alex Fergusson:** Indeed, but that is offset by the fact that an enormous percentage of Scottish aquaculture is owned by Norwegians, who have bought themselves into our industry in order to gain access to the Scottish market. I accept that the share of Scotland's product has increased in British terms, which is obviously to be welcomed. There is vast room for improvement, however, and I will come to that later.

The Norwegians back their industry to the hilt with scientific support, particularly in the development of new-species aquaculture. Somebody asked where we could do better; that is one such area. As Ted Brocklebank said, in contrast with what the Norwegians are doing in this regard, we seem about to abandon the unit at Ardtoe.

One of the major stated aims of the strategic framework is to promote the economic development of aquaculture. That is a laudable aim, but I fail to understand how we can possibly achieve it without a more robust approach to the scientific back-up on which that economic development can flourish—and it is vital that that is in harmony with the wild fish population. Again, that is an area where research input could be improved.

Our industry cannot possibly flourish in the maze of bureaucracy that aquaculture presently has to deal with. Compared with Norway, that leaves our practitioners on an uneven playing field; compared with Chile, where the industry appears to be entirely unregulated, we are on a different planet altogether.

Despite those restrictions—as Rob Gibson pointed out—shellfish aquaculture grew by 41 per cent in 2001, according to the Executive's figures. That is tremendous, but think what could happen with a more proactive Administration and a little less regulation.

**Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** Does the member acknowledge that to have a successful shellfish industry we must have proper regulation of fin-fish farming?

**Alex Fergusson:** There is a difference between having proper, quality regulation and having a large amount of regulation. The Conservative party has difficulty with the amount of regulation. I agree entirely that the virtually unregulated conditions of the industry in Chile are helpful neither to the worldwide fish-farming industry nor in allaying the environmental concerns to which the industry gives rise. There should be regulation, but it must be properly focused quality regulation, rather than the piecemeal regulation that we have at present.

It appears that the actions suggested in the framework will make the next two to three years very busy—not only very busy, but also vitally important for everyone concerned with the aquaculture industry. Although I welcome the progress that the minister said has already been made, I implore the Executive to ensure that, while we protect our producers from the worst effects of dumping, to which many members have referred, we learn lessons from our competitor countries. Those countries have one great disadvantage—they cannot sell a Scottish product for which much of the world is still prepared to pay a premium. In farmed fish, as in so many of our traditionally farmed products, our Scottish quality is our watchword. In conjunction with other members, I commend the work of Scottish Quality Salmon, which has been completely vindicated by its Label Rouge accreditation. That is unique and wonderfully worth while.

However, there is a limit to how much the Scottish brand can see the industry through. It will not do that unless robust and vigorous Executive backing is given to this exciting industry in the years ahead. The potential is enormous. The environmental concerns on which we have touched can and should be addressed, as maintaining consumer confidence is all important. Unfortunately, the Executive's motion does not address those issues. I am convinced that Ted Brocklebank's amendment does, and I urge the chamber to support it.

15:47

**Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green):** I refer to the scurrilous remarks made by George Lyon, who

suggested that the Green party wants to ban fish farming from the west coast of Scotland. In all my time, I have never said anything like that. Mr Lyon knows that I accompanied him on his visit to Norway, that I served as reporter to the Transport and the Environment Committee, that I have visited as many fish farms as he has—if not more—and that I have at no time called for them to be barred from Scotland or for the aquaculture industry to be destroyed.

**George Lyon:** Will the member give way?

**Robin Harper:** No—I have heard enough from George Lyon.

I refer also to Mr Morrison's attempt to discredit the Green party. We opposed the instrument that he mentioned because we believed that it would not be effective and was hardly worth supporting. If the member would like us to set out our position in detail, I am sure that Eleanor Scott will respond to the charge that he made.

The minister accused me—he was looking at me when he made these remarks—of making uncalled-for comments. What is the job of the Opposition, if not to make uncalled-for comments? However, I reject the suggestion that my comments have been unfair—I have always attempted to make them as fair as possible.

It is not surprising that most of our concerns relate to the environmental side of the strategy, which we believe could be more robust. I have made that view clear on many occasions, throughout the development of the strategy.

The Executive is suggesting that because of some recent research at Loch Laxford all problems with sea lice have been solved. The fish farm at Loch Laxford, which I have visited, is a prime example of excellent loch management. The people there know how to do it. They have a management style that could be copied by every other farm on the west coast—and I know that some farms are trying to emulate it. If they have not already achieved it, they are on the way towards achieving ISO 14001. They also want to achieve organic status and are getting the most environmentally sound fish feed that they can. It is because of the way in which the loch is managed that there are no sea lice there—or, not no sea lice, but very few sea lice. The sea lice problem appears to be on the way towards being solved.

I may be wrong, but there does not appear to be any reference to sea lice either in the environmental impact assessments or in the proposed changes to locational guidelines. Location, location, location.

**Fergus Ewing:** Is Mr Harper aware of recent research that has been published in the bulletin of the European Association of Fish Pathologists?

Findings show that the number of sea lice on wild salmon stocks remains relatively constant whether there is fish farming activity or not. Does he accept that research? Will he explain in more detail exactly what the policy of the Green party is? What proposals does the party have? What would the party like to do that is different, and what impact will that have on the industry?

**Robin Harper:** I could spend half an hour on that but I am in the middle of debating the strategy. I have not seen the research that Mr Ewing mentions. I am sure that it has a basis, but many with interests in wild fish would say that their experience is that there is a connection involving fish farms that are not in the best locations. That is why I said "Location, location, location." It appears that, because of the way in which the strategy will be rolled out, the first attempts to change the locational guidelines and perhaps even move some fish farms will not take place for another two to three years. That means that it will have been seven years from when ministers first took office in the Scottish Parliament before anything was done about the location of fish farms.

I have made sensible proposals—and, again, I say this for the benefit of George Lyon—that if farms have to be moved, any cycle that would be interrupted should be completed before the farm is moved. I have also suggested that there should be full compensation from the Executive for the extra expenses involved in the move.

I would like to have had time to comment on feed and the knock-on effects on Pacific fisheries, north Atlantic fisheries, bird life and whole-ocean ecology. However, there is no time. I will make one comment on area management groups. They must be properly funded, transparent and, preferably, mandatory rather than operating under the present voluntary agreements.

I agree with the SNP's view on the Crown Estate. It is about time that the powers of the Crown Estate were transferred to the Scottish Parliament or to local authorities.

15:53

**Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** A large part of my time during the previous session of the Parliament was taken up with aquaculture; I think that the same can be said for quite a few others in the chamber today. Along with Robin Harper, I was a reporter on the Transport and the Environment Committee during the previous session, and we reported on the environmental impact of aquaculture. We should all pay tribute to that committee. It put a great deal of thought and effort into its two reports on this subject. Along with the Executive, it commissioned independent research.

As Allan Wilson said, I was the committee's representative on the ministerial working group on aquaculture, which produced the strategic framework document. I chaired the environment sub-committee of that group. Every issue that has been raised this afternoon was raised in that group and addressed in the strategic framework document. It is important to realise—as Richard Lochhead obviously did not—that the members of the working group came not only from the industry but from wild-fish interests, environmental non-governmental organisations, agencies such as the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, research bodies such as the Scottish Association for Marine Science, retailers, banks, local authorities and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. That is why the strategic framework has such authority and why it is so important that its recommendations are implemented.

The working group's shared vision, which was arrived at after hours of discussion—I can vouch for that—is extremely important for our country, especially the west Highlands and Islands, where so many jobs depend on Scotland having a

"sustainable, diverse, competitive and economically viable aquaculture industry, of which its people can be justifiably proud".

That is a quote from the introduction to the document.

We must not lose sight of just how important the industry is in the Highlands and Islands in providing work, both on the farms and in processing, information technology, environmental science, transport and engineering. Fish farming is not about throwing fish pellets at a cage of fish—it involves many important and well-paid jobs. We want the industry to become more high-tech and to provide better-paid jobs that require training. That has implications for organisations such as the UHI Millennium Institute.

For me, the main environmental issues that needed to be addressed were the interaction between farmed fish and wild fish and the minimisation of the impact of sea lice. I was interested in what Fergus Ewing said about a recent report, because the research that the Transport and the Environment Committee received indicated that there was a link between sea lice on farmed fish and sea lice on wild stocks. Another important matter was how best to prevent escapes from the cages. I look forward to the working group's presentation on that subject, when it has finished its deliberations. That was highlighted as one of the most important issues, because of the effect on the genetic make-up of the wild fish.

The most pressing social issue is how bridges can be built between the aquaculture industry and

some sections of some local communities that resent its presence. The transfer of aquaculture from the Crown Estate to local authority planning will help that process, as people will have more input into where the farms are located. I hope that the future integrated coastal zone management initiative will be linked to that, so that we have much more local input into what we do with our coastal waters.

Since the publication of the strategic framework, there has been a great deal of consultative activity and stakeholders whom I have approached seem content with progress. Although it is time-consuming to sit on committees, it is necessary to have proper consultation before rules and regulations are laid. We have to get things right. I hope that we are coming to

“the end of the beginning”,

as the minister said, and I ask him when he expects concrete proposals to emerge.

All that activity is set against the background of a worsening economic position for the industry, as many members have mentioned. There has been a wave of bankruptcies in Norway and some businesses in Scotland are hanging on by their fingernails. The fact that there is a 15 per cent down-turn in the number of smolts that are being put to sea has implications for next year's harvest. It is worrying that one of the major Scottish banks is taking a very hard line with the aquaculture industry, because if the bank will not support it, who will? The small or medium-sized enterprises, which are often run by local people, are the most vulnerable. They are struggling to survive until the expected price upturn next year.

In response to the infectious salmon anaemia crisis at the start of the Parliament's first session, £9 million was made available for loans to help aquaculture businesses that were in difficulties. I believe that only about half of that money was spent and I wonder whether any of it remains and whether it could be made available—on the same, or similar, criteria—to firms that are struggling now.

The problem is that the market is over-supplied. The Norwegians are liquidity slaughtering and the end of the European Commission salmon agreement has sent prices plummeting. The Executive and the Department of Trade and Industry have proposed a surveillance mechanism to counteract the problem, but I am told that a section of the industry in Scotland has opposed the initiative. That is short-sighted—Government's willingness to help in a crisis should be welcomed, because it might not decide to help again.

I hope that the industry will come through the present economic maelstrom and will have learnt lessons about supply and demand and the need

for quality. Concentrating on quality has put the power to drive down prices into the hands of the supermarkets. We can never compete on quantity. We must get rid of cowboys and the industry must police itself rigorously, because those who deny that we need a quality product play into the hands of extremists who wish to abolish the salmon farms.

I am tired of seeing press articles full of outdated statistics, half-truths and misinformation about an industry that provides livelihoods for fragile rural areas. I believe that the strategic framework is the way forward to address both the environmental and economic issues of the industry's sustainability.

16:00

**Mr Jim Mather (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I broadly welcome the objectives of the framework document, which has been published at a time when the industry has many difficulties, and when indigenous ownership of Scottish aquaculture has fallen to 17 per cent. The document has been a long time coming, so credit is due to the industry, which has grown in the interim.

There is unanimity about the importance of aquaculture to Scotland, as it is a major export industry and a major employer, especially in the Highlands and Islands. However, aquaculture is also an industry in crisis. It urgently needs more concrete steps than the framework offers. Many operators still live with a remembered hurt at the lack of ISA compensation. That feeling is based on the widely held belief that good husbandry was penalised and that agricultural compensation precedents were largely ignored. For many fish-farming businesses, the result has included loss of stock, a resulting commercial blight on demand—that was the biggest hit—and major financial pressure because of losses and cash-flow problems. There has also been difficulty in attracting investment. The net effect is that the many distressed sales of fish farms have further increased the Norwegian dominance of the Scottish aquaculture industry.

The industry is struggling and is not short of challenges. From multinationals to independent operators, there is a daily struggle to achieve a fair price for a quality product, to increase confidence with bankers, investors and insurers, to cope with a complex regulatory environment, and to achieve higher levels of competitiveness in the fin-fish market, which is currently oversupplied.

Nevertheless, I welcome the potential of “A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture” to help the industry to address those challenges. The framework's environmental and economic aims

are all sensible and worthy, and the document provides a useful checklist against which to develop real strategies, with concrete actions and even more concrete measurements and milestones against which to measure progress. The framework also provides a checklist against which the aquaculture industry can check Government progress.

Other useful suggestions that have emanated from the industry are also worthy of consideration and of being added to a future concrete strategy. First and foremost of those is the need for a clear, succinct and unequivocal declaration of the importance of the aquaculture industry to Scotland. Indeed, I hope that the framework starts to fulfil that role. I suggest that such a message would be best recorded by the Scottish Parliament's taking the UK lead in aquaculture to ensure that the final strategic plan for aquaculture displays a clear determination to have a sustainable industry.

That plan must have the following additional key components. First, there must be concrete steps to help to underpin viability: the powers exercised by the Crown Estate should be transferred to the Scottish Parliament and the anti-competitive costs that are borne by our industry should be reduced. Secondly, there must be concrete steps to address market failure. A portion of the investment and loan capital that is provided by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise should be committed to aquaculture and private investors should be encouraged to do likewise. Thirdly, there must be concrete steps to encourage overall growth in the aquaculture sector, in line with Scotland's best interest. For example, firm qualitative and financial targets could be set for the industry and similar supportive targets could be put in place for the economic development agencies and regulatory bodies. Fourthly, there must be concrete steps to start the process of emulating other countries' overall management of aquaculture. We should try to emulate the volume and market demand that Norway has achieved and the disease surveillance of the United States.

Looking forward, we need to recognise the many issues contained in the framework that relate to the need for Scottish aquaculture to be well resourced. It is self-evident that resources and effectiveness would improve if there were a less onerous regulatory framework. Regulation needs to be streamlined, with perhaps a lighter touch on the day-to-day matters and, possibly, tougher penalties for environmental failure. The costs that come from the Crown Estate should be removed. Also, the regulatory bodies and their staff need to be set the same objectives as the industry, thereby making them motivated enablers who are committed to helping the industry to meet its economic and environmental targets.

Scotland's future aquaculture strategy must include all the worthy aims set out by the Executive plus the points we have raised, and at least the resources set out in the framework document, encouraging industry and Government to work together as never before to deliver genuinely strategic objectives for Scotland. Specifically, those objectives are: viability and growth, without which we have no robustness and no forward momentum; high environmental standards, without which we undermine markets and the survival of the industry; and burgeoning job numbers and job security, without which the viability and continuity of many rural communities would be put at substantial risk.

Those objectives would be more readily achieved and more likely to benefit Scotland if the Government also took steps to encourage diversity of ownership, to avoid the risk of Scotland's becoming a buffer zone that protects other nations from the adverse effects of market downturn, and to ensure that we drive our industry to deliver specifically for Scotland. The Government should also encourage diversity of product, to ensure that we continue to develop, to open up new markets, to create new jobs and, in turn, to deliver a diversity of intellectual property so that Scotland's research and consultancy in aquaculture are at the leading edge, command leading-edge fees and attract further investment.

I urge members to support the SNP amendment.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** Before I call Jamie Stone, I ask members to keep their speeches to a strict six minutes. In that way, I will get everyone in; if not, one back bencher will fall off the list.

16:06

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** I will try and take less than six minutes.

If members want to know about the fish-farming industry, it is important to go and meet the fish farmers. In my constituency, there are two examples—Ardvar Salmon Ltd in Drumbeg and Loch Duart Ltd near Scourie. Other members have mentioned Norway. If members go to those fish farmers, they will tell them that Norway is very high up on the agenda.

We have heard about Norway's strength and the fact that it dominates EU markets. Its 2002 sales were 280,000 tonnes compared with Scotland's 133,000 tonnes. That gives Norway a market share of 65 per cent. Since the beginning of 2003, the Norwegian industry has flooded the EU market. Exports from Norway to the EU have gone up by 15 per cent and yet the price has fallen by 15 per cent. The industry estimates that Norway's market share is now not less than 70 per cent.

However, facts are chieftains that winna ding, and the Norwegian industry is, to all intents and purposes, bust. However, it has massive support from the banks, which are largely controlled by the Government. The fish food industry is also Government controlled. Therefore, one could say—and I am protected by parliamentary privilege—that the Norwegian Government is giving the industry covert assistance.

Other members have outlined the potential damage that that could do to our industry. Our sales and cash flows are bad, losses are severe and, as Maureen Macmillan said, bank support is in danger of being withdrawn.

Contrary to what some say, our ministers are working hard. If members were to speak to the likes of Ardvær Salmon Ltd and Loch Duart Ltd, they would find that those companies will support the efforts of the Scottish Executive and the DTI, and, indeed, the efforts that are being made in Europe.

I want to ask a question of the SNP and the Conservatives. I have outlined what is happening in Norway. Does the Conservative party support that, given that Norway's economic regime is different from the UK's? The SNP has not said a great deal about Norway. Does the SNP support the type of approach taken by Norway and would it advocate that we go down that route? Would it not rather support the efforts of ministers in Westminster and the Executive to level the playing field? That is a key question and I would like to hear it answered in the SNP's summing up.

In places such as Scourie and Drumbeg, the industry provides vital local jobs to young people who have chosen to stay in the area and to revive communities that would otherwise be dying. Like George Lyon, I encourage, exhort and plead with ministers to do everything they can to get in about the problem and put a surveillance system in place that will catch the Norwegians at it and stop them from dumping on the market in a manner that could eradicate our industry.

**Mr Gibson:** Will Mr Stone tell us what effect the British Government had in dealing with the situation in Europe when the anti-dumping rules were removed? It seems to me that nothing of any effect happened at that time and that his questions to the SNP about whether we would follow the Norwegian route are totally irrelevant to the future of Scottish salmon.

**Mr Stone:** Ministers worked extremely hard on the anti-dumping rules. It is relevant that the SNP should answer that question, because we want to know which economic model it advocates for the Scottish fish-farming industry's future. Until we have that answer, we cannot believe anything that the SNP says.

I will end on a slightly different, more positive note and move from the salmon industry to the shellfish industry. Mr Rob Gibson will recall that my home town of Tain has a successful model of a sustainable shellfish industry, which I encourage ministers and relevant committees to visit. I see Maureen Macmillan smile. I am talking about the Dornoch firth mussel industry. As the charter says, King James VI of Scotland and I of England gave that area to the royal burgh of Tain as far as the eye shall see, and we still have it today. The fishery is natural and is harvested naturally, much as one might pick brambles.

**Maureen Macmillan:** Why is it so difficult to buy Tain mussels locally?

**Mr Stone:** All the mussels are being exported to France for a rather fat profit.

I encourage the Parliament to see that example of extremely good practice. That sustainable fishery earns substantial sums for my dear old home town and provides a model that could be studied and replicated by seeding in other similar firths around north and west Scotland.

I have taken less than my six minutes, which I hope is helpful, Presiding Officer.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** It is indeed.

16:11

**Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** It is high time for the Scottish Executive to bite the bullet on aquaculture and encourage its growth as a major part of farming in Scotland. Fin-fish and shellfish farming should receive the same encouragement as terrestrial livestock and cereal farming. It should be immaterial that one industry is based on land and the other is on water; it is all farming.

We in Scotland must make the most of all our industries and our biodiversity, so I hope that "A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture" becomes a living document, rather than just some nice words. It must boost those industries, support jobs and protect the equally valuable wild salmon and sea trout fishing industry, which is important to Scottish tourism.

I have spoken with the west coast trusts and some of their scientists, and I will make some points about area management agreements, which are good. They go a long way towards solving long-running disputes between salmon farms and the wild fish industry and shellfish farmers, but some big problems remain. Not all fish farmers have agreed to participate, and that must be remedied to achieve a level playing field.

The AMA process is voluntary in Scotland, but mandatory in Norway. I am not sure which process

is best, because it is sometimes difficult for smaller fish farms to comply because of the extra expense and lack of sites. However, it is vital that the targets that AMAs set are high enough to make a difference to achieving the collective goal of a successful farmed fishery and a successful wild fishery that co-exist sustainably.

We Conservatives have asked before for a one-stop shop for fish farmers, rather than numerous regulating bodies, and for better funding for research and development. It is worth considering the situation in Norway, because it has been fish farming for longer than Scotland and has encountered the same problems vis-à-vis wild fish. For example, in some areas of Norway with valuable sea trout and salmon fishings nearby, fish cages cannot be sited within 20km of river mouths. In some areas, no fish farming is allowed at all. Scotland has plenty of room for fish cages to be in areas where they will not affect migratory salmon and sea trout runs. The Scottish Executive should give help if present site locations need to be changed. Mistakes on locations might have been made in the past, but that was not the fish farmers' fault.

Our biodiversity is vital, and Scotland is one of the last strongholds of populations of freshwater pearl mussels, which are a globally threatened species. They depend entirely on migratory fish. The tiny mussel spats lie on the gills of small salmon for six to eight months before they drop off into a river, where they can live for 130 years. Yesterday, I spoke to a scientist from the Argyll Fisheries Trust, who informed me that on a recent research project, he netted one pool in the River Fyne from which he captured 36 farmed salmon and only 11 wild ones. I will not give John Farquhar Munro the location of the pool. All of the rivers that flow into Loch Fyne have suffered an almost total wipe-out of wild stocks since salmon farming started in the loch. It would seem that fallowing is improving the situation.

It is to be hoped that AMAs will produce recommendations to put right the situation, but if they are to have a meaningful effect, it is essential that they are acted upon. For example, the timing of sea-lice treatment on farms and reducing the number of escapees are absolutely vital. Consents for the use of medicines such as Slice are far too slow. Because of the high licence costs to pharmaceutical companies, Scottish fish farmers have few choices—far too few medicines are available.

The Executive should take an active role in finding alternative sites for fish farmers to help the farmers to achieve a single year-class of fish in one area. In order to fallow properly, farmers need more sites and more room. That should not be difficult to find on the west coast of Scotland,

which has thousands of miles of useable coastline. Argyll alone has more coastline than the whole of France.

In the time that I have left, I will concentrate on shellfish farming and particularly on mussel farming, which is a success story in Scotland. Shellfish farming is expanding each year at a sustainable rate. In contrast to salmon farming, shellfish farming is mainly Scottish owned and employs an increasing number of people who live in Scotland's more remote areas.

Loch Etive, in Argyll, is the premier mussel-growing loch in Scotland, but the farmers in the area are experiencing problems with water quality, which seems to be a new phenomenon in an area that should have pristine water quality. During the main marketing period of the year, the water quality in the loch is reduced from A to B. That restricts the sale of mussels to certain buyers who will only buy mussels from quality A water. In this instance, it is suggested that local sewage plants are not doing their job properly. I ask the Executive, through Scottish Water, to look into the problem as a matter of urgency so that this new, exciting and extremely clean form of aquaculture can continue to expand and bring benefits to many of the people who live along our sea lochs.

Further to that point, I suggest to the Executive that research into the causes of water pollution and the development of measures to improve water quality around our coastline are of extreme importance if Scotland wishes to maintain its reputation for having the best-quality shellfish, both farmed and wild, of any country in the world.

16:17

**Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab):** The aquaculture debate in Scotland can sometimes be a false one in which the environment is posed on one side and the economy on the other. The two are seen to be mutually incompatible and unable to work with each other. Today's debate shows that we have to get both elements absolutely right. If we have a poor-quality environment around the coast of Scotland, there can be no aquaculture industry.

One of the main issues that affects the industry, particularly the salmon-farming industry, is the long-term cumulative impact on the environment. "A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture" recognises that our coastal environment is of exceptional quality. However, it also recognises that, if we are to protect fish stocks, fish quality and the reputation of the aquaculture products that we produce in Scotland for being high-value and high-quality food products, we need to look to maintaining that water quality in the future.

Evidence shows that the decline in wild salmon and sea trout off the west coast of Scotland has in



part coincided with the increase of farmed salmon in inshore sea cages. George Lyon is not in the chamber at the moment, but his comments in that respect were useful in giving us an insight into the history of the development of salmon farming.

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

**Sarah Boyack:** I would like to get into my speech.

Maureen Macmillan and others talked about the work that the Transport and the Environment Committee did in the first session of Parliament in its inquiry into salmon farming and the environment. It is important to note that some of the committee's recommendations are in place or are being acted upon. The point that I want to make is that such work must continue. The conservation bodies and the industry must work together to ensure that the potentially adverse impact of salmon farming on wild fish stocks does not happen.

Wherever possible, farms should be relocated to less sensitive sites to protect wild stocks as much as possible. The framework document usefully draws out the fact that the application of the precautionary principle in that regard is not straightforward. We need to have good, quality research that people can relate to and which they feel has some integrity. Getting such quality research is a really important issue.

The challenge is to ensure that good monitoring of the industry and its impact on the environment takes place over time. Some members have already mentioned key issues such as residues of food and other nutrients, the impact of chemicals on a wider scale and the environment's carrying capacity. However, although such issues have underpinned some speeches, no one has really focused on them. I intend to do so in the short time available.

Although the shellfish sector relies on a plentiful supply of natural food sources, overuse of that carrying capacity will result in poor growth and a failure to achieve marketable size. We must also consider the fin-fish—mostly salmon—sector, which relies on the environment's capacity to assimilate the wastes that arise from rearing fish in cages. It is vital that such sensitive environments are properly protected. Moreover, because costs will be associated with any regulations in that respect, we must ensure that those are right and proportionate.

We almost had a daft debate this afternoon, with the Tories tying themselves in knots over regulation. For example, they said that although they were generally against regulations, they were in favour of them where they related to quality. I hope that, in his summing-up speech, the Tory spokesperson will tell us exactly what is meant by

the right measures. George Lyon and Alasdair Morrison effectively highlighted the need for appropriate regulation, and it is vital that the aquaculture strategy brings the industry into such discussions.

Any expansion of the industry must be guided by good-quality research and information if we are to look after our environment in the long term, which is why we need good scientific evidence as a basis. The Tories have complained that there are too many studies and the SNP has said that there is not enough research. The truth is that, although some research has been carried out, which has helped to set out the industry's future path, we need more. Both the Crown Estate-funded scoping study on carrying capacity, which was published earlier this year, and SEPA's report on the incidence of harmful algal blooms on Scottish coastal waters help us to understand what is happening in the marine environment and have a significant bearing on the carrying-capacity debate, particularly in highlighting how the local environment can assimilate the impact of the aquaculture industry. However, as I have said, more needs to be done, and I welcome the establishment of the working group of experts from SEPA and the industry to ensure that any such studies are properly assessed and carried out.

Indeed, it is vital to set out future research priorities and an action plan, because the industry relies on a healthy, clean environment to optimise production and product quality. Several members have mentioned that point this afternoon, and it is why issues that are referred to in the framework document such as environmental impacts, technical and biological cultivation research and health and fish welfare science must be properly considered. Research into them is fundamental to building a long-term sustainable industry.

I also agree with the priorities on preventing cross-infection between farmed and wild stocks; on measures to prevent farmed fish from escaping and damaging wild stock; and on carrying capacity in the longer term. All the key parties that have signed up to the aquaculture strategy must work with the Executive and the industry to ensure that we achieve long-term protection both of the waters around Scotland and of the industry. Every member has pointed out that such an approach is economically important, but we must reach the point where the environment meets the economy. Both sides must engage with each other on the matter.

"A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture" will allow us to develop the debate, and it is good that the document is the subject for debate this afternoon.

16:23

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** In 1968, when I was a student, I spent a very happy summer working with the Tay Salmon Fisheries Board. It was already apparent then that wild salmon stocks were in severe decline—I have to say that that was not due to my inefficiency as a water bailiff; the decline was a long-term one. Therefore, it is no surprise that fish farming has had to replace wild stocks. In 150 years, we have come from a position where people who worked on farms on the estates pleaded to be fed salmon no more than three times a week. Of course, salmon is once again popularly available.

I will focus on what the Executive's strategic framework does not contain because, after all, it is perfectly possible to give a broad welcome to what it includes. I will focus in particular on the sustainability or otherwise of the feed stocks that are essential to the future of fin fish in our aquaculture industry.

The feed sustainability study that is dealt with in paragraphs 3.59 and 3.60 of the strategy document is almost a footnote and, as far as I can see, is not referred to under the objectives in appendix 3. I hope that the minister will be able to tell us that he is making progress on it.

Feed sustainability is an important area. I note that Papua New Guinea attempted to set up a fish-farming industry and failed because of problems with the food stock—there was not enough omega oil in the trout that they were breeding. It is important that we get feed sustainability right to keep our aquaculture industry on track.

I note that, in the ministerial working group on aquaculture, no one appears to represent that particular interest. I hope that those who were present have taken on board—

**Allan Wilson:** There was indeed a representative from the foodstuffs industry. I understand that a sea feeds report has been published and that its recommendations have been picked up by the Scottish aquaculture research forum.

**Stewart Stevenson:** I am grateful to the minister for that. It is not clear from the list of representatives who that person is, but I accept that that is the case and I welcome that.

Nonetheless, feed sustainability is an issue that goes beyond the aquaculture industry into the white-fish industry, which is certainly not represented directly on the ministerial working group. The main source of raw material for feed stock for the aquaculture industry is industrial fishing, not just in the North sea, but around the world—off the coast of South America, off the west coast of Africa and in the far east. The fact that the

Danish industry takes 1.5 million tonnes of food that haddock, cod and other essential stocks in the North sea would otherwise have eaten is a matter of concern to the white-fish industry. I would like a greater emphasis on the industrial fishery as it affects not only aquaculture but the future of our white-fish industry in science and in the politics of Europe.

We have talked about Europe and we have heard references to Norway and the lifting of the controls over the import into the EU of Norwegian salmon. It is a great paradox that, although Norway is outside the EU, it has more influence on the decision-making process affecting our fishing industry than does Scotland, which is in the EU. It is time the minister told us how he plans to remedy the imbalance of power and delivery that is obvious to many of us.

The Crown Estate has been mentioned. Jamie Stone mentioned Tain and James VI. It is great that the benefit of shellfish farming is felt by the local community. We heard from George Lyon that the Crown Estate takes £15 million out of our industry each year. Some 1.3 per cent of that returns to Scotland. If only Tain's experience were replicated throughout Scotland.

The quality of the Scottish product is vital. We know that considerable work must be done to keep up that quality. Today, I lodged a motion on sourcing local products and I hope that there will be an opportunity to have a member's debate on that subject in the coming months. In the first two hours after I lodged the motion, 15 people signed it.

I ask the minister whether the Scottish Executive discriminates in favour of Scottish salmon in its procurement for its public industries, or do we buy salmon that has been caught in copper-coated nets that do not meet the standards that prevail in Scotland? It would be perfectly possible to do that.

Carrying capacity has been mentioned, most recently by Sarah Boyack. The carrying capacity of our lochs to hold the fish that we grow through aquaculture is important, but so is the carrying capacity of food-stock sources, and I ask the minister to raise the priority of research into that subject.

16:30

**Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** I welcome the chance to speak in this debate on the aquaculture strategy although, to be honest, I would prefer the debate to have taken place some years ago, in the Scottish Parliament's first session rather than its second session, as a real urgency surrounds fish farming.

The industry expanded 10 times over in the 1990s with little guidance. We are debating a

strategic framework today, but key measures to soften the industry's environmental impacts—such as revised locational guidelines—will not come into force until 2007. In the future, the Executive and the Parliament must keep one step ahead of, rather than one step behind, an industry that will continue to have a huge impact on Scotland's ecology and economy in the years to come.

We welcome much of the Executive's framework. The inclusion of 14 targets that relate to the environment is important, but that shows how much work the industry needs to do to deliver long-term sustainability. There are still fundamental concerns over the sustainability of an industry that typically requires 4kg of marine fish as feed to derive just 1kg of farmed salmon. Moves to farm new species that are endangered in the marine environment, such as cod, surely defy logic. Shellfish production represents an economic and ecological alternative that the Executive must consider further how to support, but we cannot afford to jeopardise the future of a sustainable shellfish industry by deregulating the fish farming that impacts directly on it.

That does not mean that we should regulate the fish-farming industry out of existence, as some members think the Green party believes we should do. We should compete on quality rather than quantity in Scotland—I mean quality of environment and quality of product. There should not be a race to the bottom over standards against countries such as Norway that in any case have competitive advantages over us in their physical environment.

**Fergus Ewing:** Scottish Quality Salmon won the Label Rouge award in France. Does the member accept that we already have high-quality products? What point is the member trying to make?

**Mr Ruskell:** I am about to discuss how quality can be improved; however, it is telling that a number of celebrity chefs will not use Scottish salmon.

**Members:** Which ones?

**Mr Brocklebank:** Name some names.

**Mr Stone:** Does the member mean Jamie Oliver?

**Mr Ruskell:** Jamie Stone's namesake has been mentioned.

I say to Fergus Ewing that to deliver the quality that is required, we need an industry that promotes health and good welfare in its livestock rather than an industry that desperately seeks new veterinary drug solutions every few years for problems that are born out of practices that promote ill health and stress in fish. Organic fish farming represents some improvement on

conventional standards and the Executive must consider including organic aquaculture in its new and evolving organic action plan and strengthening its role in the delivery of the strategy.

As members have said, there are strong parallels with agriculture. Just as GM crops pose incalculable potential risks to the land, GM fish pose similar risks to the ecology of wild fish stocks. I hope that ministers will do everything in their power to prevent GM contamination in the seas as well as on the land.

One of the main lessons of the past 10 years is that we cannot isolate fish farming. Fish farming is inextricably linked to the coastal environment and all its different uses. We need to untangle the knot of legislation that surrounds the management of the coasts and the seas—there are 85 different strands of legislation. A single unifying piece of legislation such as a marine act is needed soon to deliver proper integrated management of our marine environment, and the proposed aquaculture bill could be considered as a secondary component of such an act. In his closing remarks, I would be interested to hear the minister's views on that matter.

We urge the Executive to develop far-reaching strategies that can keep us ahead of issues that affect the sustainability of Scotland. The strategic framework fails to do that, but it is welcomed as an important first step.

16:34

**John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD):** I am disappointed that my good friend Jamie McGrigor would not tell me where the pool was in Loch Fyne. I say to Jamie McGrigor that I am like MacNeil of Barra, who had a boat of his own—I have a pool of my own.

Like many members, I welcome the debate on aquaculture and the forward strategy that is in the framework. As many members have said, there is no doubt that the aquaculture industry has been an important mainstay of the rural economy for the past 20 years. It supplies jobs in many areas where otherwise there would have been none. It is estimated that, directly and indirectly, the industry employs about 6,500 people in the Highlands and Islands alone.

However, there is no doubt in my mind that fish farming has caused some damage to the environment, in particular to stocks of wild salmon and sea trout. It is often forgotten that angling supports a number of jobs on the west coast and in the Highlands; it is estimated that it supported 3,400 jobs until recently. It is regrettable that many people who used to love coming to the Highlands to fish are now going to places such as Russia,

Patagonia and Canada, mainly because our fish numbers have declined so drastically.

I am sure that many members will be aware of the renowned fishing that used to exist on Loch Maree. It was considered the prime European destination for catching sea trout. Twelve full-time gillies used to be employed there, but now there is one part-time gillie. Someone who goes to fish there now would be lucky to catch one sea trout in a day, and it would probably be contaminated with sea lice.

Through the tripartite working group, the Scottish Executive has tried to introduce trial measures, including area management agreements to help to reduce the chemical and lice burden in sea lochs—I notice that the fish-farming industry now frowns on the word “chemical” and uses the term “medicines”. Those are voluntary agreements and the inconvenience of imposing area management agreements means that few are likely to be successful. We need to consider compulsory agreements. I am pleased to say that in reply to my question last week Allan Wilson indicated that in due course he may consider those if the area management agreements are deemed unsuccessful. Unfortunately, time is something that many rivers do not have; stocks are reported to be at a level from which they may never recover.

The problem is that there is no universally accepted evidence to support the case on either side of the argument. The environmental lobby spends money on reports that demonstrate environmental damage, but the industry claims that those reports are flawed. The industry spends money on lobbying and places expensive advertisements in *The House Magazine* and *Holyrood* to persuade parliamentarians that nothing is wrong.

I suggest that the Executive must commission its own survey to investigate the effects of sea-cage fish farming on wild fish stocks and on the environment. It needs to survey the lice populations in sea lochs that have cages and those without cages. It should also survey at least one loch that has cages and remove them before surveying it again to discover whether there is any recovery.

There is no doubt that such a survey will cost money, especially when we allow for the cost of removing cages from at least one sea loch. However, I believe that the Crown Estate is one body that has made vast sums of money out of fish farming. It puts very little in and takes a lot out, and the time has come for it to take responsibility as a landlord and fund a detailed survey of the effects of the industry that it has been living off. The Scottish ministers must make that clear to the Crown Estate. I notice that the SNP’s amendment

states that it wants to take power from the Crown Estate—I will go further and say that we also want its money.

16:39

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):**

I was interested to hear that Richard Lochhead believes that this is the first time that we have debated aquaculture in the Scottish Parliament. Even if that is the case, I seem to remember John Home Robertson vociferously defending the aquaculture industry in the chamber—it must have been at question time. I remember Rhona Brankin doing the same thing and the current deputy minister, Allan Wilson, defended the industry in his opening speech.

This is one issue on which I praise the Executive’s work over the past four years and into this session of Parliament. The Executive has defended an industry that, at times, was difficult to defend. Four years ago, there were grave doubts about the environmental impact of the industry and calls for an inquiry in the Parliament, but the Executive took a constructive and balanced decision based on the economic importance of the industry to some of the most peripheral areas of Scotland.

As we have heard, the industry employs 6,500 people, which, when compared to many other industries, is not a lot. Given that the industry is peripheral and exists in areas in which limited employment opportunities must be taken when they come along, the fact that the Executive was willing to balance those considerations against environmental ones was extremely important. As time has progressed, opportunities to begin to deal with the environmental issues have arisen. The strategic framework for aquaculture goes some way towards taking advantage of those opportunities, although it could have done a great deal more.

We have heard that there are still problems with escapes of salmon and that, although it is claimed that the problem of sea lice is being dealt with, the large-scale evidence remains to be seen and the jury is still out on the issue. We have also heard how important it is to cut regulation. Standards are required in the industry, but the burden of regulation under which the industry labours makes it difficult for it to compete on an equal footing with the industry in other countries. The minister must make a commitment to consider regulation in order to determine what can be cut away—surely much of it can.

We want more effort to encourage the development of a range of aquaculture activities, including shellfish production. The opportunities in Scotland to raise scallops, mussels and other

shellfish have been mentioned. Because shellfish are not dependent on a supply of feed drawn from the sea, they provide huge opportunities.

Stewart Stevenson and, to a lesser extent, Mark Ruskell spoke about the demand that fish farming creates for industrial fishing. None of us can address that point satisfactorily today, but we must address it. Huge numbers of fish are drawn out of the sea, including not only the feed for haddock and cod, but young haddock and cod, which are taken as a bycatch. That causes enormous problems for all the fisheries.

Standards are a key issue. We have an opportunity to address the fall in price by selling higher-quality salmon. A high quality, high welfare and environmentally sound product can command a premium in the marketplace. We are lucky to have Scottish Quality Salmon, which is in a strong position to continue to market quality salmon with those benefits throughout Europe.

To answer the question that Jamie Stone posed—although sadly he is not here to hear the answer—the Conservative party does not believe in massive state intervention or financial support to make the industry the success that it could be, although we believe that support should be given for market development and promotion. The opportunity exists to sell a product that commands a substantial premium throughout the European marketplace.

16:44

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP):** The framework document starts well when it states:

“For too long the industry has been bedevilled by often ill-informed criticism of its operation”.

Almost every week, we all read story after story attacking the salmon farming industry. Those stories are written by a small group of about five or 10 individuals whose names I will not mention but whom we know. They have been supported by a number of journalists who seem to have a desire to destroy the salmon farming industry.

We should all agree that salmon farming is essential to Scotland and that the jobs that it provides are, as many members have said, in the most peripheral parts of Scotland—such as in Lochaline, in my constituency—where there are no alternative jobs. Anyone who attacks the industry and knocks the quality of our Scottish salmon product does it no service. This is the first time that I have had the chance to listen to the Green views on this matter, and I am astonished that Jamie Oliver should suddenly be the arbiter of policy in the Scottish Parliament. That is a novel proposition. It may be that the Green party is moving towards a new phase of muzziness and

fuzziness, as it was not clear to me what its policy is—whether it is for or against the industry, or whether it is for the industry, provided that it is different in some unspecified way.

One of the unfortunate aspects of the debate is the fact that there has been no real recognition of the excellent research work that has been undertaken.

**Robin Harper rose—**

**Fergus Ewing:** No doubt, Robin Harper will agree with me.

**Robin Harper:** I certainly agree about the research. However, surely Fergus Ewing will agree that I have made it clear that we support the industry as long as it is environmentally sound. Would he not agree that, with any industry that uses dangerous chemicals on occasion and poses a potential threat to the environment, there is always a place for the whistleblower?

**Fergus Ewing:** Of course. No one is suggesting other than that the industry has achieved a great improvement in standards of environmental stewardship over recent years. [*Interruption.*] Perhaps that is Brian Simpson of SQS phoning me to agree with the point that I am making—no, it is John Farquhar Munro making arrangements about his fish farm.

No other member has dealt with the role that salmon can play in nutrition. On 1 September I spoke to an audience of international neuroscientists at Coylumbridge at a conference that was convened to consider the role of fatty acids in finding possible cures for schizophrenia, Alzheimer's and autism, as well as the nutritional role that fatty acids—which are found in salmon—play generally. A mass of research has already been done. I want to tackle what seemed to be the fallacy of Sarah Boyack's speech—most of which I agreed with—which was that we are only just starting to undertake research.

**Sarah Boyack:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Fergus Ewing:** I will make this point first. When I visited Dunstaffnage marine laboratory a couple of years ago, I learned that a lot of work had already been undertaken into the location of fish farms. That work has now been taken up by Mediterranean models and projects such as DEPOMOD and MERAMED, which use digital technology to show the best places for fish farm locations in particular marine situations. We have already done a huge amount of research, and we should not tackle this debate as if it had not been done.

**Sarah Boyack:** I was picking up the point that Mr Lochhead made, which was that no research had been carried out. Sylvia Jackson tried to

intervene a couple of times to say that we have excellent research. I agree that excellent research is being carried out; the point is that we need more. I am sure that we can all agree on that.

**Fergus Ewing:** I am not offering to hold anyone's jersey.

I would like to bring members up to date with the situation at Ardtoe, which is in my constituency. I have visited Ardtoe on numerous occasions and supported the efforts to save it when Seafish decided that it was going to divest itself of its financial responsibility. I am pleased to say that, although a deal has not yet been done, from discussions that I have had with John Rutherford, Jim Treasurer and the chief executive at Ardtoe, it seems likely that Ardtoe will be saved.

Unfortunately, ministers have declined an invitation from me to visit Ardtoe and no financial help has been provided, although it has been requested. At the end of August, I was contacted—I had better not say by whom—with the message that the reason that there was no deal at Ardtoe was that the Scottish Association for Marine Science was waiting for a letter of reassurance from the Executive that Ardtoe would receive research commissions from the Scottish aquaculture research forum, which did not meet until 2 September. That letter was not provided until the very last minute and only following my intervention at question time. Therefore, while the Executive's theory might be fine, the implementation side is sadly lacking.

The SNP is wholly committed to a competitive, well-regulated industry. It is a shame that the Tories could give us no idea about the regulations that they wanted to get rid of. I could help them out by telling them where the real problems lie: delays in consents and in dealing with applications to use medicines such as Slice. Unless we address the competitive disadvantage through the rental charges that are imposed by the Crown Estate commission—contrary to what the minister says, other countries do not have that charge—there will be a clear anti-competitive disadvantage. I would be interested to hear whether the minister agrees with the Liberal Democrats that power over the Crown Estate commission should be transferred to the Scottish Parliament.

16:50

**Allan Wilson:** This has been an interesting and informative afternoon and I am glad that the Executive lodged the motion. Not only have I had the honour of opening the debate but I have the privilege of closing it.

I do not doubt Richard Lochhead when he says that this is the first time that the Scottish Parliament has debated aquaculture, but I was a

bit surprised to hear that. Certainly, in the first parliamentary session, there was a great deal of inquiry into the concerns surrounding aquaculture. Following the submission of a petition to the Parliament, the Transport and Environment Committee initiated a rolling inquiry into the activities of the industry and the Rural Development Committee also took a considerable interest in the subject. The input of colleagues during the consultation period on the strategic framework was helpful indeed. At times, I seemed to be permanently in committees that were dealing with aquaculture. It is odd to be criticised by the SNP for lodging a motion on aquaculture when the SNP failed miserably to do so in the four and a half years of the previous session.

However, we want to look forward, not backward. As we all know, the partnership agreement is the future for the Scottish Parliament.

George Lyon—a true member of the partnership—asked me about the timetable for cutting regulation. Of course, the process of cutting regulation has already started and the planning extension will help it along. The strategic framework envisages that a review of the question of the lead body will take place within four or five years. Further, I intend to introduce an aquaculture bill this session, which will be the mechanism for delivering the streamlined regulation. I should say that I agree with much of what Fergus Ewing had to say on that subject.

The issue of the Crown Estate and sea-bed leases is clearly a reserved matter. However, we acknowledge that sea-bed management and rental arrangements are important issues, particularly for the fish-farming industry. The partnership agreement commits us to consulting on the best strategy for protecting and enhancing Scotland's coastline.

**Richard Lochhead:** Quite rightly, the minister states that the issue concerning the Crown Estate is reserved to Westminster. However, is he willing to approach the relevant authorities to try to get the powers that they enjoy transferred to the Scottish Parliament?

**Allan Wilson:** The difficulties of premature intervention, eh? Before I was interrupted, I was about to say that, in that context, we intend to consider the sea-bed rental arrangements. As part of that, we will be involved in discussions with the appropriate Whitehall departments.

I am not suggesting that the framework document solves all the problems or allays everyone's concerns. However, we have turned a corner and I think that the Parliament recognises that. We know the issues of concern and we have a framework and an action plan to tackle them. It

is legitimate for Richard Lochhead to criticise the Executive but, when he criticises the framework document, he is, as Maureen Macmillan said, criticising everyone who participated in the process: all the stakeholders; the regulators; the local authorities; the Scottish Environment Protection Agency; everybody in the veterinary services; the retail sector—the whole kit and caboodle. It is fine to criticise me; it is unfair and unwarranted to criticise everyone in the industry.

I agree with Richard Lochhead on two counts. The industry must operate at the highest levels. Some of the framework's priorities for action are designed to that end. As I said to Alex Fergusson in the context of comments about Norway, we can learn lessons from other countries. Indeed, aquaculture has given me an opportunity to travel. I have been on fact-finding missions to British Columbia, Galicia, Portugal and elsewhere to examine other competitors in the marketplace. That has been an informative process for me. There is also considerable contact between Government scientists and their counterparts elsewhere—Norway, Canada and Ireland all spring to mind. When I refer to officials meeting their Norwegian counterparts in August, I fully intend to raise with them market intervention on the price of salmon.

I regret and fundamentally disagree with the extremely negative and downbeat tone of what Ted Brocklebank had to say.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** One moment, please, minister. Will backbenchers please stop talking and listen to the minister?

**Allan Wilson:** Thank you, Presiding Officer. Listening to my speech is not compulsory, but I assure members that it is informative.

On research and development, the Executive has made available £100,000 per annum for the new aquaculture research forum. The three priorities that we identified for the industry—which Mr Mather, wittingly or not, endorsed—are encouraging investment, growing exports and developing branded products.

The Executive has worked tirelessly with the United Kingdom Government, the European Community and the industry to address the oversupply of salmon on the European market. The matter is still being pursued actively. On surveillance, we will need the rest of the industry's support. Somebody—I cannot remember who—mentioned the divisions in the industry. There are differences of view about the value of surveillance, but we will continue to consider the surveillance plan.

I will say something briefly about Robin Harper and the Greens. He seemed today to adopt a new mantle for him, that of Mr Angry. I do not dispute

the Opposition's role of offering criticism, but I say to Robin Harper that, if he is going to dish it out, he must be able to take it. It is not the Executive that has been saying that the research means that sea lice are not a problem—far from it. Many of the questions about sea lice need to be addressed, and we are continuing with that research. However, a considerable amount of public money has been put into the AMA process. The study that Fergus Ewing cited—he did not mention this—concurred with evidence from other areas that lice burdens on wild fish are reduced in the years following synchronised fallow in neighbouring farms. The TWG system is working towards reducing that.

**Robin Harper:** I accept that.

**Allan Wilson:** I was looking for a fight.

On relocation, we will consider issues such as farm distances from rivers. On the proposed new fish health directives, we may, as Jamie McGrigor requested, introduce exclusion zones around important rivers. Those initiatives will all underpin a voluntary AMA. At question time last week, I said it to John Farquhar Munro—and am happy to repeat today—that if the voluntary system fails, we will consider regulating within our proposed AMA.

As we go through the process, lessons will be learned. New information will come to hand. New tasks will emerge and be included in a revised action plan. I am confident that we can deliver results and will acquire a greater understanding of the aquaculture industry's strategic needs as we go through the process.

However, it is clear from the debate that we have nothing to learn from the Tories' upside-down economics or the SNP's inside-out politics. As for the Greens, I suspect that, as my colleague Alasdair Morrison said, they must be birlin in their sandals at their refusal to support the scallop conservation measures.

The Liberal Democrat-Labour party partnership will draw on the opening line of the framework's vision. We expect that

"Scotland will have a sustainable, diverse, competitive and economically viable aquaculture industry, of which its people can be justifiably proud."

I support the motion.

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees to establish a committee of the Parliament as follows—

Name of Committee: Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine Railway and Linked Improvements Bill Committee

Remit: To consider and report to the Parliament on the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine Railway and Linked Improvements Bill

Duration: Until the Bill has received Royal Assent, falls or is withdrawn

Convenership: The Convener will be a member of the Labour Party and the Deputy Convener a member of the Scottish National Party

Membership: Bill Butler (Labour), Mr Richard Baker (Labour), Mr Rob Gibson (SNP), David Mundell (Conservative), Nora Radcliffe (Lib Dem)

That the Parliament agrees the following nominated committee substitutes, as permitted under Rule 6.3A—

### Labour Party

Audit Committee	Marlyn Glen
Communities Committee	Christine May
Education Committee	Mr Richard Baker
Enterprise and Culture Committee	Rhona Brankin
Environment and Rural Development Committee	Janis Hughes
Equal Opportunities Committee	Jackie Baillie
European and External Relations Committee	Ms Wendy Alexander
Finance Committee	Gordon Jackson
Health Committee	Paul Martin
Justice 1 Committee	Helen Eadie
Justice 2 Committee	Cathie Craigie
Local Government and Transport Committee	Bill Butler
Procedures Committee	Irene Oldfather
Public Petitions Committee	Susan Deacon
Standards Committee	Marilyn Livingstone
Subordinate Legislation Committee	Maureen Macmillan

### Scottish National Party

Justice 1 Committee	Roseanna Cunningham
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### Scottish Socialist Party

Education Committee	Rosie Kane
Justice 2 Committee	Ms Rosemary Byrne
Local Government and Transport Committee	Colin Fox—[ <i>Tavish Scott.</i> ]

**The Presiding Officer:** The questions on those two motions will be put at decision time, to which we now come.



## Decision Time

17:00

### The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):

There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S2M-310.2, in the name of Richard Lochhead, which seeks to amend motion S2M-310, in the name of Allan Wilson, on the strategic framework for aquaculture, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

### FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Gibson, Mr Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
Mather, Mr Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)

### AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)

Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
May, Christine (Central Fife) (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)  
McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

### ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 22, Against 80, Abstentions 11.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The second question is, that amendment S2M-310.1, in the name of Ted Brocklebank, which seeks to amend motion S2M-310, in the name of Allan Wilson, on the strategic framework for aquaculture, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Gibson, Mr Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
Mather, Mr Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)

Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 37, Against 76, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The third question is, that motion S2M-310, in the name of Allan Wilson,

on the strategic framework for aquaculture, 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)  
 Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (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)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

**AGAINST**

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

**ABSTENTIONS**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Mr Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Mr Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 65, Against 19, Abstentions 29.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament welcomes the Scottish Executive's commitment, as set out in *A Partnership for a Better Scotland*, to support an aquaculture industry that is sustainable, diverse and competitive; endorses *A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture*, prepared in collaboration with, and supported by, a wide range of stakeholders and launched in March 2003 and notes the progress already achieved in addressing the priorities for action listed therein, and further welcomes the Executive's continuing commitment to work in partnership with industry

and all the other key stakeholders in regularly reviewing and reporting to the Parliament progress with the monitoring and implementation of the full programme of work contained in the strategic framework.

**The Presiding Officer:** The fourth question is, that motion S2M-330, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the establishment of a committee, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees to establish a committee of the Parliament as follows—

Name of Committee: Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine Railway and Linked Improvements Bill Committee

Remit: To consider and report to the Parliament on the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine Railway and Linked Improvements Bill

Duration: Until the Bill has received Royal Assent, falls or is withdrawn

Convenership: The Convener will be a member of the Labour Party and the Deputy Convener a member of the Scottish National Party

Membership: Bill Butler (Labour), Mr Richard Baker (Labour), Mr Rob Gibson (SNP), David Mundell (Conservative), Nora Radcliffe (Lib Dem).

**The Presiding Officer:** The fifth and final question is, that motion S2M-331, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on committee substitutes, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees the following nominated committee substitutes, as permitted under Rule 6.3A—

#### **Labour Party**

Audit Committee	Marlyn Glen
Communities Committee	Christine May
Education Committee	Mr Richard Baker
Enterprise and Culture Committee	Rhona Brankin
Environment and Rural Development Committee	Janis Hughes
Equal Opportunities Committee	Jackie Baillie
European and External Relations Committee	Ms Wendy Alexander
Finance Committee	Gordon Jackson
Health Committee	Paul Martin
Justice 1 Committee	Helen Eadie
Justice 2 Committee	Cathie Craigie
Local Government and Transport Committee	Bill Butler
Procedures Committee	Irene Oldfather
Public Petitions Committee	Susan Deacon
Standards Committee	Marilyn Livingstone

Subordinate Legislation Committee

Maureen Macmillan

#### **Scottish National Party**

Justice 1 Committee

Roseanna Cunningham

#### **Scottish Socialist Party**

Education Committee

Rosie Kane

Justice 2 Committee

Ms Rosemary Byrne

Local Government and Transport Committee

Colin Fox

## European Pollutant Emission Register

### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):**

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-106, in the name of Dr Sylvia Jackson, on Scotland's European pollutant emission register. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I invite those members leaving the chamber to do so as quickly and quietly as possible.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the Scottish European Pollutant Emission Register by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency; recognises that this is an important component of a strategy to deliver environmental justice in Scotland; notes that all communities have a right to know about chemical emissions in their environment; further notes that, in the United States, the introduction of the Toxic Release Inventory resulted in emission reductions of over 40%, and looks forward to the rapid development and publication of a comprehensive and easily accessible system that includes contextual health and environmental impact information.

17:06

**Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab):** I am pleased to see Roseanna Cunningham here. That means that there are two of us on crutches at this debate.

I am delighted to be given a second opportunity to debate a member's motion about the development of a Scottish pollutant emission register. I thank Friends of the Earth not only for its campaigning on this issue, but for its support and for the information that it has collected and provided.

I have read the previous debate on this issue, which took place last year. I am aware that a plethora of terms and acronyms is used in pollution registers and that many chemical terms appear on the Scottish Environment Protection Agency's website. Being a chemist, I am not particularly worried by those terms, but I am sure that other people may find references to phenols and other benzene compounds disconcerting. We must overcome that problem.

The key issue today is the development of a register that details the emission of pollutants and the making of that information available to the public so that people are encouraged to become involved in public debate and Government decision making. The register was established following the Aarhus convention, an international agreement that came into force on 30 October 2001.

I will summarise briefly the history of the register, because it is already ably described in a

Scottish Parliament information centre paper of October 2002. The Aarhus convention led to two important European directives and the creation of the European pollutant emission register—the EPER. The SEPA website shows the evidence that is being collected in Scotland for the register. Evidence is also being collected in England and Wales.

The European directives require that such information be collected and that results be monitored and appear in an inventory that identifies principal pollution sources and emissions. There is provision for reporting at European level in 2002, 2004, 2007 and every year after that.

I want to consider the current position in more detail. England and Wales are a wee bit ahead of us: through the Environment Agency, they were able to establish an online database before we did. The database provides information about 150 chemicals from 2,000 factories. Information relating to postcode areas, towns and regions can also be accessed.

At the previous debate on the issue, we asked Allan Wilson—who is still the Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development, which is good news—to ensure that the Scottish Executive, via SEPA, works with the Environment Agency in England and Wales. We thought that that expertise would be useful and could be built on. In fact, they have been working together and, in February this year, the Scottish Executive announced that SEPA would also be creating an online inventory of information on environmental emissions.

In May this year—many of us will remember that it was election time—SEPA published its EPER details. We are told that, by 2005, there will be a full online register. As part of the process of developing that register, a consultation is taking place. It is important that we feed into that to ensure that the inventory is as comprehensive as possible. That is along the lines of what I said last time, so I am pleased that our work is developing in that way.

In his concluding remarks in the previous debate on the subject, Allan Wilson said that he was hoping not only to take on board the 150 pollutants on the list in the English and Welsh system, but to work towards the 600 pollutants on the list of the north American system. We hope that that is still true.

Emission data should also include contextual information on health and environmental impacts. On its website, SEPA says that a list with that extra information is being developed at the moment. That is needed, and will give local communities a lot of usable information. Friends of

the Earth has said that other information that would be useful on a comprehensive site would include: how a company in an area compares with others of a similar nature; the cumulative effect of emissions from various sources in that area; whether releases were routine or accidental; and the past record, including any prosecutions, of companies in the area.

I want to talk about another piece of work by Friends of the Earth—its briefing on the link between pollution and poverty. Other members may want to talk about this as well. The data that have been used for the research have come from the Environment Agency. They cover a range of chemicals emitted to the air, water and land by large factories. Information on the locations of factories and the levels of emissions was then considered alongside the Government's index of multiple deprivation and it was revealed that deprived communities bear the brunt of factory pollution. The study focused on emissions to air of chemicals that are recognised as being carcinogenic—that is, cancer-causing. The results are alarming. Of the 11,400 tonnes of carcinogenic chemicals that were emitted to air in England in 1999, 66 per cent were in the most deprived 10 per cent of wards and 82 per cent were in the most deprived 20 per cent of wards. Such information is very useful. Time is too limited to go into that study, but I ask that we do a comparable study here in Scotland.

Members will remember that, in February last year, the First Minister not only pledged his support to sustainable development, but stressed the importance of everybody's taking responsibility for Scotland's environment. I believe that he was the first person to use the term "environmental justice". That is now part of Scottish Executive policy. He said:

"At the moment there is a real injustice in that people who suffer the most from a poor environment are those least able to fight back."

I was very heartened at the Scottish Executive's recent response to a new report on measuring deprivation in Scotland. Members will know that that report has been in development for quite a while. In its response, the Executive has accepted the need for consideration of the physical environment. The response says:

"There are links to developing measures of environmental justice which need to be considered."

I hope that things go further and that measures are not just considered but become part of policy, now that there appears to be a direct link between pollution and poverty.

In conclusion, we still have a long way to go, as we need to have a comprehensive register online,

but good work is being done. Please can we continue with that.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I will be able to call all the members who have asked to speak.

17:15

**Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP):** I apologise to members in advance, as I will have to leave at 5.45, which might be before the end of the debate. I congratulate Sylvia Jackson on securing the debate. In our respective current circumstances, she will understand the constraints that restricted mobility places on one's ability to get from A to B in reasonable time.

Like Sylvia Jackson, I welcome SEPA's publication of the Scottish European pollutant emission register. It may or may not be SEPA's role to act as some sort of bureaucratic Erin Brockovich but, as the motion states, it is an important aspect of access to information that all communities have a right to know about chemical emissions in their environment. It is extraordinary that we have come so late to absolute recognition of that right and that we still have communities that are struggling to find out what the position in their area is.

However, a little caution must be exercised in responding to the publication of the register's data. SEPA makes it clear that the register is purely a factual reporting of data as required by European legislation and that inclusion in the register does not imply that companies have breached their limits for emissions. The very nature of their work is bound to put some industries higher on any register than other industries and that will always be the case. We must guard against regarding the register data as some sort of polluters' league table—I worry greatly that the media will jump to that conclusion. Instead, we must learn to use it as an information baseline for ensuring that emission levels are reduced.

Sylvia Jackson made pertinent comments about other, in particular comparative, information that might be useful. That is a way of commending best practice and sharing expertise.

I suggest that the Executive, either through the Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development or the minister who is responsible for external relations, could have a word with the people who are responsible for the European Commission's web page on the European pollutant emission register, which has links to EPER information pages in member states. The link to the UK EPER home page, which is marked with a union flag, is a link to the site of the Environment Agency, which is responsible for England and Wales. The fact that there is no obvious opportunity to get from there to SEPA's

information on the subject is an important internet access issue. The present situation is far from helpful for individuals, communities or companies that seek information about pollutant emissions in Scotland. At best, the failure to realise that there are two different registers and set-ups in the United Kingdom represents ineptitude on the part of those who compile the website; whatever the reason for it, the relevant web page needs to be corrected.

I commend Sylvia Jackson's motion and I look forward to hearing the minister's remarks at the end of the debate, if I am here.

17:18

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** Caring for the environment is as central to Conservative party policy as it is to the policies of any of the other major parties, because it would be wrong to limit the ability of future generations to meet their needs, or to pass on to them heavy environmental costs. Therefore, caring for the environment must continue to be a priority.

Any innovation that will help us to achieve a cleaner and safer environment for every member of society is worthy of support. However, we are wary of forcing on businesses policies that might add unnecessary costs, as they are already suffering from high business rates and crippling water bills. Furthermore, we would not want to see the creation of a register as the only answer to cleaning up businesses' emissions. It is essential that different approaches are adopted, that diversity is always allowed and enabled and that we do not think that the register is the sole solution to the problem.

Sylvia Jackson's motion suggests that the introduction of a toxic release inventory in the United States resulted in an emission reduction of 40 per cent. That is proven fact. However, that is a very high figure and it raises questions about the behaviour of companies that led to the results. Is it really possible to reduce emissions that quickly, in a way that is safe and legal? Was there a reduction in total tonnage? If that was the case, which chemicals saw the greatest reduction—the toxic or the non-toxic ones? We appear not to have answers in some cases.

In addition, since the US introduced its inventory in 1986, the progression in European and international environmental law means that, 17 years later, we are in a much more advanced position. Therefore, it is unlikely that the introduction of such a register would have the same effect here as it did in the United States.

A further concern about the foreseen effectiveness of the register is that many companies in Scotland already openly reported

their emission levels every year without being forced to do so. For example, BP at Grangemouth, Shell and many other companies are committed to reducing their overall emissions as part of their corporate social responsibility programmes. Credit should be given to those companies for having to some extent jumped the gun against the register.

Although we look forward to the effects that the register might have, we must also be careful to keep in mind the additional problems that may be highlighted. One example is incineration, which is often considered as an option for disposal of material that currently goes to landfill.

**Dr Jackson:** Several years ago, there was a lot of concern in my constituency about the Rechem Ltd incinerator, but I hope that the register will allay such fears. The siting of an incinerator may be helped by the fact that it would be more closely monitored.

**Alex Johnstone:** I was going to make that point. Many of us are contacted by constituents who are concerned about the risks from proposed incinerators and from equipment that is designed to recover power from waste, so we must be in a position to be able to give some guarantee that emissions are being monitored. I believe that the register will be the first step in guaranteeing that such monitoring is taking place.

17:22

**Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab):** Like other members, I congratulate my colleague Sylvia Jackson on securing this debate on an important issue, about which I welcome the opportunity to speak.

I support Sylvia Jackson's call for further research into the link between our poorest communities and the areas that are most blighted by toxic emissions. In a parliamentary debate just before the summer recess, I welcomed the launch of the online pollutant register. I also voiced my concerns about the fact that Shanks Waste Services Ltd, which operates the Greengairs site in my constituency, was identified as Scotland's seventh biggest emitter of toxic waste.

It is vital that we have easy access to information not only about who is polluting, but about what types and levels of pollutants are being emitted. We need information on the effects of emissions on the health and well-being of people who live nearby. I hope that the publication of the information on the SEPA website will put considerable pressure on all companies that discharge waste into the environment to ensure that they do all that they can to prevent risk to surrounding communities.

I have some sympathy with Friends of the Earth's call for an increase in the number of

pollutants on the inventory. Increasing the number from the current 50 to 200, to match the figure in England and Wales, would be an important first step. However, as Sylvia Jackson said, we should strive to match the American toxic release inventory, which reports on the emissions of more than 600 pollutants.

People such as my constituents in Greengairs have to live with the consequences of the discharge by companies of toxic waste into the environment. Whether people are concerned about the day-to-day grind of living with noxious odours or the more serious health consequences that are associated with the discharge of high-level toxic materials, the register will enable them to monitor toxic emissions more easily in and around their communities. It will also help them to have a better understanding of the type of pollutants that are discharged, including the possible health effects of the emissions.

I welcome the publication by SEPA of the European pollutant emission register and urge the agency to continue to develop and enhance that valuable public resource.

17:25

**Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** I echo my colleagues' comments and thank Sylvia Jackson for securing the debate. The topic will resonate with my constituents and Sylvia Jackson's constituents, especially the people in the eastern villages, who face many years of uncertainty and concern over some of the industry in that area. I am thinking particularly of the Caberboard plant at Cowie.

Over the years in which I have had contact with communities working on environmental justice issues, I have noticed one common thread, which is the search for the truth. Many of those communities just want to know the truth about what is happening. They are not necessarily against industry; in many areas, the local industry might be the biggest employer. However, they want to know the truth about what is happening. They want to know what emissions are being allowed into the environment and how those emissions are affecting their health and local environment.

We welcome the implementation of the European pollutant emission register, despite the fact that it has been somewhat delayed in comparison with what has happened in England and Wales. However, we have to ask whether the register represents the whole truth. The answer is that it does not.

There are four main flaws, although I hope that, over time, we can remedy them. First, the register is compiled on a three-year basis. The register

that came out in May therefore refers to emissions in 2001. The next report will come out in 2006 and will refer to 2004. That means that there are two lost years—2002 and 2003—for which we will not have any data. I hope that that situation will be remedied by the introduction of annual reports from 2007. However, we must be vigilant about that.

The second flaw is that the register takes account only of total annual emissions. Some emissions occur on a low frequency and over a short period, but the discharges can be significantly high—they are often called spikes. If those discharges are of a particularly low frequency, the annual reporting threshold may not be met. Therefore, those spikes or incidents of high pollution will not require to be reported on as part of the register. That is a technical issue, but we must clear it up.

The third flaw is that the responsibility to return data about pollution emissions lies with the companies. I question whether SEPA has the resources and the remit to check the information that is going into the register. We are somewhat reliant on companies' honesty and it seems to be possible for an unscrupulous company to underestimate its emissions and thereby slip below the reporting threshold.

The final flaw is that we are considering only 200 chemicals. I gather from Sylvia Jackson's comments that that is more than are being considered in England and Wales, but the number is still low number compared with the 650 toxic chemicals that are reported on as part of the US toxic release inventory, which has been successful in reducing emissions. We have to get the complete picture of pollution in the environment.

The register is an important tool for communities, but only if it is completely transparent, robust and properly resourced. We owe it to the communities that are suffering from environmental injustice to give them the whole truth and not just half-truths.

17:29

**The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Allan Wilson):** I am pleased to respond to the motion. I congratulate Sylvia Jackson on securing the debate, because the subject is close to the heart of the Executive's environmental justice agenda, to which she referred. When we debated the issue in January 2002, much work remained to be done to complete Scotland's contribution to the European pollutant emission register.

As Sylvia Jackson said, publication of the EPER data earlier this year marked a step change in the availability of emissions information in Scotland.



The next step will be the launch next week of a website that presents the EPER data in a geographical format. I hope that members will be patient about the two to three-week delay in launching the map-based inventory, as I am reliably assured that the product is well worth the wait. Publication of the EPER data at the European level has been delayed by several months to February next year, so Scotland remains well placed in relative terms. However, I acknowledge the point made by my colleague Roseanna Cunningham and I assure her that the link to the Scottish site will be added. I commend her for her close attention to detail.

I stress that the EPER is not an end point, but a starting point. In February, I announced that a more comprehensive pollution inventory would be in place by August 2005. The priority that the Executive affords that objective is shown by its inclusion in the partnership agreement.

As Sylvia Jackson said, when I spoke in the debate in January 2002, I set out an aspiration that the Scottish pollution inventory should match the best in the world. That remains our aspiration. The proposals for the inventory will allow us to match the rest of the United Kingdom and to be among the best in Europe by 2005, but that is not the end of the process. I want the inventory to go further—like Scotland in Europe, we want to succeed. SEPA has signalled its intention to expand the inventory to cover emissions from a further 2,000 or more installations; I support that intention, subject to the outcome of a cost of compliance study.

The protocol on pollution release and transfer registers under the Aarhus convention sets a common baseline standard for reporting emissions information. I am confident that Scotland is in a strong position to have a compliant inventory in place in good time before the protocol becomes legally binding, which we expect to happen in 2007.

Comparisons have been drawn with north American pollution inventories, which green pressure groups consider to be the model to aspire to. As I have said, I share the aspiration that the Scottish inventory should be among the best in the world, but the comparison should be made not only on the number of chemicals, because larger amounts of information that is difficult to interpret will not necessarily take us to where we want to go. As Roseanna Cunningham said, putting the data in context is a more important short and medium-term objective. I am glad that that priority was reflected in the motion and in most of the speeches.

Analysis of the reaction to publication of the EPER data makes it clear that the public—if journalists are included—do not find it easy to

relate mass emissions data to effects on humans and the environment, as Roseanna Cunningham said. Indeed, even the normally reliable Press Association appears to have deserted us. An important first step to address that problem will be the addition of contextual information that describes the environmental and health impacts of the substances that the inventory covers. SEPA and the Scottish centre for infection and environmental health have worked together to develop that information, which I assure members will be launched alongside the map-based version of the website to which I referred.

Mass emissions and substance data are only part of the information that people need. We also need more information on the exposure to the chemicals experienced by people, as well as by the environment. SEPA has a water classification scheme that provides a quality measurement of water bodies in terms that are easy to understand. Those data will be added to the inventory in 2004.

Like Karen Whitefield and others, I support SEPA's approach of giving priority to improving contextual information and links to information on environmental quality. I also support its view that that is a higher priority than expanding the list of chemicals in the short and medium term, important as that might be.

As the motion recognises, the pollution inventory is not just a public information service; the EPER has set an important baseline against which to measure progress and set targets for reducing emissions in the future. Setting targets in terms that measure environmental outcomes is important. Equally important are the tools to regulate and reduce emissions, which are already well developed.

Pollution prevention and control regulations provide a stringent regulatory regime for activities that have the greatest environmental impact. The regime is being phased in over the period to 2007 and has been supplemented by specific controls on waste incinerators, an issue that I know arouses much public concern. The revised large combustion plant and national emissions ceilings directives will further limit emissions of several key air pollutants over the next few years. The Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003 provides a comprehensive framework for protecting the water environment from harmful emissions.

I believe that the combination of emissions information, regulatory controls and market incentives provides a powerful set of tools that can be used to pursue reductions in emissions, as has been done in north America. Such a set of tools ensures that we build on the generally good environmental quality that Scotland currently enjoys but that we want to make better. We also

want to use those tools to address problem areas more effectively than has been done in the past.

In summary, the motion is a timely reminder of the progress that has been made and of the work that needs to be done to fulfil our aspirations for the inventory. Sylvia Jackson talked about environmental justice. I say to her that the Executive is considering work in this area as part of its environmental justice agenda. When that work is developed, it will be brought back to the chamber.

I hope that members and others will take the opportunity, as Roseanna Cunningham has done, to visit the new user-friendly version of the website when it is launched next week and that they will contribute to the SEPA consultation on the content of the 2005 inventory.

*Meeting closed at 17:38.*

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