

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Wednesday 11 February 2004  
(*Afternoon*)

Session 2

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## CONTENTS

Wednesday 11 February 2004

### Debates

Col.

<b>TIME FOR REFLECTION</b> .....	5677
<b>PRESIDING OFFICER'S RULING</b> .....	5679
<b>FOOTBALL</b> .....	5681
<i>Motion moved—[Mr Kenny MacAskill].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Mr Jamie McGrigor].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Colin Fox].</i>	
Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP) .....	5681
Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con) .....	5684
Colin Fox (Lothians) (SSP) .....	5686
The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Mr Frank McAveety) .....	5688
Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD) .....	5691
Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP) .....	5692
Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind) .....	5694
Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab) .....	5695
David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con) .....	5696
John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP) .....	5698
Colin Fox .....	5699
Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD) .....	5701
Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) .....	5702
Mr McAveety .....	5704
Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP) .....	5706
<b>NUCLEAR WASTE</b> .....	5709
<i>Motion moved—[Roseanna Cunningham].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Allan Wilson].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Alex Johnstone].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Mr Mark Ruskell].</i>	
Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP) .....	5709
The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Allan Wilson) .....	5711
Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con) .....	5714
Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green) .....	5715
Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD) .....	5717
Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab) .....	5719
Campbell Martin (West of Scotland) (SNP) .....	5720
David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con) .....	5722
Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab) .....	5724
Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green) .....	5725
Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD) .....	5727
John Scott (Ayr) (Con) .....	5728
Allan Wilson .....	5730
Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP) .....	5732
<b>BUSINESS MOTIONS</b> .....	5735
<i>Motions moved—[Patricia Ferguson]—and agreed to.</i>	
<b>PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTION</b> .....	5737
<i>Motion moved—[Patricia Ferguson].</i>	
<b>DECISION TIME</b> .....	5738
<b>VISITSCOTLAND (TOURIST INFORMATION)</b> .....	5749
<i>Motion debated—[Nora Radcliffe].</i>	
Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD) .....	5749
Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP) .....	5752
Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con) .....	5753
Mike Watson (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab) .....	5755
John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD) .....	5756
Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green) .....	5757

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP).....	5758
David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con) .....	5760
Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab) .....	5761
Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD) .....	5762
Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con) .....	5763
The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Mr Frank McAveety) .....	5764

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## Scottish Parliament

*Wednesday 11 February 2004*

*(Afternoon)*

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

### Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Good afternoon. Our time for reflection leader this afternoon is the Reverend Dr Michael Purcell, who is parish priest of St Mary of the Angels in Camelon.

**The Reverend Dr Michael Purcell (Parish Priest, St Mary of the Angels, Camelon):** I teach in the school of divinity just through the wall, so it is a pleasure to be here in the flesh to see what this place is like.

I was speaking with a friend from Lebanon last week. I asked him what he would speak about if he were offering a reflection in the Scottish Parliament. Straight away, he replied that he would speak about diversity as the life of a community. I took his words to heart. I began to think about diversity, and the very diverse society in which we live—a diversity of communities, cultures and peoples.

His words caused me to reflect on language and how we use it. What is diversity? It is variety and difference. It is related to diversions, a changing of direction, a being taken out of ourselves and our own concerns. Diversity and diversions involve turnings and changes.

But then I reflected that this turning is also linked to conversion, a turning towards someone. That also involves change, but it perhaps involves a change in us. Going further, this conversion is linked to conversation.

Today, I would simply like to associate these words—diversity, diversion, conversion and conversation—as things that should guide the life of a Parliament that speaks and, perhaps, speaks in an exemplary way. We all share in the gift of language and the responsibilities that it brings.

The French writer Maurice Blanchot wrote that, when faced with another person, the only alternative is to speak or to kill. What Blanchot meant is that the words we use are powerful. Words can be creative and affirming. They build bridges. They cross frontiers. They enable communication and they build up the life of community. They bring a sense of worth and value to others. They establish peace. However, words can also be destructive and divisive, hurtful and harmful, harshly vocal and violent.

Strangely, it is because we are diverse and different that we are able to speak at all. If we were all the same, we would have nothing to say to one another, and the life of a community would wither.

This is one of the prayers that we often use in my own Christian tradition:

In the midst of conflict and division,  
we know it is you  
who turn our minds to thoughts of peace.

Your Spirit changes our hearts:  
enemies begin to speak to one another,  
those who were estranged join hands in friendship,  
and nations seek the way of peace together.

Your Spirit is at work  
when understanding puts an end to strife,  
when hatred is quenched by mercy,  
and vengeance gives way to forgiveness.

May this place of speaking—this Parliament—be a place where words are used well and wisely, creatively and constructively, so that diversity truly is the life of a community.

## Presiding Officer's Ruling

14:34

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Before we come to the football debate, let me say a few words on the subject of yellow cards and red cards. I have reflected on the points of order raised by Patricia Ferguson and Tommy Sheridan during last week's First Minister's question time and wish to make the following comments.

First, all members of the Parliament have rights and responsibilities to one another and to the people whom they serve.

Secondly, I am responsible for ruling on the conduct of all members when they are in the chamber. However, as has been ruled from the chair on many occasions in the past, matters that are covered in the Scottish ministerial code are not for me. That includes the principle that ministers should give accurate and truthful information to the Parliament. Notwithstanding that, I will defend the right of any member to probe and challenge the Executive. After all, that is why we are here.

Thirdly, in fulfilling that duty, members have the responsibility to challenge respectfully, with courtesy and in good order.

Lastly, accusations that a member has lied, is lying or other derivatives of that word will be dealt with in the following way. I will call for the member to stand, to apologise and to withdraw the remark. That is the yellow card. Should any member refuse so to do, he or she will be defying the chair and disrupting the business of the chamber. That will be seen as a conscious decision to engage in disorderly conduct and will result in expulsion from the chamber. That is the red card.

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. You have just provided a reasonable explanation of how you hope affairs in the chamber will be conducted over the coming years and months. However, if a player is red carded, even under the Scottish Football Association's rules they have a right of appeal. Will you look into the development of an appeal procedure for members that ensures that ministers are held to account in the same way that members are held to account? If I think that a minister is deliberately misleading Parliament, as far as I am aware I cannot refer them to the Procedures Committee or the Standards Committee for investigation. Surely we need some form of protection, so that ministers are not above the law but share collective accountability for the conduct of the chamber?

**The Presiding Officer:** I am glad that you find my remarks reasonable. It is clear that the use of

the words lies and lying, or any derivative of those, will result, first, in a yellow card, and secondly, in either an apology and withdrawal or a red card. You know the consequences of a red card.

The standing orders of the Parliament are silent on the ministerial code, so I have no locus and standing in relation to it. I simply pass that information to you. If you wish to pursue the matter by other means, that is up to you. However, you are not to do it in this chamber and by using the word lying. That is my last word on the subject today.

We can now get on with the real business of football.

## Football

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-889, in the name of Kenny MacAskill, on the future of Scottish football, and two amendments to the motion.

14:38

**Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP):** I thank the minister for discussing and agreeing the terms of the motion that we are debating today. It is appropriate that when the national game is being debated in the national Parliament we should try to achieve a national consensus.

Scottish football finds itself in troubled times. The list of clubs in financial trouble reads like an excerpt from a hall of fame. More may follow those that have already been engulfed. Others, professional or not, are in debt or at best cash strapped.

Let us be clear that football is important. It is about jobs and livelihoods at clubs. It is part of the fabric of the community in towns and cities. It is part of the lives of many fans and followers. Nationally, it is how many people not only derive pleasure, but partake of exercise. Our distinct identity as a football nation is a source of pride, if all too often a source of heartache. Football is part of modern Scotland, transcending class, bridging age and uniting regions.

Let us also be clear that the plight of many clubs is a tragedy. Through mismanagement or mere misjudgment, they are in a dreadful situation. However, it is not the responsibility of the taxpayer to bail them out. The game needs to address the situation that has allowed wage bills to exceed income and clubs to live beyond their means. Limited companies may die; hopefully, football clubs will not, and football certainly must not.

Public funding for the game is essential, but it must be channelled into promoting the game as a whole and not into subsidising the faults and errors of the few.

Scottish football needs to restructure. Over recent years we have seen the game move from being a participatory sport to being a spectator event. The emphasis has been on stadia and foreign stars at the expense of the support and enhancement of the grassroots game. Scotland has pursued the wealth of the English premiership, or Spain's la Liga, rather than copying the development of the game in Norway or Denmark. As a result, we have bankrupt clubs, fewer people participating in the sport and a less successful national team than in comparable small nations. According to the Scottish Football Association, the

number of players in Scotland is 130,000. However, despite its smaller population, Ireland has 180,000 players. Norway, with a comparable population to Scotland, has 325,000 players. As a result, Norway has a fitter population and, more important, a bigger pool of players from which to select its national team.

Rather than build football from the big clubs down, we need to construct Scottish football from the grass roots up. That is not rocket science. We have had reviews before. The tragedy is that they have not been implemented. How many bodies do we need to regulate and run football in Scotland? We have the Scottish Football Association; it must be extended from 78 member clubs to represent the whole football family. It must change and evolve, but it is the body that is best suited to governing the game and we must build around it. We do not need a superfluity of organisations from the Scottish Junior Football Association and the Scottish Schools Football Association to the Scottish Premier League, the Scottish Football League and beyond. It is not players hanging up their boots that we need, but some buffers hanging up their blazers.

**Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind):** I agree with much of Kenny MacAskill's analysis so far, but it is important for the Parliament to understand that the SPL, the Scottish Schools Football Association and the Scottish Junior Football Association are not completely separate entities from the Scottish Football Association. They come under the umbrella of the Scottish Football Association, which is the sole governing body for the whole of Scottish football. It is important that everybody understand that.

**Mr MacAskill:** I fully accept that. As Dennis Canavan might be aware, John Swinney and I met the SFA and it was made clear that those bodies are affiliated. They contribute immensely through the time and commitment that they give, but we also have to address the structures. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, those structures are archaic and they need to be developed. I hope that they will be built on consensus. As I will go on to say, it might be that we need to offer some carrot as opposed to too much stick.

We need to get more people playing the game and fewer people administering it. We cannot replace the blazers with bureaucrats or players with politicians. We know what needs to be done. The plans exist and have done so for years, ever since Ernie Walker's time. If any additional review is required, it should come from within the game and should be done by the Dalglishes and the Laws or some of the countless other sporting legends.

What is needed is the will. As Mr Canavan commented, the role of the Parliament should be

to say that funding is contingent upon change—we must say, “We cannot make you, but if you are to receive public funds, then change you must.” We are in a new millennium and the time has come to change to meet it.

Action must also follow on from structural streamlining. A reconstituted SFA must enforce licensing schemes to address financial mismanagement. Broader ownership of clubs must be sought. Clubs should be for the pleasure of the many, not the privilege of the few. Community involvement must grow. Football has as much to contribute to our future as it has to our past, but to do that it must adapt to changing times. Football is our most popular sport and it has a great deal to contribute to the health and welfare of not just our young, but of all generations. The streets are busy with traffic and football fields are being sold off to developers. It is our duty to make the game affordable and accessible to all. Public funds must fund and provide public facilities. The PlayStation generation must be afforded the chance to become a footballing generation.

I am not prepared to accept either of the amendments that have been lodged. As far as the Tory amendment is concerned, I think that the “home international championship” that it mentions belongs to the previous century. In any event, the fixture lists for the Scottish international team should be chosen by Berti Vogts, not pre-selected by any Tory amendment.

Moreover, the Tory party’s proposals on drinking in stadiums are entirely counterproductive. The Nicholson committee’s report is currently under review. I and other members have had private discussions with the minister and his colleague and it would be wrong to supersede them and preempt where they might take us. More important, one of the results of this debate should be that we encourage more people to participate in football instead of giving more people the opportunity simply to have a drink while they sit on their backside.

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

**Mr MacAskill:** Not at the moment.

The Scottish Socialist Party’s amendment deletes a great deal of the meat of the motion that has been discussed and agreed between the minister’s parties and my own party. As such deletion would negate any recognition of the requirement for change and to invest at youth level, I am not prepared to accept the amendment.

Our approach should be “one nation—one association”. We must restructure. Although we must do what we can for the clubs in trouble, they must find their own level. We must reclaim the people’s game for the people and make it

affordable and accessible to all. We must build from the communities up, not from the big clubs down. We must provide facilities for all, not a fabulous lifestyle for the few. Let us follow the Norwegian and Danish model, not the English or Spanish one. Let us create a healthier population, a viable professional league and a more successful international team.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the crisis faced by Scottish football; recognises football’s significant contribution and potential impact in terms of its economic, social and health benefits and its role in our culture and identity; sympathises with the backroom and playing staff of those clubs worst affected; calls on professional football clubs to work with their supporters to harness the emotional and financial investment they make in their clubs; calls on the football authorities and clubs to ensure better business planning and financial management; believes that public funding for the game is essential but not the bail out of individual clubs; welcomes current and proposed financial support from the Scottish Executive but calls for such support to be matched by structural change; calls for the Scottish Football Association (SFA) to be a more integrated governing body for the game; calls for a review of the professional league structure in Scotland and the criteria for membership, and further calls for the SFA to regulate and develop participation by all ages and at all levels from grassroots in the community through to the national team.

14:47

**Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands)**  
(Con): I should point out to Mr MacAskill that my amendment

“invites the Scottish Football Association to consider reinstating the home international”.

It does not tell anyone to do anything.

**David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands)**  
(Con): Unlike the SNP in its motion.

**Mr McGrigor:** Yes.

Although there is certainly a crisis in football, which is a game that is so important to so many Scots, I am very confused by certain points in Mr MacAskill’s motion. In a press release that was issued on the SNP website on 6 February, he stated:

“No one will thank politicians if we try to dictate to football how it should proceed”.

If that is the case, why, while welcoming current and proposed financial support from the Scottish Executive, does he call

“for such support to be matched by structural change”?

Surely that would be a case of politicians interfering with the business and management of football clubs and associations, both of which should be outwith any political interference. It is up to clubs and associations to take sensible financial decisions to cope with the present crisis. I would



agree with Mr MacAskill's statement that  
"public funding for the game is essential"

only if such funding were used to promote the playing of football in schools and to build the infrastructure to encourage that instead of giving a handout to struggling clubs.

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

**Mr McGrigor:** Not at the moment.

Sections of Scottish football must realise that they do not generate enough of a turnover to support current levels of spending. There is no reason why a well-run club cannot operate at a profit. Clubs must find a way of securing a sustainable future that is based on a core of good, young players in order to help to boost dwindling attendances. Above all, they must make sound financial decisions.

In 2003, PricewaterhouseCoopers produced a report that concluded that, for a club to stand a chance of producing a reasonable financial performance, wage costs should represent no more than 60 per cent of its turnover. However, in 2001-02, only Celtic Football Club achieved that. In the same year, Dundee, Dunfermline and St Johnstone actually spent more on wages than they earned in income. Such a policy is bound to end in tears. Unfortunately, those tears are shed mostly by the loyal fans who have supported their teams relentlessly, through triumph and disaster in all weathers, and who have been let down badly by management.

I accept Lex Gold's point that this year the Scottish Premier League's total revenue has dropped from £21 million to £14 million. I also accept that he is quite right to say:

"There will be a lot of people who'll say why should we help you folks who have made an absolute shambles of it."

I am sure that most Scottish fans would agree, especially when they realise that the exclusive £50 million Sky TV rights offer was rejected by the Premier League clubs on the recommendation of the SPL management, who preferred the SPL's own proposed TV channel, which—as we know—failed to materialise. It was therefore the SPL's advice that precipitated the dramatic fall in television revenues to the clubs and the "absolute shambles" to which Mr Gold refers.

Other foolhardy practices have come to light. Bill Aitken, our chief whip and arguably the finest left winger since Bobby Lennox, tells me that after Motherwell went into administration last year it poached players from Partick Thistle by offering them higher wages. Partick Thistle took the honourable decision of not going into administration: it paid off its debts. That is surely a

commendable course of action and an example that other football clubs should follow.

I have written to the chairmen of all the United Kingdom football associations to ask them for a return of the UK home internationals. England, Wales and Northern Ireland are in the same qualifying group for the world cup, so they will play each other twice anyway. What better time would there be to rekindle fixtures that were always popular and would be good for sport and for the economies of all the cities throughout the UK that were chosen to host the games? Revenue raised through television coverage could be reinvested in the Scottish game.

We also believe that we should revoke the ban on the sale of alcohol at football grounds. Our leader, David McLetchie, will expound on that later.

I come from the generation who remember great Scottish teams with players such as Jim Baxter, Jimmy Johnstone, wee Willie Henderson and Archie Gemmill—to name but a few. Those men encouraged young Scottish footballers. Now we have more great players such as Barry Ferguson, James McFadden and Darren Fletcher; they set the standard to which budding youngsters can aspire. We need more good Scottish players. In football terms, we need a Scottish coaching state rather than a Scottish nanny state.

I urge members to support the amendment in my name.

I move amendment S2M-889.1, to leave out from "significant" to end and insert:

"importance in terms of its economic, social and health benefits and also its contribution to our culture and identity; believes, however, that football clubs must take responsibility for their own commercial decisions and that a well-run football club should be sustainable without the need for public funding; further believes that the Scottish Executive can help club finances by lifting the outdated alcohol ban in all-seater stadia, and invites the Scottish Football Association to consider reinstating the home international championship as a means of generating additional revenue for the development of the game."

14:52

**Colin Fox (Lothians) (SSP):** I declare an interest—perhaps it is a confession, as I am a Lothians MSP—I am a lifelong Motherwell fan. That is where I was born and bred and the club has already been mentioned in the debate.

Kenny MacAskill's motion more than adequately highlights the crisis in Scottish football and there certainly is a crisis. Anyone looking at the way that Scottish football is currently run must be tempted to ask, as Friedrich Engels once asked of Karl Marx, "Why is there not always a crisis?"

When we look at the situation, logic always goes

out of the window in the management of Scottish football. Perhaps nothing typifies the madness of how Scottish football and our clubs have been run more than the figures Dunfermline released this week; it was revealed that its wage bill was 136 per cent of its turnover. Clubs' indebtedness at such levels leaves them at the mercy of the banks at a time when attendances are falling.

**Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab):** I thank the member for giving way. I could not resist that temptation.

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP):** Declare an interest.

**Scott Barrie:** Unfortunately, I do not have a financial interest to declare.

Does the member agree that the state of clubs such as Dunfermline is symptomatic of a club that has ambition and wants to do well on the national and international stage? That is one of the difficulties that we have when Scottish football is, unfortunately, dominated by two clubs and the rest all have to compete with them. It is very difficult for clubs such as Dunfermline to compete in that arena.

**Colin Fox:** I agree with the member on that point. That is the point that I would like to finish my remarks on in a couple of minutes' time.

There have been crises before in Scottish football. After the famous Hillsborough disaster, clubs were faced with converting sometimes antiquated grounds into all-seater stadia. There was the Bosman ruling and the effect of European Union competition law on transfers. However, it is fair to say that the current crisis is undoubtedly the most severe that the sport has faced.

It is fair to say, as Graham Spiers did in *The Herald* on Tuesday, that when we examine how the current crisis has developed, it is clear that some clubs

"showed a reckless disregard for their financial position"

and that the situation has been brought to a head by the failure of promised TV deals.

We have seen that phenomenon across Europe. In Italy, Fiorentina went bust because it banked its money on the promise of an Italian television deal. I am told that 74 clubs in the English league are seriously indebted. For example, Leeds United Football Club's crippling debts of £80 million are well chronicled. In Scotland, Motherwell, Dundee and Livingston football clubs are already in administration. Which club will be next? As a Lothians MSP, I take a close interest in events at Tynecastle and Easter Road.

**Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab):** Would not the Scottish Socialist Party's policy of banning alcohol advertising on strips

worsen the situation for clubs? The Tennants Scottish Cup and the Bells Scottish Football League are all sponsored in that way.

**Colin Fox:** With respect, if the member will allow me, I will tell him precisely what the Scottish Socialist Party's policy is.

I want to highlight one or two points, if I can, as my time is rapidly diminishing. What happens when a team collapses? Yesterday I spoke to Jackie McNamara of the Scottish Professional Footballers Association, which is attempting to salvage what is left of the careers and contracts of players throughout Scotland—such as the six Livingston players who were sacked yesterday and the six others whose wages were cut by half, or the 20 Motherwell players who were sacked on the spot a couple of years ago. Such players find themselves in a stark position. While we are examining restructuring for Scottish football, we must introduce modern industrial relations to replace the archaic situation that we have now. Not all footballers are on the £50,000 per week wages of Henrik Larsson or the de Boer brothers. Players' careers are shortened through injury and declining living standards.

Communities are also affected by the closure of football teams. I have an eye on the time, Presiding Officer, but I want to get to the central issue, which is mutualisation.

**The Presiding Officer:** You have about 30 seconds left, I am afraid.

**Colin Fox:** There is much to be learned from mutualisation, through which clubs are owned by a broad base of supporters. More than 100,000 fans own the football club at Barcelona. Professor Jonathan Michie, of the department of management at Birkbeck College at the University of London, produced a paper that led to Northampton Town and Bournemouth football clubs in England being owned by supporters trusts. That is the way forward and that example should be followed in Scotland. The example of the stadio comunale in Italy, where stadiums are owned by local authorities, also offers a way forward that would ensure that facilities are widely available to the communities that put their support behind clubs.

I move amendment S2M-889.2, to leave out from "sympathises" to end and insert:

"notes the experience of successful club teams such as Barcelona that are mutually owned and elect their own board of directors to run the club; further notes that some clubs in the English Nationwide League have already chosen this path by setting up supporters' trusts, and believes that public funding should be made available to allow for wider community involvement in the clubs and to co-ordinate the game across Scotland."

14:57

**The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Mr Frank McAveety):** I am probably up front on my own with Tommy Sheridan, which is a surreal experience.

Football is a passionate issue in Scotland and there is no doubt that many of the speeches this afternoon will be about how we address the immediate concerns and economic problems that some of our many clubs have faced during the past few months and which have resulted in the substantial difficulties that four clubs in the SPL are now in.

**The Presiding Officer:** Minister, there are some urgent signs behind you. Your microphone is a bit low.

**Tommy Sheridan:** Behind the play as usual, Frank.

**Mr McAveety:** I am reminded of when Engels said to Karl Marx, "We are getting beaten 5-0; we probably need a revolution pretty soon."

Those who are involved in the debate come to it with a passion and a commitment to addressing the concerns that face clubs. We need to recognise that clubs have responsibility for putting their own financial affairs in order, so that they do not face the meltdown that too many clubs have faced during the past few months. Some of the rigour with which costs—including wage costs and some of the over-commitments that clubs have made—are now being addressed, might concentrate minds.

Our agenda in Scotland should not be about dealing with the immediate issues that face clubs, but about how we grow the game and encourage participation at youth level and across different age ranges. The reality is that in comparison with our European neighbours, including those in Scandinavia, we are very good at encouraging participation up to the age of 18. However, we have not been so good at developing the very best of those young players, to ensure that they can come through the ranks to perform for clubs and—we hope—our national team in years to come. We need to address the dramatic drop-off in adult participation in football.

I welcome the developments of the past few weeks at the SFA on the licensing scheme and I welcome the role that the SPL has played recently—although perhaps belatedly—in addressing the financial situations that have forced clubs to face the consequences of not having followed things through.

The Parliament and the Executive should be asking how they can provide support at grass-roots level to enable a transformation so that the game can be sustainable in the long term and can

allow many of our youngsters to perform at the top level.

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** Nobody has mentioned women's or girls' football. Does the minister recognise the importance of women's and girls' football? Girls' football is currently the fastest growing sport in Scotland. Will the minister ensure that girls and women get the opportunity both to play football and to spectate at women's games?

**Mr McAveety:** That point is well made. There is potential for growth and the increase in young girls' interest in football has been dramatic. We need to support and develop that—acknowledging that we are starting from a low base.

We must ensure that people have access to high-quality football and leisure facilities, to ensure that they can participate beyond school age and on into adulthood. That is why we are committed to ensuring that the active schools programme contains a variety of activities to ensure that young people are active while at school and can keep that going into adulthood, linking into the community clubs agenda.

We are investing in reform. There have been calls today for mutualisation, to which I am not unattracted. However, the fundamental issue is to support the work that Supporters Direct has undertaken in the past couple of years during the crises that many fans have seen their clubs going through. The work of Supporters Direct to encourage many of those fans is genuinely making a difference. I look forward to the annual general meeting in a few weeks' time.

Through our commitment to the football academy in recent years and, more important, through our commitment to the development of national and regional facilities, I am convinced that we have an opportunity to find ways of helping football.

**Tommy Sheridan:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Mr McAveety:** I am conscious that I have only about a minute left. I hope that I can deal with issues when I sum up.

We have to ask what we will do about the development of youth football. Over the past few months, since becoming the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, I have been engaged with the SFA in addressing the review that has been undertaken and in considering the recommendations that we want to make progress on. I categorically assure the Parliament and the wider public in Scotland that we are committed to ensuring that we invest in youth football in Scotland. We believe that we can grow from there.

Part of the investment will require reform in the governing body and its component parts—

including the important elements that Dennis Canavan talked about earlier. That will be a major challenge. Some people will have to face up to that challenge and their responsibilities much more than they have in the past. However, I am determined that our investment in youth football will lead to a radical change in the way that football is run. Individual football clubs and the authorities must be up to the challenge. If we can be more effective in the coming period, I am convinced that the improvements that we already see—in our under-21 football side and in the emerging talent that will come through to the full national side—can be developed much more.

Over the next few years, Scots players—born and bred here—will find themselves much more involved in the clubs—including the old firm. That will help to address many of the concerns that members have expressed over the past few weeks.

15:03

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** I welcome the debate and especially the sensible tone of the motion and the speeches so far. It has been a good example. Members may have different emphases, but on issues such as this we can unite around the main point rather than merely abuse one another.

I was very impressed by the minister's speech. He said all—or rather, a lot of—the right things. Unlike those who are not ministers, he has a problem: he not only has to say the right thing, he has to do the right thing. We will judge him on that.

The two amendments raise some interesting points. This may be a relatively minor point, but it would be worth while having some sort of trial for the licensing of alcohol at sports grounds. That might actually reduce drunkenness as well as help the clubs financially.

As the minister said and as the SSP's amendment suggests, Supporters Direct, mutualisation and co-operatives represent an important way ahead.

There seem to be two main problems. First, when intelligent and careful businessmen get involved in a football club, they lose it and we are now picking up the pieces. We must try to encourage the tycoons who get involved in football to apply their intelligence to the issue rather than to let their hearts rule their heads. Secondly, the fact that sports organisations must be seen to be independent, because of international agreements, means that there is a limit to what we can do to encourage the SFA to act more intelligently than it does at the moment.

We could legitimately use the approach of “no

reform, no money”, because the whole byzantine apparatus that mismanages Scottish football needs to be sorted out. As the minister said, it is particularly important to act on the review of youth football, because that is where the future lies. At the moment, school sports co-ordinators provide liaison between primary and secondary schools, but we need to have the same—or even better—liaison between the secondary schools and the clubs, because the many young people who take part in sport in schools are not flowing through to local clubs. The minister could address that.

We need to emphasise the importance of attracting good people into football and other sports. We want to make it easier and more attractive to become a coach or a club official, as there are many obstacles that prevent people from doing that. As well as providing facilities, which are very important, we must supply the people who will enthuse young people and encourage them to use the facilities.

If we can invest more in facilities and in the people to manage them and attract young people into them, we will greatly reduce antisocial behaviour. I think that it is legitimate to use some of the budgets that are dedicated to sorting out young people to encourage community activity such as sport and culture. Many good things can be done and, as the minister is saying the right things, let us get on and do them.

15:07

**Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP):** I was going to start by saying that I am by no means an expert on football, but hearing Donald Gorrie has made me feel quite knowledgeable about the subject.

I am pleased to be taking part in the debate both as a member with a constituency interest in football, given the plight of Dundee Football Club, and as a health spokesperson. I can see the huge potential of football to improve our nation's health, particularly among young people of both sexes. I will say more about that later.

The situation at Dundee means that all concerned are experiencing a difficult time. I pay tribute to Dundee supporters who have rallied round and raised considerable amounts of money for the club. The Dee 4 Life campaign is hoping to raise enough money to secure the cost of Dundee's youth programme and the wages of the ground staff for the rest of the season and I am sure that we wish it the best of luck in achieving that.

Every encouragement should be given to Dundee and to all the other clubs that are facing difficulties at the moment. However, I see the present crisis as being short term, although I do

not think that we should underestimate the scale of the problem, given that the figures involved are significant. Today we should be focusing on the long term. I do not believe that the public in Dundee or anywhere else would support the use of public money to bail out clubs—to be fair, the clubs have not been demanding that. We need to set Scottish football on the right course for the longer term so that the clubs do not find themselves in a similar crisis in the future.

Part of the debate about the future of Scottish football must be to consider the role of supporters clubs and trusts. We must consider ways of ensuring that supporters have more influence over the game by broadening ownership of clubs. As recommended by Dr Stephen Morrow of the University of Stirling, more emphasis should be put on community ownership, which would help to concentrate efforts on developing grass-roots football.

As has been said, Scottish football must find its appropriate financial level. We need a bottom-up approach, not a top-down one. We need to harness home talent rather than spend huge amounts of money on international players we cannot afford. Scottish clubs cannot compete in the inflated-wages war to attract international players, which is why focusing on home-grown talent makes far more sense. However, to do that, we must invest in grass-roots football, which means not selling off playing fields but keeping them for kids to kick a ball about in. We must develop facilities in communities to encourage young players, which should be linked to, and supported by, Scottish clubs.

Kenny MacAskill talked about the need for restructuring. I countenance that, given that when I looked at the internet last night, it took nine pages to print off the structure of Scottish football. That structure must be honed down because if change is to happen it will require a clear focus. It would be better to have only one body.

There is huge potential for creating health benefits by encouraging more people to play football. Obesity levels among young people have been highlighted yet again today. We must do more to get young people active. Football is an accessible game; it does not require a huge outlay. If we stop selling off playing fields, open spaces will still exist on which people can play football.

Nearly three times as many people play football in Norway as do in Scotland—320,000 people play the game in Norway. Norway achieved that through investment in grass-roots football and getting more people to participate. Yet again, lessons can be learned from our Scandinavian neighbours.

**Mr Monteith:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Shona Robison:** No, thanks. I am going to finish soon.

Politicians cannot dictate what changes should happen in Scottish football, but we can kick-start a national debate and send a clear message to the football community that change is necessary for the long-term good of the game. If we are to avoid future crises at clubs throughout Scotland, we must hope that the national debate will lead to a consensus on the changes that are required to give Scottish football a new lease of life.

15:12

**Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind):** Nearly every speaker has referred to the crisis that is facing Scottish football: virtually every club in the SPL is heavily in debt; three are already in administration; and a fourth has asked its players to take a wage cut. The financial affairs of some clubs are like something straight out of “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland”—the normal rules of business are ignored. It is about time that directors got a reality check. Some have tried to buy a short cut to success by lashing out millions of pounds to import foreign players, some of whom are overpaid mediocre performers who are not delivering. Scottish football, and football in general, is a multinational sport, but the influx of so many foreign players prevents Scottish players from getting a game.

Some clubs do not seem to have anything that resembles a genuine youth development policy. If the Scottish Executive is to put any more public money into football, it must be tied to the provision of community facilities and projects such as football academies that aim to nurture young talent. It is not the Scottish Executive’s job to bail out football clubs that have got themselves into a mess through financial mismanagement.

It is rather ironic that all three of the SPL clubs that are in administration voted against Falkirk’s promotion to the SPL last year, despite the fact that Falkirk should have been promoted on merit as champions of the first division and despite the fact that Falkirk’s finances are much healthier than those of the clubs that vetoed Falkirk’s promotion. That decision was based on self-interest rather than on fair play. I take no pleasure in the misfortunes of any football club, but the SFA and the SPL should ensure that all their members are on a sound financial footing and that promotion is based on merit rather than on spurious criteria that allow the SPL to behave like a closed cartel.

There should also be more opportunity for football fans to have a stake in their club through supporters trusts. Football clubs should not simply

be the playthings of rich businessmen, some of whom have brought once great clubs to the verge of extinction. Football clubs are part of the community and there must therefore be at least an element of community ownership.

I finish on a positive note. On Sunday, I watched my old club, Spartans, playing in the fourth round of the Scottish cup. When I played for the club, way back in the swinging 60s, we had to pay to play, instead of being paid to play. Sometimes we were struggling to get 11 men on the field, and even when we managed that we sometimes struggled to get jerseys and shorts to match. This season, the club, which now runs three senior teams and a youth team, reached the last 16 of the Scottish cup—not exactly a rags-to-riches story, but an example of a wee club aiming high and achieving success on merit. If there were more of the Spartan spirit throughout the game, the future of Scottish football would be much brighter.

15:16

**Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):** It makes a refreshing change to be able to welcome a motion lodged by the Scottish National Party. I welcome the debate principally for two reasons. First, it identifies areas on which the Executive is making progress and, secondly, it addresses concerns that I highlighted in November in a motion on the crisis in Scottish football. That was in the wake of Dundee's going into administration and, although I knew that the situation was serious, I had not imagined that, only a couple of months later, another SPL club would go into administration, with yet another seemingly on the verge.

What makes those experiences particularly painful for fans is that they have few options but to look on while the clubs they love face financial ruin. As someone who was, until this season, a season-ticket holder at Tynecastle, with a long family tradition of supporting Hearts, that has come home to me cruelly. Whatever the financial arguments over the future of Hearts are, the owners of the club are persevering with their plan to sell Tynecastle despite overwhelming opposition from Hearts supporters.

I am pleased, therefore, that the Executive is backing supporters trusts, with a view to getting fans' representatives on boards. I know that colleagues—including Scott Barrie at Dunfermline and Lewis Macdonald at Aberdeen—are involved in individual trusts, and I hope that the future of Scottish football is not one where owners have all the say and fans have no say.

The other area that the Executive has prioritised is the grass-roots development of the game. The

Executive has invested in youth academies, and the Scottish Football Partnership is overseeing £7 million of investment in developing young footballing talent and finding the players of the future who will be vital to our success at international level.

I have been surprised to hear some senior people in the game suggesting that the Executive should intervene directly to help some clubs, when the SFA has made it clear that it does not envisage such a role for itself. That is not to say that we can afford to take a laissez-faire approach. The SPL has announced that clubs in administration will be docked points, but there has to be constructive support too. The Executive has a role to play in reviewing how the governance of the game can better support clubs and the development of the sport more widely, and I look forward to the publication of the SFA review on that issue.

There could be a role for Parliament to contribute ideas for the future and I hope that, in the midst of its busy schedule, the Enterprise and Culture Committee could find time to investigate how all the stakeholders in senior football could work together to help clubs to tackle their financial problems. That includes the communities around clubs and sponsoring organisations such as the Bank of Scotland. I have had a useful meeting with the bank on its involvement in supporting football. The investment that it puts into clubs and communities is hugely welcome. It has insisted in the past that it will not pull the plug on the many clubs that owe it huge debts. I hope that that policy will continue despite the recent events at Livingston, and the apparent pressure that it is putting on the Hearts board to sell Tynecastle. I also hope that it will provide financial advice and guidelines for clubs and help the SFA to engage in more regular financial scrutiny of clubs.

Another proposal to help clubs out of their financial plight is ground sharing, where that is desirable. A number of interesting ideas have emerged in the review published today by the all-party group on football at Westminster.

In short, a team effort is needed to address the problem. What irks most about the crisis is that many fans have been saying for years that it was coming. I hope that, in future, fans will have a say in ensuring that our football clubs do not reach such a crisis again because, although football is a game, it contributes a vital economic and cultural boost to communities throughout Scotland. It is not just the clubs that cannot afford to take no action to ensure a better, more prosperous future for Scottish football.

15:20

**David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands)**

**(Con):** This is a day for nailing colours to masts, or perhaps, in my case, wearing hearts on sleeves, so I begin by declaring an interest as a small shareholder in Heart of Midlothian plc and, like Richard Baker, a devoted fan of the club for many years.

Although our professional football clubs have received public funding in the past for the development of all-seater stadia and other safety measures, as well as for community and youth development activities, that is a different proposition from a taxpayer-financed bail-out to eradicate the £190 million-worth of debt that our Premier League clubs have accumulated to date. Such a bail-out would be quite unacceptable to the body of taxpayers in Scotland, and I am pleased that there has been a broad consensus on that point in the speeches that have been made today.

In the debate, many suggestions have been made as to how we improve and develop the game as well as deal with the present financial crisis. For our part, the Conservatives have suggested one modest step that the Scottish Executive could take by lifting the ban on the sale of alcohol at football grounds, which would enable clubs to increase their revenues on match days. No convincing case has been made for the retention of the ban, which predates all-seater stadia and the greatly improved security arrangements that are now in place, and I welcome Donald Gorrie's expression of support for at least a trial lifting of the ban in a number of stadia. It is incomprehensible to me that police in Northumbria should welcome the fact that refreshment areas in St James' Park in Newcastle sell beer before games as a means of encouraging spectators to come to the ground early and discouraging binge drinking right up to the last minute outside the ground, but our senior police officers throw up their hands in horror at the prospect. Why is it that English football fans are treated like responsible adults in their football grounds whereas we treat our fans like feckless children in ours? There is no sense at all in that.

However, I would be the first to acknowledge that such a measure in itself will not transform the present situation. Each club has to seek its own financial salvation and resolve its problems by working together with its shareholders, supporters and creditors. In that context, we should give fair credit to the Bank of Scotland, which not only sponsors the Scottish Premier League, but has sustained the majority of our professional clubs by allowing generous lines of credit that, I suspect, would not be extended to any other businesses that performed so dismally.

The fact of the matter is that most of our clubs

are seriously undercapitalised. Their principal shareholders are invariably successful businessmen in their own right, with a love of the game and a passion for their team. They are wealthy enough to buy their way into clubs but rarely wealthy enough to pump in the additional equity that is required to stabilise finances. It also seems that, as several members have already said, in their new roles, those shareholders leave behind the business skills that made their fortunes in the first place and rely unduly on tolerant banks approving absurdly optimistic business plans that invariably proceed on the assumption that the sun will always shine and that sources of revenue such as television rights can be relied on to grow exponentially.

I am reminded of the words of Macbeth when he spoke of

"Vaulting ambition, which o'er leaps itself  
And falls on the other."

He could have been speaking about Scottish football today. In truth, our fans have to be prepared to capitalise their clubs by putting their money where their mouths are and subscribing for new shares, and the present owners have to be big enough to surrender control so as to open up the equity base. The survival of many clubs and the overall health of our game will depend on their willingness to do so.

I am pleased to support the amendment in the name of my colleague Jamie McGrigor.

15:24

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

I declare an interest as a director of the finest exponents of Scottish football, Motherwell FC.

I am not in favour of the Parliament bailing out Scottish football. It must stand on its own feet, and I am pleased to say that my club will be moving out of administration in the next eight weeks or so. It has been a hard lesson to learn, but we have learned it, and our overall wage bill is well within the recommended norm that is applied across all other industries.

Karl Marx was mentioned earlier. He stated that religion was the opiate of the masses. Nowadays—possibly sadly—football is the opiate of the masses. It is a tremendous mass attraction, which generates a great deal of passion. Every community is entitled to its own little bit of passion. Football fans do not like the idea of clubs amalgamating. We like to go to Airdrie or wherever and experience a little bit of local rivalry.

I can tell Dennis Canavan that I would have voted for Motherwell to be relegated at the end of last season and for Falkirk to be promoted, because fair play and competition are what football should be all about. Sadly, that did not

come to pass—but, fortunately for us, we were able to take advantage of what happened. We have a youth policy, and we have a supporters trust, which has a representative on the board of directors. That is the way ahead for every club in the country. Clubs will benefit by involving the fans at grass-roots level.

The Conservatives talked about alcohol and football. Yes—why not bring it back in? Well, I doubt whether any of the Conservative members have ever seen the side of a little girl's face ripped off because of some thug in a drunken condition at a football match throwing a half-brick. I witnessed that—Rangers were playing Motherwell at Fir park on that occasion. The poor kid will be scarred for life. Incidents such as the 1980 riots—when mounted police were needed to quell the old firm crowds who were fighting a religious battle that had taken place about 300 years before—have no place in football.

I am quite surprised at the Conservatives wishing to go down that road. For every club from which they might get support, there would be the owners of all the surrounding pubs and hostelrys who would no longer vote for the Tories, because their policy would take their profits away. The police have the right to stop any drunk getting into a football game. If someone is inebriated, they are not allowed access to the game. That is the correct approach.

The state of schools football is at the root of the whole situation. I ask Frank McAveety to encourage the Minister for Education and Young People to encourage schools football to be resurrected. Since the demise of schools football, Scottish football has basically gone down the tubes. We must get back to a good competitive level in schools and bring the kids through. More money must be pumped into communities so that they have facilities for kids to play the game.

Football is a great game because of the great uncertainty. Take Manchester City: the other day, they were 3-0 down to Tottenham Hotspur at half time, and were down to 10 men, but came back to win 4-3. It is a tremendous spectator sport, and I recommend to anyone who has not yet done so to enjoy the benefits of watching football. I have worked in the game for 25 years, and I hear a lot of stories about this, that and the other. I can assure members that it is the greatest game in the world—I will leave it at that.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):** I am afraid that we are behind the clock and must now move to closing speeches. My apologies to those members who have not been called.

15:28

**Colin Fox:** It is always a joy to hear Karl Marx

mentioned in the chamber. Whereas my colleague Mr Swinburne got it right, the minister—typically—got his quote wrong, so it is back to the drawing board for him.

I am encouraged by the fact that several members, including Donald Gorrie and Dennis Canavan, touched on the benefits of mutualisation, an approach involving a broad base of support for football clubs in our communities. In response to Mr McLetchie's remarks, I could not help but recall the words of Lenin—no less—who advised the likes of Mr McLetchie, "You're better getting a kopeck from 1,000 workers than having the backing of one multimillionaire." So have many football clubs found out. That is an illustration that a broad base of support will bring greater dividends in the long run—although "dividends" was probably a word that Lenin was not prone to use very much.

It is perhaps ironic that one of the best illustrations of the success of mutualisation comes from America, which is the land of unrestricted free enterprise. The National Football League contains 28 teams, one of which is the Green Bay Packers, which is mutually owned by 4,624 of its fans. It has proved to be one of the most successful clubs in the league, which shows that there are advantages in having a broad ownership base. Perhaps that answers the question that Scott Barrie asked me about the duopoly that runs the Scottish football scene at the moment

**Rhona Brankin:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Colin Fox:** Sorry, I do not have enough time.

Something else that is of value in the American football league is its draft pick scheme, under which the best up-and-coming young players are allocated each year to the team that had the poorest record in the previous season. The second-best player goes to the second-poorest team, and so on. There is an equalisation of the process. I hope that the minister will consider that scheme.

**Scott Barrie:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Colin Fox:** Just this once.

**Scott Barrie:** The member eulogises about the American set-up, but will he condemn the practice whereby clubs move around the United States willy-nilly at the behest of their owners? Within a season, clubs move from New York to Los Angeles or from Houston to Tennessee, so the set-up is not all good.

**Colin Fox:** I share that point of view, but the problem is not confined to America, as Scott Barrie knows—Wimbledon Football Club moved to Milton Keynes. Fans rightly take a dim view of the



movement of traditions and history to other parts of the world. In all fairness, and as a Motherwell supporter, I would like there to be a system whereby the wealth that the sport creates is spread across football as a whole.

As many members have said, the future of Scottish football rests with our young men and women. If public money is to be invested, it is right for it to be invested in community development of football and in youth and women's football in particular. That is where the future players for the Scotland team and other clubs will come from. I mentioned mutualisation, and I hope that the minister will consider the Green Bay Packers, Barcelona, Northampton Town and Bournemouth. It might not work for every club, but there are lessons for Scottish football to learn from those examples of mutualisation and from football supporters trusts.

15:32

**Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD):** I agree that this has been a good debate. Like David McLetchie and Colin Fox, I will make a confession today: I have been supporting Heart of Midlothian since I was 13 years old. By the way, I moved to Edinburgh when I was 13, so that was my first opportunity to support the club.

I agree with Kenny MacAskill that football is part of the fabric of our communities and I agree with his motion. Much has been said about business involvement in football. I agree with Dennis Canavan, who said that many businessmen are like characters in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland". I ran my own business for a while and I would never have conducted it in the way that business people run football clubs. I made sure of my circumstances before I spent money. Lex Gold has complained that Scottish football has been hit by the loss of television revenues and of revenue from transfers. Surely it would have been prudent for those businessmen to wait and see whether they would get those revenues before they spent them. Many members referred to business people owning and running football clubs; such people must be more responsible.

**Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP):** Does the member share my view that it is ironic that Sky TV has today announced its first dividend in five years while the football clubs in Scotland and England that it used to support are either in administration or close to it? Its revenues have been built up on the back of the football industry.

**Mike Pringle:** I do not disagree with the member. Television companies, along with businessmen, have a responsibility to help not only football but all sports.

I agree with David McLetchie that the sale of

alcohol in clubs could have an impact, but that is not the answer and it is not where we will get the tens of millions of pounds to solve the problem.

The structures are old. Shona Robison referred to the pages that she dug out from a website to obtain some idea of the structure of the SFA, which needs to modernise. She also referred to the destruction of football fields throughout Scotland. As a councillor, I was a member of a planning committee for many years, during which I tried hard, but with little success, to prevent building on playing fields. The Scottish Parliament could seriously examine that. The Executive proposes to review planning law shortly. Perhaps the minister responsible could take on board what members have said about planning today.

**Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green):** Will the member give way?

**Mike Pringle:** I am sorry; I have only four minutes for my speech.

Colin Fox did not have much time to speak and neither do I, but he talked about supporters taking some control of football clubs. *The Scotsman* today contains an article that suggests that SMG is about to sell Heart of Midlothian's debt of £5.5 million for £2 million to an undisclosed group of businessmen. Perhaps SMG could reflect on what has been said today and sell that debt to the Heart of Midlothian supporters trust, so that the supporters can have a direct influence. As a Hearts supporter, I would welcome such a sale, because it would mean that the chief executive and the present board members, who are incompetent, would not have a majority of the shares and that Hearts might be able to stay in the community. The debate is about communities.

I agree with Dennis Canavan's comments about investment in young footballers. We should not bring football players from abroad with vast wages. We need to cultivate our own young players. Colin Fox's idea of a draft pick such as that in American football was good.

I support the motion.

15:37

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I declare an interest, as my two sons are registered players with Livingston Football Club and I am a minority shareholder in Hibernian Football Club.

There is no doubt that football faces a crisis. The problem is not just that teams such as Motherwell, Dundee and Livingston have gone into administration, as many clubs face that spectre. As Dennis Canavan said, another issue is the plight of Falkirk and, possibly, other teams that might be made subject to what I see as a

restriction of trade that prevents their promotion although they have won promotion on merit. That creates a local crisis for clubs.

Problems are also being experienced in recruiting referees at youth and junior levels. Without referees to manage games on the park, football is difficult to realise and make beautiful.

A crisis is also being experienced in schools. Many schools struggle to put together a team, whether that is because few kids come forward or because of a lack of teachers who are willing to run a team. However, evidence exists that schools turn down the help that parents offer, even when those parents have SFA coaching qualifications. I hope to debate with the minister in this parliamentary session the report about youth football, because there is no doubt that if we are to get football right, youth football will be key to change.

I was surprised by the tenor of Kenny MacAskill's speech, much as I welcome his initiating the debate, because the debate's pre-publicity led me to believe that he did not think that politicians should intervene. I picked up from the tone of his speech the idea that although we should not bail clubs out or intervene directly in football, we should use public funds for football as a lever to extract change in football's structure. That is still intervention in my book.

**Mr McNeil:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Mr Monteith:** I am sorry, Duncan—I have no time for an intervention.

Money for youth structures in particular should have no such preconditions.

Dennis Canavan's speech was objective and realistic. The speech was one of the best, if not the best, so far. He examined realistic aspects of what clubs face. David McLetchie brought into the debate the reality of the argument about licensing and the reality of the financial situation.

There are two key issues for football clubs. First, they do not have enough turnover. The turnover of Scottish clubs compared with that of football teams such as even Hull City—which can have gates of more than 20,000—is far too small.

Secondly, teams need more equity. There is no panacea—certainly, municipalisation is no panacea. The idea that supporters can simply buy shares in clubs without having the equity to invest will not change anything. Supporters trusts are good at giving supporters a voice, but they cannot resolve the problems of lack of turnover and lack of funding for investment.

With the SFA, the Executive can certainly help to provide more all-weather, field-grass pitches,

which are crucial for the youth of today. More regional academies are needed—I know that the Executive is doing work in that area. Crucially, however, an indoor, full-size pitch—and perhaps more than one—is needed. Such things have been provided in Norway. We cannot just say about the Norwegians, “They’re Scandinavian and so have a good team.” We must recognise that people in Norway do not play rugby, cricket and other sports to the same level as people in Scotland do, but Norway has invested in indoor full-size pitches.

There is no problem that politicians cannot make worse. Therefore, we should be careful before we meddle with Scottish football.

15:41

**Mr McAveety:** We are being asked to consider ways in which the Executive and the Parliament can raise the importance of our national game; to address many of the critical factors that are involved; and to identify ways in which clubs themselves can remedy their immediate concerns. More important, we should consider how to develop an infrastructure so that clubs can effectively develop players. We are also being asked to consider how we can address the issue of male and female participation in sport—both in schools and when people leave schools and enter adulthood—to ensure that there is a participatory sports culture that includes football and is more equivalent to the culture in other parts of Europe. That is the real challenge that we face.

I noted with interest that David McLetchie quoted from “Macbeth”, which refers to

“a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing.”

I will leave members to judge David McLetchie's contribution. I say to him that I am sorry for lacking grace.

The fundamental problem is how we should address the big issues. We must consider and address the issue of alcohol in the light of the Nicholson report, but alcohol is not the fundamental reason why many large and small clubs are in the position that they are in. It is important this afternoon to signal the real issues that can be addressed. Members of all parties have suggested thoughtful ways in which to address concerns that have been raised recently.

We must link up active schools co-ordinators and community clubs more effectively. That is one of the key strategies that sport 21 and sportscotland have been asked to develop over the next few years.

**Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab):** I had hoped to make a number of points, but I thank the

minister for giving me the opportunity to intervene.

The minister is aware that, prior to its recent difficulties, Livingston FC had engaged quite effectively with the community and community clubs in West Lothian and had presented plans to develop a football academy, which were knocked back by sportscotland. What does the minister intend to do to make it easier for clubs to take advantage of opportunities that exist to develop youth football?

**Mr McAveety:** We are considering the location of sports and football academies. The development that Heart of Midlothian has proposed in west Edinburgh has been seen as one way in which to address needs in that area. Given that much of the contribution to academies needs to come from partnership moneys, perhaps in retrospect and given recent developments, sportscotland took a wise decision on the long-term sustainability of the idea in question.

We need to address the principle that Bristow Muldoon has rightly raised in our development of national and regional sports facilities and to ensure that football clubs see a role in that alongside other sports. Brian Monteith is right to say that Norway has ensured that there are full-size indoor facilities so that its climate does not impact on development.

There is a more important element to our role, which I mentioned earlier. Incredible numbers of young people still participate in football in Scotland, but we do not have ways in which to maximise the best of that talent and to make enough of it come through. Perhaps too many of our clubs exclude opportunities. Norwegian and Brazilian players have been invoked as exemplars of football players, but I am sure that the respective supporters of Rangers and Celtic have identified Flo and Rafael as rather dodgy acquisitions. The total cost of those players was nearly £20 million, which could have been used more effectively for young people.

I will end with three important points. We need to develop the school-adult link much more effectively. We also need to ensure that the loss of any playing fields is looked at by sportscotland and the planning authorities to ensure that an improvement comes from that. I do not have any nostalgia for red blaes or black ash, and anyone who has played on those surfaces will testify to that terrifying experience. They do not engender a capacity for skill; playing on them is about saving energy and injuring your opponent before they injure you. We must improve the range and quality of facilities. I hope that the partnership bids that are coming forward will deal with that over the next few months.

Equally important is the role of leadership, both

at club level and at organisational level. The SFA, as the governing body in Scotland, has a signal responsibility to work effectively with clubs and their affiliates to ensure that Scottish football has a prosperous future and a better structure. The current structure is based on a 20<sup>th</sup> century model of football development, and if there is a request for support from the public purse, it needs to reflect the fact that we are looking to the future and a 21<sup>st</sup> century model of football development. There must be flatter management structures and much more rigour in how clubs conduct their business. Most important, how do we assist clubs in developing young talent and how do we grow the skills that are there, not just in football for young men but, as Rhona Brankin said, in football for young girls? Football at that level has been improving dramatically in recent years and we have a real challenge in continuing that.

With consideration and support, we can genuinely make a difference. The Executive will make its contribution, where appropriate, but football itself has to raise its game.

15:47

**Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** I declare an interest as a season-ticket holder and a lifelong supporter of Dunfermline Athletic. I wish them well this evening—sorry to all the Celtic fans here. Supporters of clubs that are in the situation in which Dunfermline Athletic finds itself do not feel very good, and there are many fans who feel like that in this country today.

I thank everyone who has taken part in today's debate on Scottish football. We may have our individual views on how the current crisis in the professional game has been arrived at—that is as inevitable as it is predictable—but I hoped that today's debate would allow us to achieve some sort of common understanding of the scale of the challenge that is faced and a shared view of some of the strategies and solutions that will need to be developed for Scottish football to survive in the short term and prosper and bloom in the longer term. From that perspective, the debate has been successful. We have recognised the importance of the economic, social and health impacts of football in Scotland, right through from the grass roots to the national team. We have also recognised that a soft landing for troubled clubs through public funding is not a realistic prospect; that structural change is an absolute essential to allow a much more integrated approach to be taken in the governing of the game in Scotland; and that football clubs and their supporters must work together to harness investment in the clubs at both an emotional level and a financial level.

I hope that we have sent a message to lovers of football, and to those who are employed or

involved in the game at whatever level, that we in the Scottish Parliament care about the future of the people's game. The phrase "the people's game" is a powerful and well-used description of the game. Certainly, at youth football level—not just in the schools—and for all the individuals throughout the country who are involved in the game, that description still rings true. Up and down the country, there is a band of dedicated volunteers who organise youth football, whose contribution to the sporting and social life of Scotland is not recognised often enough. We should pay tribute to them, as they are keeping alive the tradition and image of the people's game. In their hands lies the success or otherwise of the game of football in Scotland. They are the ones who require to be supported and nurtured if we are to breathe new life into the professional game and bring greater success to our national teams. That will not happen overnight and, as Kenny MacAskill said, it has got to start from the bottom and work up. In short, we have got to get the basics right and the fundamentals sorted.

Can we still call the game at the top level—the professional level—the people's game? At the very top, some players are paid more in a day than some people earn in a year. Dennis Canavan and Colin Fox alluded to that. Even in provincial clubs in Scotland, top players earn more in a month than the average person earns in a year. Many clubs have moved away from being clubs in the traditional sense. More and more, they are structured as companies that come under various forms of ownership. The professional game has moved a long way from being the people's game.

However, a consistent factor in football is the way in which the fans continue to show a long-term commitment to the clubs that they support—although perhaps not in the same numbers as in the past. That shows that, although the way in which the professional game is run may change, the game means so much to the fans that they will put up with an awful lot. I just hope that the current crisis does not weaken the connection between the clubs and their communities to such an extent that more famous names will be lost to the Scottish professional scene.

It is true that the economic base of Scottish football has changed and that running a football club is complex, but that cannot excuse clubs for consistently spending more than they earn and running up a combined debt of £144 million, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers. In its report, "The PricewaterhouseCoopers Financial Review of Scottish Football – Season 2001/02", PricewaterhouseCoopers stated that five clubs—not including Motherwell, as John Swinburne will know—were technically insolvent. Those were Dundee, Dunfermline, Hearts, Hibs and Livingston. The clubs in a net asset position all

saw their positions worsen due to poor results. As members have said, that has resulted in Motherwell, Dundee and Livingston going into administration because they have not been able to service their debts. How many more will follow?

The choice for some clubs is either to go into administration or to take drastic but inevitable action to force down costs. That has an impact on everyone who is employed by the clubs. That is why our motion states that the Parliament

"sympathises with the backroom and playing staff of those clubs worst affected".

I am surprised that the SSP in particular wanted those words to be removed.

Why has it taken so long for experienced businessmen to act and for the banks to intervene? That question puzzles me. As others have said, perhaps the reason is simply that football is still the people's game and the businessmen and banks are as wrapped up in its emotion and tradition as the ordinary fans are. If that has been the case, I hope that that heady cocktail does not prove too potent for the game to absorb.

I am sure that many club chairmen would cite a variety of reasons—some of which we have heard today—for the perilous state of the game. One reason is the costs associated with the Taylor report. As an individual, I still think that all-seater stadiums were not entirely necessary. Some room should have been made for terracing to allow mass spectator sport at a cheaper level for the fans. Other reasons include the Bosman ruling, the failure of the TV deals and the dash to keep ahead by buying success through inflated wages. There have also been falling attendances, which were in part caused by the product being overpriced for fans. Another reason is the clubs' overexposure to borrowing.

Whatever the reason, the professional game must change drastically if it is to survive. Some traditions may have to be left behind. I finish by quoting a recent article by the University of Stirling's Steven Morrow, who was mentioned earlier. I think that he said it all when he wrote:

"In the current situation there is little merit in blind defence of history or tradition if the consequence is the disappearance of the very thing you are trying to save."

I encourage all members to support the motion at decision time.

## Nuclear Waste

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

The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-890, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on nuclear waste, and three amendments to the motion.

15:53

### **Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP):**

Obviously, we are all aware of the passage of the Energy Bill through Westminster. Much as I would prefer the subject matter of that bill to be dealt with in this legislature, the effect of last week's Sewel motion at least means that this Parliament is aware of what is going on at Westminster. However, other discussions that are taking place at European level will also have a direct impact on nuclear waste management, which has been a matter of great public controversy from time to time in Scotland.

Here are just a few of the matters that are under consideration. The Commission proposes to expand its competence in nuclear safety control. There is a push towards developing deep geological disposal sites. Consideration is being given to approving the transportation of shipments of nuclear waste from one member state to another or on to a third, presumably non-European Union, country. There is discussion about making European Atomic Energy Community money available not just for safety improvements and decommissioning, but for financing new nuclear power stations. Europe is considering not requiring any advance consultation with, or even notification of, local authorities when nuclear waste is transported through local authority areas. Do the Parliament and ministers have a view on any or all of those issues, which are under discussion in Europe?

We may be heading down the road of granting public money to build new nuclear power stations, thereby increasing the production of nuclear waste well before we have a clue about how to handle it—leaving aside other aspects of the debate on domestic nuclear energy. We may end up having the waste schlepped across land and sea to a few as yet undisclosed deep burial sites. However, no one will be informed when that waste is on the move, not even the emergency planners. The little control that we in Scotland have over aspects of the issue may be eroded further.

That is not some theoretical worry. A year ago, a lorry carrying radioactive waste crashed on the Friarton bridge in my constituency. The emergency services knew nothing about the potential dangers until they arrived on the scene.

That rather negates the point of planning for emergencies.

We need to minimise the transportation of nuclear waste. When waste has to be shifted, we need to ensure that the responsible authorities along the route are aware of what is happening. Wherever possible, nuclear waste should be stored and monitored on site and above ground. As burial of waste comes back on to the agenda, surely the history of United Kingdom efforts to find such solutions should alert Scotland to the distinct possibility that we will end up as one of the favoured areas for disposal. We already know that 25 of the 45 proposed sites under consideration in the public domain over a period of years—more than 55 per cent of the total—were in Scotland.

That is before we remind ourselves of the secret list, whose existence is openly acknowledged, even if we are allowed to know only two of the sites on the list: Sellafield and Dounreay. Those who doubt the existence of the list should have a conversation with representatives of Nirex and ask them directly about it. Nirex is honest about the list and equally honest about its inability—at the insistence of the Government—to divulge the details. The list names potential sites for nuclear waste.

I commend Nirex for making huge efforts to repair its reputation with the public. Any contact with Nirex now is a vastly more satisfactory experience than it might have been 10 or 15 years ago. Nirex wants to be able to discuss nuclear waste management in the open and honestly. I suspect that it would much prefer to make the secret list not a secret. However, as long as the list exists, it will fuel suspicion about the current agenda—and rightly so.

The SNP believes that, in the interests of both safety and democracy, it is essential that the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency should have responsibility for the regulation of waste storage and disposal. Currently, we have the nonsensical position that Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate regulates the storage of waste at nuclear sites and SEPA takes over responsibility only when the waste is to be disposed of.

Shifting responsibility for nuclear waste storage to SEPA would provide a more seamless regulatory framework for the handling of nuclear waste and would increase openness and democracy in the system. Such a move would mean that waste storage sites could be subject to public consultations and it would effectively devolve responsibility for nuclear waste storage to the Scottish Parliament. Before any member gets too restive about the fact that this call is coming from the SNP, I inform the chamber that it is not an exclusively nationalist position. In 1999, the

House of Lords Science and Technology Committee recommended exactly the same thing.

The statutory guidance for SEPA for which the motion calls has been promised and is long overdue. Draft statutory guidance for the Environment Agency in England and Wales was produced as long ago as November 2001. We do not need to reinvent the wheel, but the Executive must get moving on the issue. The groundwork has already been done in the England and Wales draft, which refers to a “progressive reduction” of discharges taking

“primacy over other considerations, apart from safety”

and states that

“the unnecessary introduction of radioactivity into the environment is undesirable, even at levels where the doses ... are low.”

In the light of those comments, the Executive’s amendment today is particularly disappointing. It welcomes the “UK strategy for radioactive discharges 2001-2020”, which means accepting, among other things, increased discharges from Sellafield from now until 2012 and beyond and allowing the thermal oxide reprocessing plant to remain open until 2024.

At least the Tories are honest in their open support for the unbridled development of nuclear power, but they show absolutely no concern for the serious issue of how we should deal with the waste produced by the nuclear process. The Green amendment adds to my motion and I will support it if we get there.

Support for the SNP motion will signal the Parliament’s intention to put public safety, openness and democracy above all other considerations in dealing with nuclear waste. The communities of Scotland deserve no less.

I move,

That the Parliament is concerned that policies related to nuclear waste management are being discussed and debated at UK and European level without significant input from Scotland; believes that appropriate statutory guidance for the Scottish Environment Protection Agency on radioactive discharges is urgently required, and considers that decisions regarding the control, management and disposal of nuclear waste material in Scotland should be a matter solely for the Scottish Ministers.

16:00

**The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Allan Wilson):** I thank the SNP for securing the debate. As I said last week when we debated the Sewel motion on the Energy Bill, I am happy to discuss radioactive waste management issues and I welcome the opportunity to do so today. Given the range of issues that were raised during last week’s debate, however, we need to be clear about what we are

discussing.

I made it clear last week—and will do so again today—that radioactive waste management is a devolved matter. Discussions can sometimes lead us into issues relating to nuclear energy, nuclear installations, nuclear safety, security and the transportation of radioactive materials, but all those matters are reserved. I do not intend to revisit the devolution settlement today. It is important for the Parliament to consider those matters for which we are responsible.

In that context, some of the speeches last week, including—dare I say it—Roseanna Cunningham’s, called for a Scotland-wide debate on the best options for dealing with radioactive waste, a call that she repeats today. However, what we heard last week made me realise just how much some people, including the Opposition spokesmen, are unaware of the work that is already going on.

As I said last week, the need to have a national debate—in Scotland and the UK—on how we deal with our long-lived radioactive waste is precisely why we have set up the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management. Members will recall that, in September 2001, we—the UK Government and the devolved Administrations—jointly published the consultation document “Managing Radioactive Waste Safely”. We were then, as we are now, of the view that it is important to work together to identify long-term management options. In response to that consultation, the decision was taken to set up the new independent body to review all radioactive waste management options.

CORWM is an independent committee, jointly appointed by ministers from the UK Government and devolved Administrations at the end of last year, to review options for long-term management of long-lived radioactive waste. CORWM is the product of a partnership between those Administrations. Its remit demands that it operates openly and transparently. It has held its first open meeting this week in London. It will also hold meetings at locations—

**Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** Does the minister accept that, although different bodies, including the one that he mentions, can give advice to the Government, at the end of the day ministers take the decisions? Will he rule out today the prospect of Scotland’s becoming the national depository site for intermediate-level waste?

**Allan Wilson:** The member misunderstands. The point of setting up a body independent of the Government to advise ministers on matters such as the long-term management of nuclear waste is precisely to secure the type of independent advice that we desire. For me to pre-empt the outcome of

that process would be pointless.

I am not clear how our involvement in CORWM shows that there is no significant input to the process from Scotland, as has been claimed. Ministers and officials have been involved in the process from day one. I assure members that CORWM is well aware of the high level of interest and concern in Scotland about radioactive waste. We have made that clear and we will continue to do so.

**Bruce Crawford:** That is not the point.

**Allan Wilson:** I will develop the point. CORWM will shortly present its proposed work plan to ministers for agreement. It will be for all of us—Scottish ministers and our colleagues in Wales, Northern Ireland and the UK Government—to agree jointly to what is proposed. As I said, it would be pointless for me to pre-empt whatever CORWM decides in advance of our ministerial meeting to consider its recommendations.

On the alleged relationship between Nirex and CORWM, we should make it absolutely clear—as CORWM has done—that public and stakeholder engagement is critical to the success, and will be at the core, of the committee's work programme.

If we are to decide the future of radioactive waste in Scotland and the rest of the UK, we must look forward, not back. We must seize the present opportunity to do something positive about the future. However, we cannot achieve that without the full and active involvement of everyone within and outwith the chamber.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Will the minister give way?

**Allan Wilson:** The Presiding Officer is indicating to me that I am in my last minute. I will come back to the member in my closing speech.

We want to ensure that, once CORWM has reviewed the options, it will deliver its recommendations to ministers on its preferred option or combination of options by the end of next year. We also expect SEPA to implement policy changes as a result of any decision on those options, although we acknowledge that some—but by no means all—of those changes might require further guidance from the Executive. If so, guidance will be produced as soon as is reasonably practicable, following consultation with SEPA and others as necessary.

I make it clear that the Executive takes its responsibilities very seriously. However, we also need to recognise that the reserved and devolved aspects of the issue must be handled in such a way that we are able to influence as well as to make decisions.

I move amendment S2M-890.3, to leave out

from “is concerned” to end and insert:

“agrees that the review of options for the long-term management of radioactive waste, currently being undertaken by the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management, is the correct means of engaging Scotland in the debate to find a long-term publicly acceptable solution to the disposal of long-lived radioactive waste and that the Scottish Executive should continue to input into UK, European and international radioactive waste issues and require the Scottish Environment Protection Agency to implement policy such as the *UK Strategy for Radioactive Discharges 2001-2020*.”

16:06

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** I thank Roseanna Cunningham for securing the debate. We need to discuss the issue; indeed, the Conservatives will always be happy to discuss it.

Because we in Scotland must know exactly where we are in relation to nuclear waste, the Conservatives will support the Executive amendment, which ensures a proper and continuous process that will deliver on the country's requirements for disposing of nuclear waste in the long term. I doubt that I will find much support for my amendment, whose purpose is to highlight the crisis facing Scotland's capacity to produce energy, particularly nuclear energy. However, I will move it nonetheless.

The Executive is committed to achieving 40 per cent of electricity generation through renewables by 2020. However, we are gravely concerned by what constantly happens when I and other Conservative members try to elicit information on exactly how the remaining 60 per cent of energy will be generated. For example, when I asked the minister with responsibility for energy, Lewis Macdonald, to tell me what he thought the level of electricity consumption would be in 2020, he said that he did not have any figures for that.

We need to think long and hard about how we will generate the electricity that we require to ensure not just that the lights stay on but that industry has the fuel that it needs to maintain growth. We must also take into account our extremely important commitments to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Indeed, I will concede the importance of those commitments whenever I am asked about them. Nuclear energy has a key role to play in closing the gap, but we have only a short time in which to make decisions on the matter.

That is why the Conservative amendment makes it clear that we not only support the development of the handling of nuclear waste, but believe that the process of replacing our capacity for generating electricity through nuclear energy must begin. We can achieve many positives in that respect. For example, the decommissioning that is being carried out at certain sites in Scotland and

that will expand as other plants are decommissioned—

**Bruce Crawford:** What impact did the closure of Torness for several months last year have on Scotland's industry and economy? Indeed, did anyone really notice that it had been closed down?

**Alex Johnstone:** The member knows as well as I do that some nuclear stations are reaching the end of their capacity and that two major coal-fired stations will terminate production within the timescales that we are discussing. It is critical that we examine the balance of energy that is available to Scottish industry if we are to support its growth.

As for the assumption that building new nuclear power stations will increase the amount of nuclear waste that we have to handle, figures that I have received from British Nuclear Fuels Ltd indicate that replacement of nuclear capacity will dramatically reduce the amount of nuclear waste that is being produced. Significant reductions in both intermediate and low-grade waste are very much achievable.

In my final remarks, I must criticise the SNP for lodging the motion without taking into account our future electricity generation needs in the generation of electricity. I must also to some extent criticise the Labour Party for failing to address the issues and perhaps being misguided into short-term political opportunism by their Liberal Democrat colleagues. I express my support for the Executive amendment, but urge everyone to consider what the future holds if we do not address the issue of nuclear generation capacity.

I move amendment S2M-890.1, to leave out from "is concerned" to end and insert:

"believes that nuclear power capacity is vital in meeting Scotland's future energy needs; recognises technical advances in the handling and disposal of the associated waste materials, and considers that the resolution of nuclear waste issues and the development of new nuclear power capacity can and must run in parallel, as the lengthy commissioning process means that decisions about new nuclear power stations cannot be put off any longer."

16:10

**Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** We in the Green party agree with the thrust of the SNP motion that issues that relate to nuclear waste in Scotland must be determined by Scottish ministers. However, the debate needs to address the core issue: the production of nuclear waste. The first step in managing the hideous legacy of 50 years of nuclear waste is to stop making the stuff in the first place. As the phrase says, "When you're in a hole, stop digging." The nuclear industry is not sustainable under any definition of the term. Any industry that leaves

countless generations with the thankless task of looking after our highly toxic and environmentally damaging waste is almost uniquely unsustainable.

We are talking about geological time. In a quarter of a million years, somebody somewhere will have to factor in the effects of the nuclear waste that our generation is creating today. People can stick their heads in the contaminated Dounreay sand and they can throw public subsidy at the nuclear industry that the renewables sector would die for, but they cannot ignore the laws of physics. The reality is that safe, clean nuclear electricity has turned out to be dirty. As for its being too cheap to meter, that myth has been well and truly debunked. Even when Government bodies have accepted the decommissioning costs and liabilities, the nuclear industry still has not managed to make electricity generation pay. When British Energy went cap in hand to the Government for a handout that would have been illegal for any other industry, it exposed the financial abyss into which the nuclear energy is staring.

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** The member has given the chamber a litany of criticisms of nuclear power. Could he explain why the Green party in Finland has supported the introduction of new nuclear power stations?

**Mr Ruskell:** We are talking about Scotland and we must look at what Scotland needs to do to produce base-load electricity for the future. I argue that, contrary to what the Conservative amendment suggests, we need to start investing in far-market renewables that can take over from base-load energy generation in the future and meet Scotland's electricity needs.

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

**Mr Ruskell:** I am sorry, but I need to move on.

The financial abyss into which the nuclear industry is staring is perhaps the same abyss as the one in which people want to stick the waste. During the early 1990s, Nirex, in its infinite wisdom, dreamed up a plan to bury nuclear waste in an earthquake zone and under an aquifer. Thankfully, the Government gave the plan the thumbs-down. However, we are still waiting for the next crazy suggestion and we are still waiting to find out where the dozen potential target sites are that Roseanna Cunningham mentioned.

Let us face it, nuclear waste has no safe disposal route. The industry has spent millions of pounds of taxpayers' money trying to find a way in which to make the problem go away. Good money has been thrown after bad and the problem is still with us. The waste must be stored in secure facilities, it must be able to withstand terrorist attack and, if necessary, it must be able to be



retrieved for further treatment.

If waste is created at Torness, it must be stored at Torness—likewise at Hunterston, Rosyth and Dounreay. Nuclear power is a job lot; we cannot welcome the jobs that the stations create but turn up our noses at the waste that is generated. Scotland must not become a final resting place for anybody else's waste. Although we have a moral responsibility to look after waste that we produce, there is no case for importing waste.

**Allan Wilson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Mr Ruskell:** Sorry, but I do not have time.

We do not need to rely on fossil fuels or nuclear fission in the future if we invest in far-market renewables today. A combination of hard energy efficiency measures and renewables can provide predictable supplies and offer us clean energy and more long-term employment than the nuclear energy industry has ever done in the past or ever will in the future.

I move amendment S2M-890.4, to insert after "Parliament":

"acknowledges that radioactive nuclear waste for which there is no safe disposal route will remain harmful to human health and the environment for many thousands of years and that responsibility for nuclear waste created by this generation will have to be inherited by countless future generations; considers that the most important step in tackling the growing problem of nuclear waste must be to stop creating the waste in the first instance; believes that Scotland should not accept nuclear waste originating outside Scotland and that waste arising from Scottish civil and military nuclear facilities should remain on the site of the originating facility in secure, monitorable and retrievable storage;"

16:15

**Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD):** Liberal Democrat policy is to phase out nuclear power stations in Scotland. However, we accept that nuclear decommissioning and the storage of waste must be carried out on a UK basis. The debate underlines the key point that no safe method of storing nuclear waste has been found and that remaining nuclear power stations must be decommissioned.

The motion centres on whether Scotland is sufficiently in control of her own destiny on the matter. Policy on the management of radioactive waste is devolved, as are the land-use planning and environmental control regimes for which SEPA is responsible. The UK does not have a policy on the long-term management of radioactive waste, but the process of reviewing the options for waste disposal was initiated in 2001 by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which, with the Scottish Executive and the other devolved Administrations, produced the

consultation paper "Managing Radioactive Waste Safely". Ministers have jointly appointed the new, independent Committee on Radioactive Waste Management to carry forward that process and to prepare recommendations for ministers on a preferred option or combination of options by the end of next year. At that point, it will be for Scottish ministers to decide whether they want to accept or reject those recommendations, following public consultations on the options that are proposed. I see no merit in running a separate and parallel assessment process. However, I hope that the undertaking fares better than previous attempts by bodies such as Nirex to deal with the problem of radioactive waste.

At Westminster, the Energy Bill will establish a nuclear decommissioning authority, which will oversee the decommissioning of public sector nuclear facilities that are owned by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and BNFL. Under the bill, the NDA could operate a disposal site, but such a site could not be located in Scotland without the joint agreement of the secretary of state and Scottish ministers. It is therefore wrong to characterise the NDA as a UK body that could foist nuclear waste on Scotland.

The UK Government is responsible—thankfully—for the liabilities of past nuclear activity, but there is a complex mess of reserved and devolved responsibilities in relation to the issue. The funding of the NDA and decommissioning are reserved matters, as are nuclear installations and sites. Moreover, the NDA will become the owner of such sites and will be wholly funded by the UK Government, but the clean-up process will naturally involve the creation and management of radioactive waste, which is a devolved matter.

**Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):** I am fascinated by the member's list of devolved and reserved powers. What is her answer to this mess, as she characterised it? Is it to bring some of those powers to this Parliament, so that it can take a more strategic view, or is it simply to hand power back to Westminster? That would seem to be a curious position for the Liberals to take.

**Nora Radcliffe:** If the member allows me to continue, I will give my view on that when I sum up.

Any development that requires planning permission at the proposed sites will be a matter for the area's planning authority in the first instance. Scottish ministers have powers to call in and determine planning applications, but only on planning grounds. Defence is a reserved matter, but radioactive waste management policy, its regulation under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993 and planning procedures are devolved matters.

What is important is that policy decisions on the long-term management of radioactive waste still rest with ministers. The NDA will implement decisions, but it will not be able to take a decision on the final disposal route for the waste. In conclusion, although the whole situation is a mess, I support Allan Wilson's position that the Scottish Executive is sufficiently represented and influential in the matter.

16:19

**Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** One of Scotland's oldest nuclear power stations is in my constituency. It was opened in 1959 and at its peak was able to produce 200MW of power. Since the power station opened, it has been a major employer in Annandale and Eskdale. Currently, more than 400 people are employed there, and it also supports a substantial number of local contractors. Although decommissioning will take a number of years, the cessation of production and the gradual dismantling of the site will result in the loss of a significant number of well-paid jobs in the area. Well-paid jobs are not especially easy to find in Annandale and Eskdale.

We have a strong interest in attracting some of the functions of the nuclear decommissioning authority when it is established next year—especially as its establishment will coincide with the cessation of power generation at Chapelcross. Because of the expected job losses and because of the existing expertise of the local work force in nuclear issues, we feel that we are well placed to create a centre of excellence in decommissioning in Annan.

I was pleased that the Scottish National Party scheduled nuclear waste for debate. It is an important issue. I was, however, a little disappointed when I read the text of the motion, because it appeared to relate to constitutional issues. However, Roseanna Cunningham raised a number of legitimate concerns. I do not agree with all of them but it is important that we should discuss them.

The power companies that generate 25 per cent of the UK's electricity through nuclear power are UK companies, and the NDA will operate UK-wide—partly because energy policy is reserved to Westminster. I therefore do not have a particular problem with these issues being discussed on a UK basis.

**Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con):** Mark Ruskell referred to the dangers and the dirtiness of the nuclear industry. In all the years of nuclear operation in Elaine Murray's constituency, were there ever any major accidents? Have there been any major accidents in Scotland?

**Dr Murray:** I was just about to come on to that

point.

Fortunately, there have been no serious incidents at Chapelcross in 45 years. If there had been, Cumbria would probably have been more affected than many parts of Scotland. Similarly, Sellafield—where much of the waste from Scotland goes—is in England but, if there had been a problem there, it might have affected my constituency more than many parts of England. I do not think that the nationalistic argument applies.

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)**  
*rose—*

**Dr Murray:** I am sorry but I have only four minutes.

I am now going to annoy a large number of my coalition colleagues: I am one of those people who believes that nuclear power generation has a future. I believe that the global environment is more seriously threatened by greenhouse gas emissions than it is by the new generation of nuclear reactors that is currently being developed and researched. Of course, I believe that renewables are part of the solution, but I do not believe that they are the whole solution. A 1,000MW advanced passive reactor—1,000MW is five times the power of Chapelcross—would, over a 60-year lifespan, produce something like 2,000m<sup>3</sup> of low-level radioactive waste and about 700m<sup>3</sup> of intermediate-level waste. I therefore believe that we must not close the door on nuclear power.

I have some sympathy for the Tory amendment—although issues arise over who will develop the power capacity that it refers to. There is currently a lack of appetite for investment in power because the power market is poor.

I will not deceive the work force at Chapelcross by saying that next year we can somehow have a brand spanking new nuclear power reactor and that everybody will get a job. However, I think that research can continue and that licensed sites such as Chapelcross would be ideal for such research. People in such areas are sympathetic towards nuclear power. My plea is this: do not close the door on nuclear power, because it will prove to be an essential part of the global energy supply.

16:23

**Campbell Martin (West of Scotland) (SNP):** In his opening remarks, the minister criticised the SNP for straying into areas that he said were reserved to Westminster. As the minister knows, like him, I live close to the Hunterston nuclear power station. I make no apology for referring to matters that a Parliament in London tells me that I should not refer to. I will refer to nuclear energy

because although the community that I live in has grown used to accommodating a nuclear power station, that does not mean that the community is happy to have it on its doorstep.

When the civil nuclear programme was launched in the United Kingdom, we were told that it was a new dawn for Britain and that we would have a bright future. We were told that nuclear power was cheap, clean and safe. At that time, the media were full of good-news stories about how nuclear power would provide cheap electricity for the people of the United Kingdom. The stories were usually illustrated with photographs of bright, shiny children doing their homework in brightly lit rooms that were powered by bright, shiny power stations. However, we should bear it in mind that, at the same time, the Government was telling the people of the United Kingdom that the best way to survive a Soviet nuclear attack was to hide under the kitchen table. If we learn anything from the British Government's propaganda back then, it is that British unionist Governments then were as trustworthy as the British unionist Government is today and that we should perhaps not believe everything that it says about the nuclear industry.

**Phil Gallie:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Campbell Martin:** No, thanks—I have a lot to get through.

The claims that were made for the nuclear industry back then are still made today by people such as the minister's very good friend the Labour MP for Cunninghame North, Mr Brian Wilson. Mr Wilson is very pro-nuclear but conveniently forgets that back in 1987, when he was a mere Labour Party candidate, he supported a resolution that was passed at the Scottish Labour Party conference that called for the mothballing of all nuclear power stations in Scotland.

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

**Campbell Martin:** No, thanks; have a wee seat, pal.

Back then, the pro-nuclear Brian Wilson was anti-nuclear but, back then, so was Tony Blair. That is how much the Labour Party can be trusted.

Let us talk briefly about what the Labour Party said about nuclear power back then. It said that nuclear power was going to be a clean source of energy, but it seems to have overlooked the fact that nuclear power produces toxic waste that contains plutonium, which can stay radioactive for hundreds of thousands of years, so it is not a clean source of energy. The Labour Party also said that nuclear power was going to be cheap but, if it was cheap, surely it would have been able to compete in new Labour's energy market; if it was cheap, surely British Energy would have been

able to compete in the market without having to be bailed out with £650 million of taxpayers' money. That is the amount that was poured into one favoured private company to keep it going.

What is the Government's strategy to deal with the toxic nuclear waste that is produced from supposedly clean nuclear energy? Last year, I asked the minister whether there was

"an acceptable solution for dealing with existing nuclear waste".

The minister's initial response was that he would get back to me as soon as possible, so it is clear that a lot of thought was going into the response. When he finally provided a substantive response, he stated:

"The Executive's policy is that radioactive waste should be disposed of where a disposal route exists."—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 28 July 2003; S2W-1114.]

A hell of a lot of thought went into that answer. I invite the minister to take the opportunity to tell us exactly what the Government plans to do to dispose of our nuclear waste.

When the minister sums up, he could perhaps also indicate the cost to the public purse of the liabilities management authority taking on the financial burden of clearing up nuclear waste, which was estimated to be £48 billion in 2002. What is it now? More public money is going into it. If there is to be no new nuclear build and no new generation from renewable sources at Hunterston, perhaps he can tell the workers at the Hunterston nuclear power site how he intends to guarantee their 400 jobs.

16:28

**David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con):** For the past five years, I have felt that, when the opportunity to speak out in favour of the nuclear industry in the Parliament presents itself, it should be taken by those of us who support the industry.

There is no doubt that nuclear waste is a very serious issue; it is a serious issue that is dealt with by serious political parties. The debate has again shown that within the United Kingdom, and within Scotland, there are only two serious political parties that are willing to engage in a proper discussion on the subject.

**Rob Gibson:** Will the member give way?

**David Mundell:** No—the SNP has chosen the topic of the debate and I want to concentrate on my issues.

As Roseanna Cunningham mentioned, disposal of waste has been examined by the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee, and the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management's review is on-going. In my view,

much of the debate is about the SNP greening itself for what it sees as potential votes rather than about the seriousness of the issue. It is up to the SNP whether it wants to scramble about for that minority vote; we need to concentrate on providing for the energy needs of this country in the future. That will be done only by developing new nuclear power stations.

For once, I was heartened to hear Elaine Murray's comments. I want her to encourage her colleagues within the Labour Party—nationally and here in Scotland—to come off the fence and come down in favour of the nuclear industry. They need to face up to the Liberals in Scotland and tell them what is what, rather than fawn on their policies on renewable energy and foist wind farms on people in rural areas of Scotland. The Labour Party in Scotland should convey clearly to the UK Government that there is support for the nuclear industry, which is needed if we are not to have the blackouts and cuts in supply that have happened elsewhere.

As always in such debates, the SNP takes a pick-and-mix approach to European countries. Of course, as my colleague Brian Monteith alluded to, the one country that is not mentioned in debates about the nuclear industry is Finland, which has come out clearly in favour of nuclear power.

**Mr Ruskell:** Will the member take an intervention?

**David Mundell:** I took an intervention from Mr Ruskell on the issue in a previous debate. The answer to his question then was that, if the Romans had had nuclear energy, they would still be here.

A false impression is often given in the media that the green anti-nuclear agenda has a national consensus behind it—it does not. The case for the nuclear industry deserves to be made. My one criticism of the industry is that it sometimes does not present itself on the front foot, although it needs to do so. If we do not have nuclear power in a decade, people in this country will not be able to enjoy the lifestyles that they have now.

I fear that in the debate and in decisions taken about nuclear waste, people who are anti-nuclear power are using the waste issue in an attempt to delay the commissioning of new nuclear power stations. That is why I call on the Scottish Executive to support what Mr Johnstone and I said in last week's debate and run the two processes in parallel so that we can begin the commissioning of new nuclear power stations, whether they are at Hunterston, Chapelcross or Torness. Let us get on with that work. The lead time for new stations is long and if we delay any further we will only open ourselves up to an energy gap.

16:32

**Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** Given that the debate is about nuclear waste management, SNP members must be well aware of the internationally acclaimed nuclear decommissioning at Dounreay. The policy change from nuclear fuel reprocessing to decommissioning was brought about by partnership working between the UK Labour Government and the Scottish Executive. The main mover was the late Donald Dewar, both as Secretary of State for Scotland and as First Minister.

Ten years ago, I would never have dreamed of standing up in a public place to praise Dounreay's environmental record. Although Dounreay was a welcome provider of high-quality jobs in Caithness, it had a reputation for secrecy and cover-ups of possible leakages from waste pits, particularly the infamous waste shaft. There were cover-ups of the loss of radioactive material and other possible incidents of contamination. In those circumstances, rumours abounded, some of which were justified. However, Dounreay is now a model of nuclear waste management. All waste is to be stored on site. High-level waste is vitrified in a new purpose-built unit; intermediate-level waste is conditioned for long-term safe storage on site; low-level waste is also stored on site; and the new waste receipt, characterisation and supercompaction plant has led to significant advances in managing low-level solid waste.

**Rob Gibson:** Will Maureen Macmillan take an intervention?

**Maureen Macmillan:** I am sorry but I have only three minutes.

The recently opened low-level liquid effluent treatment plant, which replaces a 1950s plant, will also mean lower levels of emission and higher standards of environmental protection.

In the past five years, Dounreay has become an outstanding example of transparency in managing nuclear waste. In fact, it carried out public consultation on how to deal with the infamous waste shaft. The decommissioning programme has already provided 1,000 apprenticeships. Elaine Murray has nothing to fear from decommissioning because it provides many jobs. The expertise that is building up locally in Caithness can be used to decommission other nuclear sites. Caithness's reputation for expertise in technology and the new skills that are being gained are attracting more high-quality firms to the area.

Partnership work with the UK Government has given us, in Dounreay, a first-class example of how to manage nuclear waste. I have no reason to doubt that future radioactive waste management

plans will be any less responsible.

At present, the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management, jointly set up by the Scottish Executive, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and other devolved Administrations, is reviewing the options for dealing with existing waste and waste decommissioning. Its work will be carried out transparently and I associate myself with everything that the minister has said on the matter.

The Energy Bill, which we discussed last week, provides for the establishment of a nuclear decommissioning authority so that there will be necessarily consistent approaches to decommissioning across the UK. The bill recognises the responsibility of the Executive and the Scottish Parliament in that area and provides for joint decisions between Scottish ministers and the secretary of state.

I am content that the Executive and Westminster are putting in place robust standards. If the SNP's motion were passed, it would destabilise that. Safety is what is important. Some of what has been said by the SNP today has been 20 years out of date. We must not jeopardise safety through pre-set ideas.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Sold out!

**Maureen Macmillan:** How dare you?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** We now move to the winding-up speeches. I call Shiona Baird.

16:36

**Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green):** I cannot believe that I am sitting here in 2004 listening to a serious argument to commission more nuclear power stations. Have we learned nothing in the past 50 years? Have we really become more technically adept at storing nuclear waste? There are still far too many unanswered questions—

**Maureen Macmillan:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Shiona Baird:** No.

**Maureen Macmillan:** Has the member ever visited Dounreay?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member is not taking the intervention.

**Shiona Baird:** There are still far too many unanswered questions, an additional list of which we heard from Roseanna Cunningham. Not even the nuclear industry has answered the questions. Dounreay has not even started building its vitrification plant and we are told that burying high-level waste in concrete means downgrading it to

intermediate-level waste, as if changing its name makes it safer.

The UKAEA wants to be able to move liquid radioactive waste from old to new storage tanks but wants to discharge some of the liquid—into the sea, presumably—to maintain space in the tanks for emergencies. Such solutions do not inspire confidence. We look to the Executive to stand by its statement that it will not commission any more nuclear power stations until we are absolutely convinced that the industry has learned how to deal with the waste of the past 50 years.

Nobody has talked about the cost of commissioning new power stations. A figure of £2 billion per station has been mentioned to me. Given the present financial arrangement, we can safely assume that that figure would have doubled by the time any station was completed. That does not even take into account the £3.3 billion of taxpayers' money that the Government has given to British Energy to help it to comply with its decommissioning and waste management responsibilities. How can Alex Johnstone and others in the chamber seriously defend such a bankrupt business and propose burdening the taxpayers of Scotland with even more waste?

Brian Monteith ought to get his facts correct. The Finnish Greens left the Government on 26 May 2002 due to the vote in Parliament two days earlier in favour of the new nuclear power station. I hope that the Liberal Democrats will take similarly principled action if such a decision ever has to be made in Scotland. I was a bit concerned to see Allan Wilson nodding rather too often at comments that were made by the Conservatives. We will need to watch that situation.

Mark Ruskell is right: members should get their heads out of the contaminated Dounreay sand and get back to the real world. The huge legacy of nuclear waste that Scotland already has is surely more than enough for future generations to deal with.

We admit that we have an energy gap and believe that we must work on filling that gap with a variety of measures that do not include the totally unsustainable and polluting nuclear power industry. That is another debate, of course, but I ask members to imagine what the renewable energy companies would say if they were given £5 billion to advance their businesses. We would certainly welcome that sort of initiative.

Today, we must concentrate on ensuring that we manage our own waste and decommission our own nuclear submarines, not anyone else's. Scottish ministers must retain direct responsibility for all nuclear waste management issues in Scotland. That area is devolved, and we must at least not abdicate that responsibility to others.

The Greens will support the Scottish National Party motion as amended by our amendment, which addresses the real core issues.

16:40

**Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD):** You will excuse me, Presiding Officer: I thought that the debate was about nuclear waste, but it seems to have become about nuclear energy. It is important that we take the issue seriously because no matter what one's personal position is on nuclear electricity generation, we have a legacy of nuclear waste that must be dealt with, and it must be dealt with seriously. We cannot bury our heads in the sand and try to pretend that it is somebody else's problem, because it is our problem.

It is not a problem that my generation wished to have. My generation did not make the decisions to have a nuclear industry and a nuclear-waste legacy, but it is left with the problem of how to deal with that legacy and it will have to pass some of that liability on to future generations because of the nature of the nuclear industry. That means that we cannot get rid of nuclear waste overnight—it will take generations.

I say to Roseanna Cunningham that it is easy to make comments about Sellafield and why it should be closed down immediately, but I have visited Sellafield—

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I did not say that.

**Iain Smith:** I am sorry. The point that Roseanna Cunningham made was that Sellafield was increasing its contamination, but it is not doing that; rather, it is making efforts to reduce the amount of contamination that it causes. However, it has to continue to carry out some of its processes; it cannot stop the Magnox reprocessing procedure, which is the major cause of the contamination that comes from Sellafield, because the Magnox fuel that has to be reprocessed from British nuclear power stations is in an unsafe state and must be reprocessed to make it safe for future storage. Unfortunately, we are left with that process, which will carry on until, I think, 2012, when the final Magnox fuel is reprocessed.

However, I have more concerns about Sellafield's role as an international depository for waste and reprocessing. It is time that the British Government got off the fence and made a decision on whether that should come to a stop, as most of us feel that it should, or whether it will allow British Nuclear Fuels Ltd and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to continue to tout abroad for reprocessing business.

The decision that we have to take in Scotland is how we want to deal with the problem. The SNP

seems to suggest that nuclear waste should become entirely the Scottish Parliament's responsibility, but I would not welcome that. I do not wish the Scottish Parliament to become responsible for the decommissioning of Torness, Hunterston, Chapelcross and Dounreay. Why should we become responsible for that decommissioning process when the fact that we have those liabilities in Scotland is part of a United Kingdom energy policy? Those liabilities have to be part of United Kingdom policy, although the Scottish Parliament obviously must have a role in considering our concerns about where nuclear waste is stored and ends up. That is why the Scottish ministers must be involved in the final decisions and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency must be involved in the key decisions.

I remember campaigning against Torness 20 years ago, fresh-faced youth that I may have been. Perhaps it was not 20 years ago; perhaps it was longer. I was not against nuclear energy per se: I was against it because it had not been proved to be 100 per cent safe—since Torness was built, there have been nuclear accidents in the world; because the costs of decommissioning had not been sorted out and nobody had worked out how to decommission; and because dealing with nuclear waste had not been sorted out.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** That has still not been sorted out.

**Iain Smith:** I agree with Roseanna Cunningham and ask her to let me finish my point.

I say to the Conservatives that the problem is that those issues have still not been resolved. That is why I remain opposed to new nuclear power stations and why the Liberal Democrats believe that nuclear power stations that are reaching the end of their natural lives should be decommissioned.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)** *rose—*

**Iain Smith:** I cannot give way because I am into my concluding comments.

Existing nuclear power stations should be decommissioned so that the waste can be dealt with and there should be no new nuclear power stations unless and until a long-term solution to the problem of nuclear waste has been found. To date, no such solution has been found.

16:44

**John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** Today, Parliament has once again divided into two groups: the realists and the rest, as David Mundell has said. Of course, there are varying degrees of reality and unreality, and the spectrum ranges from those of us who want a secure future energy policy, to those who want to take us back to the dark ages,

namely the Greens, the SNP, the Scottish Socialist Party and the Liberal Democrats.

Parliament has divided in debate, and will do so at decision time, into those who accept that decisions need to be made now in order to secure our future energy supplies, and those who are prepared to gamble on renewable energy meeting most of our future energy needs. The matter is largely to do with the issue of nuclear waste. We need to consider closely the issues around this material, which is stopping realistic decision making, as Roseanna Cunningham pointed out. The minister pointed out that CORWM is addressing those issues, which is the correct way forward.

We must accept that nuclear electricity generation is in many ways one of the most sustainable forms of energy production. First, it produces no greenhouse gases. Secondly, 97 per cent of nuclear fuel can be reprocessed and reused as nuclear fuel, with only 3 per cent becoming waste after reprocessing. Although today's debate is about nuclear waste, we ignore at our peril the lack of decision making on energy supplies. Everyone here agrees that, in an ideal world, 40 per cent of Scotland's electricity would be generated from renewable sources by 2020. That is the world that Mark Ruskell lives in, with far-market renewables. We do not live in an ideal world, however. It is now 2004, and it is looking less and less likely that we will produce 40 per cent of our energy requirements from renewables by 2020, whatever the Executive says.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** Will Mr Scott take an intervention?

**John Scott:** I have only a very short time.

**Stewart Stevenson:** It will be a very short question and answer. Can the member tell us how much it would cost to decommission the nuclear power stations in Scotland?

**John Scott:** I have no idea whatever, but I am perfectly content that the way in which Dounreay has been decommissioned—properly and well—will also apply in due course to the other power stations in Scotland. The Executive and the Government need to take hard and binding decisions now about the other 60 per cent of our generating capacity, as Alex Johnstone said. Currently, most of Scotland's power comes from six plants: two coal-fired plants, one gas-fired power station and three nuclear power stations. The coal-fired plants have a life expectancy of less than 20 years, and there are no plans to replace their capacity. The gas plant has a modest 30 years left, but gas is running out and it is getting more expensive. Our three nuclear power stations are licensed until 2005, 2011 and 2023 respectively, with no plans to replace them. In

addition, we currently export 50 per cent of our generating capacity to England, Wales and Ireland, but we will soon become net importers of electricity, unless we start making plans now to avoid that.

The Conservative position is that we should start making decisions now to stop the lights going out in future, as has already happened in California—I note that Campbell Martin appears to be unconcerned by that prospect. We must replace current nuclear generating capacity with new nuclear generating capacity, and we should start at Chapelcross. We must accept that, in environmental terms, safe storage of small amounts of nuclear waste is more sustainable than emitting huge amounts of greenhouse gases from fossil-fuel power stations. As Brian Monteith pointed out, that is recognised in Finland by parties other than the Greens.

We have to accept that we cannot have omelettes without breaking eggs, and that renewable energy, as the technology currently stands, is still little more than a pipe dream supported by an inadequate grid system. Although we wish its development well, its future contribution should be regarded as a bonus, rather than as something on which we have to depend as we allow our traditional generating capacity to decline. For those reasons, we cannot support the SNP motion or the Green amendment. I urge members to support our amendment.

16:49

**Allan Wilson:** Let me begin by being clear: for all the issues that have been raised today—Nirex, the NDA, the storage of submarines and so on—if the problem is waste, then the answer is CORWM. CORWM, which will report to the Scottish ministers, is the body that will make recommendations about how we deal with the problem of waste to us and to ministers in other Administrations in the UK. CORWM represents a fresh start and a new approach to tackling the legacy or long-term management of radioactive waste.

We have stressed the importance that we place on that committee's independence and on the need for it to engage transparently with the public. CORWM is tasked with reviewing a range of options for long-term management of radioactive waste in order to achieve long-term protection for people and the environment. Deep geological disposal, which was the sole focus of the Nirex research, is only one of the options to be considered.

As we have stated previously, CORWM will recommend the best option, or combination of options, to adopt; it is about the how rather than

the where. Some members have speculated that those issues are somehow linked in a grand conspiracy whose ultimate design is the dumping of radioactive waste at a predetermined location here in Scotland. That is simply not true; it is a myth and a fabrication.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Does the minister support disclosure of the 12 sites that are contained in the list that is held by Nirex, but which it is not allowed to disclose to the public?

**Allan Wilson:** Why? Would disclosure give the member another headline in the *Daily Record*? What difference would disclosure make? What point does the document have any more? It is an historical document that has no bearing whatever on the new and transparent process that I have described. I have no interest in giving the member headlines in the *Daily Record* or in repeating scare stories that the SNP will use to scare the electorate.

To turn to the amendments, I assure Shiona Baird that I have not been seduced by the Conservatives' superficially attractive amendment: I do not support it. The nats laughed when Nora Radcliffe said that the situation is a mess, but the truth is that it is the nationalists' policy that is a mess. The Greens are at least honest—their amendment says that we should stop creating waste in the first instance. They want to close Hunterston B and Torness, and I was interested to hear Roseanna Cunningham say that she will support that proposition. I will be equally interested to see the outcome of the vote.

As Conservative members have mentioned, we often hear the nats talk about Finland and Scandinavia—indeed, we heard that in the previous debate, when we were talking about football. However, they do not talk about Finland in this context, perhaps because that small, independent nation on the northern fringe of Europe recently took a decision to choose nuclear new build. Why did it do so? It did so for environmental reasons. Let us be absolutely clear about the matter; Scotland is a substantial exporter not only of nuclear energy, in the form of electricity, but of nuclear waste.

**Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

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

**Allan Wilson:** The SNP says that it is Scotland's waste—that phrase has shades of "Scotland's oil"—and that it should be dealt with in Scotland. By definition, therefore, the SNP advocates the establishment of nuclear storage facilities in Scotland, but it is not clear whether that storage would be on site or underground.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** We have always said that.

**Allan Wilson:** Is the member also saying that we should repatriate our waste that is currently in England? Clearly, on-site storage has security implications: if that is the SNP's favoured solution for Scotland's waste, is it really saying that it would prefer Scotland's waste to be stored over-ground here rather than underground in England? Is that what the member is telling me and the people of Scotland? On the other hand, if the SNP wants to put the waste underground, that represents a massive or—dare I say it—a seismic shift in SNP policy. Who knows, perhaps the geology of Perthshire will be suitable for such a storage facility.

We in the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats see this as a UK-wide issue. Unlike the SNP, we are committed to the facilities being located in Scotland if that is the best answer for the UK as a whole. Indeed, the SNP's new-found determination that Scotland must have its own nuclear waste facilities represents a good illustration of how narrow nationalist thinking leads to unnecessary narrow nationalist conclusions.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Rob Gibson, who has a tight seven minutes for his speech.

16:55

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** The basic principle of the SNP's policy has never changed—if waste is produced in Scotland, we will look after it and store it here safely above ground in monitorable storage. Until the situation changes, we will follow that policy.

**Iain Smith:** Will the member give way?

**Rob Gibson:** No, thank you.

The public's second-greatest fear about environmental issues concerns what happens to nuclear waste and nuclear installations. The debate has given us no hope that the Government will dispel that fear, because it is leaving many decisions to other people.

Roseanna Cunningham introduced the subject by saying that many issues that are being discussed in Europe could affect Scotland, but the minister did not deal with one of those issues. He did not address European matters such as—I will repeat them—the possibility of the European Commission's having competence over nuclear safety control, possible deep geological disposal, transportation of nuclear waste shipments between member states, Euratom money to build new nuclear power stations, and not requiring advance consultation of local authorities on waste transportation. The fact that the minister



addressed none of those issues makes it obvious why people are frightened about nuclear waste to this day.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats have supported keeping local authorities in the dark on those matters. In a debate about waste transportation, a majority of members of the European Parliament voted against an amendment by the Greens and the European Free Alliance that proposed that local authorities should be told about nuclear waste that is transported through their areas.

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

**Rob Gibson:** No, thank you.

Labour and Liberal Democrat representatives in the European Parliament voted with their blocks against that proposal. That shows members how much they want people to know about what happens with nuclear waste.

Highland Council has asked the Government and nuclear authorities time and again to provide information about waste transportation. I gave evidence as a teachers' representative in earlier discussions about Nirex, so I know that teachers have considerable concerns because the roads and railways that take waste from Dounreay to the south pass close to the majority of children who are educated in the Highlands. The local authority is not allowed to know that information. Perhaps the police might be allowed to know, but the minister's refusal to provide that information and the refusal of his party and his Executive partners to vote in Europe for its provision show how much they care about our local authorities. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Order. Far too many private conversations are going on.

**Rob Gibson:** The SNP has the ambition to tackle nuclear waste in Scotland. As I said at the outset, we believe that we should deal here with the waste that is here. SEPA's powers need to be expanded: there was the opportunity to deal with that in the debate on the Energy Bill, but the Executive lacked the ambition to deal with such matters in Scotland.

Many parts of the country have a clean image and we have fragile economies. The last thing we need is the potential for more nuclear accidents. That is why we lodged the motion and that is why we want to take responsibility for nuclear waste here in Scotland.

I will deal with the Tories' amendment. The Tories have worked on all the arguments about nuclear power for many years—at least they have been consistent. However, I point out that Nirex made a mess of dealing with nuclear waste in the

Tory years. The Tory spokesman did not know how much it would cost to clear up nuclear power stations. Surely such facts should be known before any more stations are created.

**John Scott rose—**

**Rob Gibson:** I am not taking any interventions.

The energy output of Chapelcross nuclear power station can now be supplied by a simple wind farm.

The fact is that much of what the Tories say is completely beyond the pale for most people in Scotland because most people in Scotland want us to use energy wisely and not to create more waste and more problems in future. Twenty years were wasted by the Tories in respect of progressing the development of wave power. Dr Salter's ducks, which were being investigated more than 20 years ago, were lost. He said in debates about renewable energy only two years ago that 20 years of expertise in renewables were lost while Governments in London fiddled the figures relating to his experiments. The Tories were responsible for that.

The Government says that it wants transparency and openness. Large numbers of consultations are taking place that the public are finding it difficult to respond to. If environmental principles had been written into the UK Energy Bill—which is at the root of much of the debate—that would have made it much easier for the public to respond to the consultations.

The Executive has failed to ensure that the people of Scotland have a clear picture of what is going on and it has failed to be ambitious in dealing with waste that is here, which is why the SNP lodged its motion. We ask members to reject the Government's and the Tories' amendments because we believe that, fundamentally, we must create excellence and jobs that export technology but do not import waste, and that decisions should be made in Scotland, where they deserve to be made.

## Business Motions

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is consideration of business motions. Motion S2M-906, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, sets out a revised programme for tomorrow's business.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the following revision to the programme of business for Thursday 12 February 2004—  
after,

9.30 am                      Procedures Committee Debate on its 2nd Report 2003 (Session 2): Oral Questions in the Chamber; on its 1st Report 2004: Oral Questions and Time in the Chamber; and on its 2nd Report 2004: Emergency Bills

insert,

*followed by*                      Motion on Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Bill – UK Legislation

and after,

2.30 pm                      Question Time

delete,

3.10 pm                      Stage 3 of the Budget (Scotland) Bill

*followed by*                      Motion on Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Bill – UK Legislation

and insert,

3.10 pm                      Ministerial Statement on Common Agricultural Policy Reform

*followed by*                      Stage 3 of the Budget (Scotland) Bill—[*Patricia Ferguson.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The second business motion is S2M-898, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a business programme for 25 February and 26 February.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Wednesday 25 February 2004

2.30 pm                      Time for Reflection

*followed by*                      Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by*                      Stage 1 Debate on the Criminal Procedure (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill

*followed by*                      Financial Resolution in respect of the Criminal Procedure (Amendment)

(Scotland) Bill

*followed by*                      Business Motion

*followed by*                      Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm                      Decision Time

*followed by*                      Members' Business

Thursday 26 February 2004

9.30 am                      Executive Debate on a Better Deal for Young People

12 noon                      First Minister's Question Time

2.30 pm                      Question Time

3.10 pm                      Executive Debate on Building and Supporting the NHS Workforce

*followed by*                      Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm                      Decision Time

*followed by*                      Members' Business

and (b) that consideration of the Tenements (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be completed by 3 June 2004.—[*Patricia Ferguson.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:02

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S2M-899, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the designation of a lead committee. The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Prohibition of Smoking in Regulated Areas (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.—[*Patricia Ferguson.*]

## Decision Time

17:03

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** There are eight questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that, in relation to this afternoon's debate on nuclear waste, if amendment S2M-890.3, in the name of Allan Wilson, is agreed to, amendment S2M-890.1, in the name of Alex Johnstone, and amendment S2M-890.4, in the name of Mark Ruskell, will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S2M-889.1, in the name of Jamie McGrigor, which seeks to amend motion S2M-889, in the name of Kenny MacAskill, on the future of Scottish football, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

### FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)

### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Baker, 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)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 16, Against 96, Abstentions 1.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The second question is, that amendment S2M-889.2, in the name of Colin Fox, which seeks to amend motion S2M-889, in the name of Kenny MacAskill, on the future of Scottish football, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 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)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, 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)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)

Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 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)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 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, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 13, Against 101, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The third question is, that motion S2M-889, in the name of Kenny MacAskill, on the future of Scottish football, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**FOR**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Baker, 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)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)

McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 99, Against 15, Abstentions 0.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament notes the crisis faced by Scottish football; recognises football's significant contribution and potential impact in terms of its economic, social and health benefits and its role in our culture and identity; sympathises with the backroom and playing staff of those clubs worst affected; calls on professional football clubs to work with their supporters to harness the emotional and financial investment they make in their clubs; calls on the football

authorities and clubs to ensure better business planning and financial management; believes that public funding for the game is essential but not the bail out of individual clubs; welcomes current and proposed financial support from the Scottish Executive but calls for such support to be matched by structural change; calls for the Scottish Football Association (SFA) to be a more integrated governing body for the game; calls for a review of the professional league structure in Scotland and the criteria for membership, and further calls for the SFA to regulate and develop participation by all ages and at all levels from grassroots in the community through to the national team.

**The Presiding Officer:** The fourth question is, that amendment S2M-890.3, in the name of Allan Wilson, which seeks to amend motion S2M-890, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on nuclear waste, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, 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)  
 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)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 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)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 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)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 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)  
 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, 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)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 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, 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)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 77, Against 37, Abstentions 1.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The amendments in the name of Alex Johnstone and Mark Ruskell fall.

The fifth question is, that motion S2M-890, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on nuclear waste, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, 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)  
 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)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marilyn (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)  
 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)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 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)

Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 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)  
 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, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
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 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 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, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
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 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 78, Against 37, Abstentions 0.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the review of options for the long-term management of radioactive waste, currently being undertaken by the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management, is the correct means of engaging Scotland in the debate to find a long-term publicly acceptable solution to the disposal of long-lived radioactive waste and that the Scottish Executive should continue to input into UK, European and international radioactive waste issues and require the Scottish Environment Protection Agency to implement policy such as the *UK Strategy for Radioactive Discharges 2001-2020*.

**The Presiding Officer:** The sixth question is, that motion S2M-899, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Prohibition of Smoking in Regulated Areas (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.



## VisitScotland (Tourist Information)

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

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-847, in the name of Nora Radcliffe, on VisitScotland tourist information. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

I invite those members who are thinking of leaving the chamber to leave now and to do so as quickly and quietly as possible.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament notes the criticisms from the tourism industry about the performance and operation of the visitscotland.com website; in particular, notes the concerns among some operators about the negative impact the website is having on their custom due to technical problems with the site, the high cost of subscription, the apparent lack of reliable information in some instances and the cost in lost tourism; recognises how important tourism is to the Scottish economy, and therefore considers that the Scottish Executive and VisitScotland must ensure that these problems are resolved ahead of the 2004 tourist season.

17:10

**Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD):** I thank all those colleagues whose support for my motion has enabled it to be debated this evening. I also thank the many people who have posted contributions on the interactive discussion board on the Parliament's website. An amazing number of people have contributed. That will all be taken into account in the final analysis.

I lodged the motion because tourism providers in my area made representations to me that they were unhappy about the quality of service that visitscotland.com was providing for them and, much more important, for their potential customers. At the outset, let me make it clear that I am wholly in favour of visitscotland.com. Providing a one-stop shop for people who are thinking about, or planning, a visit to Scotland is the right way to go. However, if we are to have a single point of entry, it is essential that the website work and that it work well. The website needs to offer comprehensive and accurate information and an efficient service.

The danger in falling short is that, if the website loses or fails to gain the confidence of the trade, it will not be able to provide what it was set up to deliver. The comprehensive and integrated service that was planned will be fragmented as people become so frustrated that they go off and do their own thing. Given the ambitious nature of the project, it was hardly surprising that there were teething troubles. A wide and complex range of information had to be put together and the work

force had to be trained to become competent in finding their way round all the information and in communicating it appropriately to callers.

What worries me is that visitscotland.com still seems to have more problems, less accuracy and less efficiency than it should have. The consequences of that are of deep concern for an industry that is an extremely important part of our economy and which still has significant potential for growth. The obvious consequence is that if would-be visitors cannot readily find what they want, they will not come. Alternatively, they may still come without getting the information on all the options that are open to them. That will make their visit a poorer experience than it might have been, with loss of trade for all those providers that they did not get to know about.

I hope that tonight's debate will be seen as a positive move to try to air some of the problems so that they can be recognised and dealt with. For the debate, I am operating on the basis of the notices that are sometimes seen in shops and restaurants, which say, "If we've given good service, tell all your friends. If we haven't, tell us." Tonight, I hope that we will tell visitscotland.com about its service, so that it can sort out the problems.

**Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con):** I am grateful to Nora Radcliffe for initiating tonight's debate, but given the fact that members from the south and south-west of Scotland tried to bring the same concerns before the Parliament a year ago—I suspect that they would have said then what other members will say tonight—can Nora Radcliffe have any assurance that the justified concerns that she has highlighted will be paid any attention by visitscotland.com? That has certainly not happened over the past year.

**Nora Radcliffe:** I hope that everybody can live and learn. There are hopeful signs in the improvements that have taken place even in the past year. When I first started to deal with the issue some time ago, the problems were very much worse than they are now. I am concerned that the problems are not a lot better, but we are moving in the right direction. I am an eternal optimist.

That said, one of the most worrying problems that has been drawn to my attention is that America Online users get thrown off when they log on to the visitscotland.com site. AOL is the world's largest internet service provider, so there must be a degree of urgency in re-establishing access for AOL's 35 million users, especially given the fact that there are so many AOL users in North America, which is our biggest overseas market. Earlier today, I was told that the situation is well on the way to being resolved. That is very good news. However, the fact that it has taken six months to identify and rectify the problem is not so good.

On the site, there are several options for information in a foreign language, which are accessed by clicking on the flag of the country concerned. That takes visitors to one page in their native language, which is a nice gesture. However, as soon as they look for more detailed information they are moved back into English. A business acquaintance once said to me that the Germans sell in English but buy in German. I appreciate that a great deal of work would be involved in extending the language choice further, but it would pay dividends.

I have received heaps of messages, both positive and negative, in connection with this debate. Perhaps it is easiest to let people speak for themselves. My first quotation is quite positive. The message states:

"I can't comment on the accommodation booking service since I have not used it, nor am I a hotelier. But the VisitScotland site in general is fabulous in terms of tourist information and showcasing Scotland. I can't see why people are critical. It is ten times better than the old Visit Scotland site and, frankly, it's also much better than the Scottish Parliament's—in terms of visual appeal certainly."

**Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** What the member has just said shows that part of the problem is that people do not distinguish between the VisitScotland site and the visitscotland.com site. The visitscotland.com site is a commercial site, run on commercial lines. It is not a tourist information site, but a booking service. That has caused a lot of confusion among users in my part of the world.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Before you respond, I point out that the clock has gone a bit haywire. You have a minute left, but I will allow you a minute and a half.

**Nora Radcliffe:** I had better crack on. Perhaps I should miss out the message that said:

"most MSPs own web sites, if they have one at all, are an embarrassment."

I have received more messages along the lines of the next one, which states:

"We live in Falkirk and often like to travel around Scotland for skiing or walking. On one recent trip we attempted to book accommodation, and only when confirming directions did we discover the B&B was in Torridon, not near Elgin as the website showed. You can imagine that both the hotelier and myself were furious but relieved to have avoided a wasted 4 hour journey."

Other negative comments relate to restaurants. One message states:

"Restaurants are not comprehensively listed because the company requires payment for listings. This gives potential visitors the impression that there are few places to eat. Types of food that can be searched for are bizarre, including items like 'general' & 'serving' and are not defined. Searching for 'Scottish food' returns few establishments, for instance."

On skiing, one message states:

"They have recently changed the whole site, with no warning to ski operators or the industry. This left the centres unable to update weather conditions and many of us unable to access the site at all. Worse still, the information was extremely inaccurate for a period. The site is still only half finished with links not working and the accommodation listings incomplete."

Another person said:

"visitscotland.com should design their website so that the CONSUMERS can choose how they want to contact accommodation providers, not try to drive them to use the call centre against their wishes."

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Please start to wind up.

**Nora Radcliffe:** Certainly. I want to make only two more points.

The call centre operates from 8 am to 8 pm United Kingdom time, which is 3 am to 3 pm in Boston and midnight to noon in Los Angeles.

I am sure that the company will take note of what is said this evening. I will anonymise and forward all the e-mails that I have received to both the company and the minister. The minister is here to listen. I hope that the information that is flushed out this evening will be used to move matters forward to everyone's benefit and satisfaction.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I always try to indulge the member who has lodged the motion for members' business. The debate is heavily subscribed, so speeches will be limited to three minutes.

17:19

**Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP):** As is customary, I congratulate the member on securing the debate. It is particularly appropriate, because it is important to have tourism on the agenda. Tourism is an industry that has been beleaguered, often for reasons outwith its control, such as foot and mouth and 9/11. It is on record as being Scotland's biggest industry and spans a substantial part of our country geographically and of our people individually. The website, visitscotland.com, is one aspect of the industry. It is of significant interest to many big hoteliers and, it must be said, of significant concern to many small operators.

I agree absolutely with Nora Radcliffe that there should be an e-tourism portal for Scotland. We are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To some extent, the internet is the medium of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and we must use it. Should the e-tourism portal have been designed by the private sector? Absolutely: Project Ossian was not working and clearly the best people to design it were those with the expertise to do so. Should the e-tourism portal be owned and

operated by the private sector? Absolutely not: I disagree with the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

I appreciate that the matter was not in the control of the current minister, but it is a matter of regret that it was driven ideologically by the Executive. No alternative was given to VisitScotland to consider the matter in another way. What we did was to sell out the e-tourism portal to the highest bidder. Having done so, we now find ourselves in the position that we are in today. There are those who suggest that we should sell off the e-tourism portal and start again, but that is blue-sky thinking. In the interim, we must try to resolve the problem in the interests of all.

We must give credit where credit is due, despite the difficulties that many small operators, in particular, are having with [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com). My experience is that, even if [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) staff are unable to explain all of the difficulties, they go out of their way to clarify [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com)'s position and where it is coming from. Although that might not satisfy people, at least the effort and endeavour are being made. I noticed that in dealings that I had on matters that included English as a foreign language.

We must ensure that matters are addressed. Nora Radcliffe raised the problems that relate to AOL, which must be dealt with. We must also address other matters to allay the worries and fears of small operators in particular. I am thinking not only of the small operators in rural Scotland—they, as opposed to the major hotel operators, are the backbone of the industry—but of the small guest-house owners in the city of Edinburgh, in my constituency, who feel most aggrieved.

I congratulate Nora Radcliffe on securing the debate. The SNP position is that we should not be in the situation that we are in today but now that we are, we must try to resolve matters. It is not sufficient simply to leave matters to [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com), which, we must remember, acts in the national interest. It must be brought to account and we must work collectively for the national interest.

17:22

**Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands)**

**(Con):** Although the Scottish Executive currently spends £90 million per annum on tourism, there has been a decrease in Scottish tourism since 1977. Whatever the reason, the situation must be redressed.

Regrettably, I have had many complaints from tourism professionals all over Scotland about the workings of [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com). As people use the internet more and more, it is vital that we have

decent Scottish agencies through which bookings can be made and information can be downloaded. However, [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) seems to achieve very little in undertaking those functions. It charges hotels and bed and breakfasts a 10 per cent commission for bookings and £3 per customer. As of 1 April this year, regardless of whether businesses choose to participate in the [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) booking arrangement, they will have to pay a £25 charge for a listing on the website.

This afternoon, I spoke to the owner of the Langass Lodge Hotel in North Uist, which is famous for its comfortable accommodation and excellent Scottish cuisine at modest prices. They have had an excellent season but, believe it or not, no bookings at the hotel this year have been made through [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com). The owner did a little research. She contacted the [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) call centre only to be told that there were no hotels in North Uist. There is an enormous problem with the website search engine. It is not possible to enter the word "Uist"; one has to enter the words "the isle of North Uist". The database is useless. It showed only one bed and breakfast and one community centre and yet the Uists and Benbecula are full of hotels and bed and breakfasts.

I decided to check out the situation this afternoon. First, my assistant, Jo, checked "Uists and Benbecula hotels" on the Google search engine. Immediately, she found both the Langass Lodge Hotel and the Lochmaddy Hotel, after which we did not bother to look any further. She tried the [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) website, selected the "Hotels" option and clicked on the Western Isles area of the map. The first hotel that she was offered was a hotel in Edinburgh, the second was a hotel in Callander and the third was a hotel in Thurso. There were many more besides that but no mention of any hotels on the islands, which is pathetic and inexcusable.

A lady who runs a bed and breakfast in Tarbert on the Isle of Harris received a booking through [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com). The guest rang her in the evening to say that he could not find the address, which was not surprising as he was some 300 miles away in Tarbet, Argyll. The list is endless. It is no longer funny. It is devastating for our tourism industry.

To put it mildly, [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) has taken a system that was simple, informed and easy to operate and made it into something that is complicated, uninformed and unhelpful. The Scottish Executive must accept some of the responsibility for that.

Another professional tourism operator of good hotels in Nairn tells me that most of the call centre operators are not trained in tourism, have no

product knowledge and so do not contribute to raising business. He told me that, in the past, more than 70 per cent of the clients who contacted his hotel management stayed in his establishment, but [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) tends to put people off. For example, one operator asked a caller, "Where is Nairn?" Most people know that Nairn has been a famous holiday centre and spa since early Victorian times.

I do not think that I have to say any more—the evidence is obvious.

17:25

**Mike Watson (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab):** I, too, commend Nora Radcliffe for securing this debate and for the way she introduced it. Indeed, I also commend the wording of her motion. Although she drew attention to people's concerns, she also highlighted at least one example of someone who had written about the service in glowing terms. I welcome such a balanced approach.

I should first declare an interest as the minister responsible when [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) was launched in the middle of 2002. The launch was not without controversy. For example, some of the area tourist boards were less than warm towards it and a great deal of hard work was undertaken to advertise its benefits and to ensure that many of Scotland's tourism partners were on board as early as possible. The minister will no doubt say that that situation continues.

I was rather surprised by some of Kenny MacAskill's remarks, although it would be unfair to say that he has been anything other than critical of the scheme more or less right from the start. The overall approach to [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) was enshrined in the national strategy for tourism, which was published in 2000, and endorsed in the tourism framework for action that was brought out two years later. However, I must draw to Mr MacAskill's attention the more important point that the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee's inquiry into tourism in Scotland, which reported in January last year, endorsed the principle behind [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com). That committee was convened by Mr MacAskill's colleague, Alex Neil. In that light, it is not very helpful to say that the SNP would not have been in this position if it had had the opportunity.

We must accept that, as tourism bookings are increasingly carried out online, people need the facility. As a result, it is essential that [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) provides that service. I do not gainsay the comments that Jamie McGrigor and others have made. If those are accurate reflections of some aspects of the service that is being provided, we must address them. However, Nora Radcliffe's motion essentially calls for such

concerns to be addressed and I am sure that [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) and its staff will do so. Indeed, I have visited the staff at Livingston and know that they are very much dedicated to making the service as successful and as comprehensive as it can be.

Jamie McGrigor raised the issue of registration fees. However, I do not think that an annual £25 charge is likely to put anyone off. Indeed, it is generally seen to be beneficial given the thousands of contacts and bookings that have been made since [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) got up and running.

**Mr McGrigor:** Will the member give way?

**Mike Watson:** I am sorry; I really do not have the time.

That is a testament to [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com)'s initial success. Although I accept that that success is somewhat qualified, it is still relatively early days. Scottish tourism is a healthy product and the more it is marketed internationally, the healthier it will become.

I also point out that people are still able to book establishments directly, which is not the case with every other tourism website. Many tourism providers who I know from personal experience were initially sceptical of the site acknowledged its benefits once they saw it up and running. Moreover, the charges that are made are modest by other standards; the 10 per cent rate compares very favourably with some other commercial services. For example, incoming tour operators and travel agents can charge two or three times that amount.

I am not saying for a minute that everything is rosy; however, [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) has got off to a good start. The service can and will be improved. Although such debates highlight issues that must be addressed, they also help to highlight the service's great benefits for tourism in Scotland in the years to come.

17:29

**John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD):** I thank Nora Radcliffe for securing the debate. It is with sadness and reluctance that I must concur with her earlier sentiments that many tourism providers are very unhappy about [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com)'s service. Many of my own constituents who let houses or chalets have told me that many providers have already left and that many more are seriously considering whether to stop using the service.

Much of the west coast relies on tourism as a primary and secondary source of income and people there suggest that they deserve a better service than they are getting. Like Nora Radcliffe, I

have been contacted by constituents who claim that they cannot access the [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) website if they use AOL. I am not exactly computer literate, but I reiterate Nora Radcliffe's sentiments that if an organisation such as VisitScotland, which has 11,000 members, is trying to attract custom from an organisation that has 30 million members, it is the one that should change or adapt.

The unhappiness with the service can be seen by the number of websites set up by former [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) members. There is now a proliferation of them throughout the country: [visitsouthofscotland.com](http://visitsouthofscotland.com); [visitwestofscotland.com](http://visitwestofscotland.com); and [visitargyll.com](http://visitargyll.com)—to name but a few. They are popping up everywhere.

I find it ironic that, in the week that we are debating the problems of our tourism industry, the Irish Tourist Board has a display in the Parliament's lobby. I wonder whether VisitScotland has ever had a display in the Dáil. If we are looking for a model for the Scottish tourism industry, why do we not try to emulate the Irish example—it seems to work for them.

After all that, I am pleased to say that in the Highlands we are fortunate to have an excellent organisation for tourism throughout the Highlands and Islands. The Highlands of Scotland Tourism Board officials and staff have gained the support and confidence of their members through their professionalism and dedication to the tourism industry in the area. Unfortunately—I say this with reluctance—their valiant efforts are being undermined by the inadequacy of their colleagues at [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com), which is obviously in need of a radical reappraisal so that Scotland can once again enjoy the economic benefits of a buoyant and successful tourism industry.

17:32

**Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green):** I thank Nora Radcliffe for introducing the topic, which is a very important one for us to debate.

I have to agree with Alex Fergusson that we are six or eight months late in debating the matter, because the establishment of [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) was a disaster. I am told by an industry insider that it has become a benchmark for how not to build and launch a website—as in, “We must be careful that we do not do a [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com).”

The website was greeted with uproar by tourism providers—Galloway tourism providers, in particular, were outraged. That has soured its whole relationship with providers. It was launched months before it was ready to go public—it was not accurate, it was not effective and it did not work.

The other great problem was the contract under which [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) was formed. As a private finance initiative project, it is a commercial operation so its only source of revenue is a percentage of the booking charge; therefore, its interest was principally to get people to book accommodation through it and selling Scotland was a secondary goal. I outlined that problem to the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport at the meeting of the Enterprise and Culture Committee on 28 October and asked him to address it. I am delighted to hear that the contract has now been revised and that [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) now incorporates links to the websites of other tourism providers—something that it refused to do when I visited it in the summer. That is a real improvement, on which congratulations are due.

The site as a whole has developed and it is now working much better than it was, although it is still dogged by the reputation that was caused by its early failure.

I am concerned at the prospect of local tourist information centres handing over calls to [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com), because there is no substitute for local knowledge. The book knowledge that is obtained by [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) operators is not as good as local knowledge. Further to that, given the growing trend towards relocating call centres to countries with lower employment costs, I hope that we can rest assured that would-be visitors to Scotland do not have their calls routed to somewhere else in the world—that is entirely possible with a PFI project.

Finally, I will make a couple of green points. I was delighted to see that [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) features a section entitled “See Scotland without a car”. However, I looked in vain for a link to [traveline Scotland](http://traveline.scotland)—the Executive's own travel information service. That must be addressed.

A perception of Scotland as a green and clean destination is one of Scottish tourism's most powerful assets. Research by VisitScotland and VisitBritain and by independent institutions has confirmed that environmental aspects are important considerations for some of our most important customers, such as the German and Dutch markets, and some of our highest-spending customers. We need to ensure that we do not take that cleanness and greenness for granted and that we promote Scotland as a high-quality destination.

17:35

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP):** Tourism is perhaps more important for my constituency than it is for any other constituency in Scotland. I echo the sentiments that most speakers have expressed and congratulate Nora Radcliffe on securing the

debate and on her remarks on the television last night, which I thought were very good.

I have been inundated with complaints from small tourism operators from throughout my constituency, but I do not think that there would be any point in my adding to the examples that have been given. I want to move forward and make some rather different points.

I obtained—with some difficulty—the accounts of eTourism Ltd. I did so after meeting the chief executive of VisitScotland, who said that the information that the accounts contained was confidential. At the time, I did not know that the accounts, far from being commercially confidential, had been published in Companies House—I did not know that the company was called eTourism Ltd, or I would have found that out for myself. When I made the acquaintance of the accounts, I discovered that in the first period of operation of nearly 12 months to 31 December, the company made a whopping loss of £1.248 million. The accounts stated that the company's turnover was £879,000.

VisitScotland's response was that those figures were very much in accordance with the business plan. However, the business plan requires, of course, the repayment of debts of £7.4 million. SchlumbergerSema has 60 per cent of that—or £4.5 million—but the taxpayer invested a whopping £1.875 million through VisitScotland and £1.125 million through Partnerships UK.

I seriously question whether the enterprise will become profitable. I do not say that because I want it to fail—we all want it to succeed. However, it is difficult to believe that the enterprise can achieve the success that we all want it to achieve, such is the discontent about its performance so far, in particular among small providers, and such is the needless provocation of remarks such as the one in the briefing that VisitScotland provided for this debate that in the website's first year of operation, it waived subscription fees—as if that were an act of extreme generosity on its part.

The difficulty for the minister, of course, is that visitscotland.com is essentially a private company. Some 60 per cent is owned by SchlumbergerSema. Frankly, we might as well be debating Marks and Spencers with a large minority shareholding interest. It is up to the minister to ensure that VisitScotland responds to the criticisms of it that have been made in the debate. Those criticisms have been varied and, largely, measured—I have not read from letters that I have received, which I can assure the minister use language that is slightly less measured. I hope that he will respond by indicating exactly what he will do to ensure a better deal, in particular for the small tourism provider in Scotland.

17:38

**David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con):** I hope that the minister will not give the response that he gave me when last I raised the issue with him in the chamber, when I was told bluntly that unless I had visited the call centre at visitscotland.com, I was not entitled to have an opinion on the matter. I took his advice, however, and Alex Fergusson and I visited the centre, where we had a lengthy meeting with officials.

Maureen Macmillan alluded to the issue that is at the heart of the problem before she left the chamber: the visitscotland.com site has been mis-sold. There has been a fundamental misunderstanding about what it is about, relative to a national integrated information provision—which is what is in VisitScotland's briefing. That is not what visitscotland.com, as previously constituted, is about; it is a booking agency that aims to sell bookings and maximise the amount of money that it gets from those bookings.

That is not necessarily a bad thing, and I certainly do not subscribe to Kenny MacAskill's public-private, good-bad argument. However, there is a fundamental flaw: having been sold to the tourism industry and the wider public in a certain way, visitscotland.com is not doing what people think it does. For example, if one looks up an establishment in Moffat and then checks what other attractions exist, one finds cinemas in Glasgow listed. That is because those cinemas pay visitscotland.com to be on the site. At the same time, attractions that are in Moffat itself, for example free council attractions, are not on the site. Unless the fundamental arrangements are changed, such attractions will not appear on the site. The Scottish Executive and visitscotland.com must consider whether such information should be included. If it is to be included, who will pay for that? SchlumbergerSema signed up on the basis of its making money, but has found itself landed with a pig in a poke. There are all sorts of expectations about it, but nobody is willing to pick up the tab.

I think that visitscotland.com is a good idea in principle but it has already fallen into disrepute—we have heard numerous examples of that. It will fall further into disrepute unless the fundamental issue is addressed of whether it will carry non-profit-making information and, if so, who will pay for that.

Mike Watson was rather disingenuous. As part of the initial deal, visitscotland.com was handed a whole lump of business. However, we have not had any proof of whether it has generated any additionality. I would like to hear whether visitscotland.com has added anything or whether it has simply processed what it was handed on a plate.

17:42

**Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** In some ways, I am disappointed that this topic has come up for debate again. A number of genuine concerns were expressed when [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) was set up. Particular concerns related to consultation of the tourism industry and to some of the information that was provided for businesses. I had hoped that some of those concerns would have been ironed out, so it is a bit disappointing to hear that the problems of some time ago persist in some parts of the country. Personally, I have not heard many complaints recently; it may be that, in the south of Scotland, things are a bit better than they were before. However, problems clearly persist throughout the rest of the country.

I was around with Mike Watson when [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) was brought into being. It was always intended that it would be a tool for business. It was not to drive business and it was not to be compulsory; it was to be a tool that would, we hoped, be so attractive to business that most people would want to sign up to it and use it.

Members have spoken about misleading information. Area tourist boards are responsible for some of the local information on the site, and businesses are responsible for some of the information about themselves. It may be that some of the area tourist boards should examine the information that they make available to ensure that it is correct and that the site is as good as it should be.

Like many others, I looked up my own locality on the site this afternoon. Obviously, I did not try to book anything, and I did not go in through AOL, so I cannot comment on those issues. I looked at hotels, bed and breakfasts and inns, and I got 293 results, most of which seemed to be in Dumfries and Galloway. Of those 293, 153 were in the lowest price range—between £10 and £22 a night. That rather suggests that the site is attractive to some of the smaller businesses.

Most of the businesses seem to be bookable either online or via the national phone line. However, by clicking on the link for further details, it is possible to get addresses and, in some cases, postcodes so that maps can be accessed. In many cases, phone numbers are given, so people do not have to book through the national phone line but can book directly with the business concerned. It was always the intention that people should not be forced to go through the national phone line.

I also had a look at some of the activities that are mentioned on the website. If I do have a criticism, it would be to say that the range of activities is possibly a little limited at the moment. For example, I found no mention of equestrian tourism, which is a growing opportunity in our

area. In the wildlife section, I asked where we could see red squirrels and red kites in Dumfries and Galloway. I was told where I could see them in Nairn, but I did not think that that was terribly helpful. However, the website is improving.

I say to [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) that, if there are genuine concerns, they should be looked into. However, I regret that [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) so often gets negative publicity, because it is a very useful tool for marketing tourism in Scotland. I believe that it is a national portal that could be particularly useful for areas such as mine, which are not so well known for the cycling, climbing and walking that can be done there.

17:45

**Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD):** First, I congratulate Nora Radcliffe on securing today's debate on [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com). It is a particular pleasure for me to participate in the debate, given that I know about the front end of the business. Perhaps I should declare an interest, as my wife runs a small bed and breakfast in Edinburgh, which means that I am only too aware of the problems that the industry faces.

The debate comes at the end of six months during which I have been consulting all the B and B owners in my constituency of Edinburgh South who are on [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com), following my receipt of a number of letters last summer about the website and the telephone booking service.

Only last month, I arranged a number of meetings between B and B owners in my constituency and Philip Chalmers of [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com), at which owners were able to put their concerns directly to the organisation and hear what it had to say—[visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com)'s representative was very engaging and answered almost all my constituents' concerns. If any member would like a copy of the minutes of that meeting, I will be happy to provide them. The meeting followed a visit that I made to the organisation's headquarters in Livingston, during which I was able to see at first hand the work that it does and to hear about its plans for the future. I know that other members have also made such visits.

I will make two brief comments on issues that arose from those meetings, the first of which relates to the role and function of [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com). In my view, there has been a misunderstanding within the tourism industry and among politicians that [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) is run by or connected to VisitScotland; indeed, that was my understanding until the meetings that I have mentioned. Fergus Ewing referred continually to VisitScotland when he meant [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com). The two organisations have no connection—as

others have said, [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) is a private company. Although the area tourist boards are minority shareholders—they own 12.75 per cent of [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com)—and [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) pays VisitScotland to use that name and to appear in its adverts, it must be recognised that there are others who have that opportunity. It is a public-private partnership that has a technology company as a major shareholder and which operates as a private company.

As has been said, it is a fact that B and B owners have not yet paid anything for being part of the website. Many B and B owners who are involved in other websites find that they are substantially more expensive. The charge to owners by [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) will be £25 per annum from this year—use of the service was free last year—which allows 1,000 words and 15 photographs on the website. Other providers do not offer that.

I want to comment on the problems that the website and telephone booking service have had. For example, [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) accepts that there have been problems in the first year of operation and that there has been a lack of engagement with the industry. As others have said, many of the problems stemmed from the rush to use the website when it went live; there was a huge demand for [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com)'s services, which it struggled to cope with last summer.

Following my meetings, I have no doubt that the people at [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) have a passion for the Scottish tourism industry and that they will do all that they can to improve users' experience of the website. I suggest that all members engage with [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com). Given that Philip Chalmers came to my constituency, I am sure that he would be most willing to go to other members' constituencies to talk to their B and B providers.

17:48

**Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con):** I thank the Presiding Officer for fitting me into what is a heavily subscribed debate; I will be brief.

I have always been told that any successful website is entirely dependent on the links that it possesses. The fact that [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) will not link to any other site that offers accommodation or online booking services means that it has no links; therefore, by definition, it cannot be a particularly good website. That goes to the root of the problem, because [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) should be an information provider—an umbrella site that has links to the thousands of high-quality individual websites that accurately reflect the depth, quality and diversity that Scottish tourism encompasses. Instead, [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) is a commercial

competitor in the tourism market, which means that it acts to cut out information on other competitors altogether, even when it is meant to be promoting those competitors.

On overseas access, if one takes five minutes to trawl through the website—particularly the foreign language site—page after page of accommodation inquiries are returned with the message, "Error: this page cannot be displayed". If somebody in Germany, Sweden or France gets that message two or three times, they will soon go to another website, which probably means going to another country. There is a potential cost to tourism.

I will finish by quoting from a letter that was recently written to *The Scottish Farmer* by a constituent of mine, Joan Mitchell of Newton Stewart, on the subject of Quality Meat Scotland. She said:

"If QMS want to see an example of the problems which occur when a national promotional body loses touch with a fragmented industry, they need look no further than the tourist industry and [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com)."

I point out that Joan Mitchell is the leader of the Liberal Democrats on Dumfries and Galloway Council and that she was the chair of Dumfries and Galloway Tourist Board when [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) was introduced.

**Chris Ballance:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I realise that I omitted to declare an interest: I have a small interest in a business that I think may be accessed—indirectly, through about three websites—through [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com). I apologise for not mentioning that.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I think that that gets you out of jail.

17:51

**The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Mr Frank McAveety):** I hope that Chris Ballance will get some business through that promotion.

I thank Nora Radcliffe for providing the opportunity to discuss the concerns about [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) and the role of the Executive and VisitScotland in addressing those concerns. Members identified a number of detailed issues during the debate. I suggest that, as Mike Pringle said, they should take up the offer to utilise the experience of the new official who has been working in recent months to try to address many of the concerns that users and businesses have raised and to ensure that a more seamless approach is taken. I am sure that a host of points will be raised with [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) as a result of the debate, which I hope that the company will address.

The issues of the thinking behind [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) and of how to grow tourism in



Scotland have been raised. The parliamentary committee that considered the tourism strategy made two main findings. One was that we should promote Scotland more throughout Europe and the world to ensure that people visit Scotland and that they can access different parts of Scotland. The second was that we should use the emergent information technology to ensure that we do those things effectively.

There will always be teething problems, but given that [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) is a commercially driven enterprise through a public-private partnership, I hope that the current situation will concentrate its mind. Ultimately, the company must respond to its customers' wishes. I am sure that it has a long-term business plan to address the issues, notwithstanding Fergus Ewing's perspective, which is the one that he often has when he considers financial planning for major projects and developments. I want to ensure the viability of [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com)'s product for the development of tourism in Scotland.

We must mention the importance of tourism to the Scottish economy—we have not heard about that often enough. More than £4.5 billion comes from tourism into the Scottish economy and the industry accounts for 215,000 jobs. The industry is important and we need to continue to get it right. Already, [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) has handled more than 66,000 bookings, which have generated more than £9 million-worth of business for the industry in Scotland.

**Alex Fergusson:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Mr McAveety:** I will finish this point first; it is important to do so for the purposes of balance.

A customer survey showed that more than 99 per cent of customers rated the service as good or better and that more than 98 per cent of customers said that they would book again via [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com). There is discontinuity between that evidence and the anecdotal evidence and experiences that some members have mentioned. We need to find a way of resolving that issue so that the experiences that members hear about reflect those figures much more.

**Alex Fergusson:** Will the minister expand on the figures and answer the question asked by my colleague David Mundell about how much of the business is new and how much has simply been directed through that route because it had to be?

**Mr McAveety:** I do not have that information to hand, but I guarantee that I will respond to David Mundell. I will endeavour to ensure that the information on any other point that has been raised and that we cannot address this evening through lack of time is made available.

Members raised a number of other issues. As of 1 April, there will be an annual charge of £25 for subscribers to the listings. I do not think that that figure—50p a week—is in any way unreasonable in a comparative sense. The fee for being listed on the website includes the option to display up to 15 photographs.

**Mr McGrigor:** I agree that £25 a year is not an enormous amount of money to pay but, given that it is a new charge, one would expect people to be able to make slightly better use of [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com). However, the people to whom I have spoken appear already to be fed up with [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com).

**Mr McAveety:** An equivalent listing on [yell.com](http://yell.com) would be five times that figure. People need to take that into account. With regard to issues of customer dissatisfaction, I point out that [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) has in place a structure that is designed to address those concerns—that structure was not in place at the start of the project.

People have made broad points about responsiveness. I am glad that David Mundell has visited the call centre and I hope that that relationship can be beneficial in terms of any concerns that he might have about [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com). I believe that the *Official Report* will show that I encouraged members to visit the centre, although I would not exclude any member from participating in a debate just because they had not endeavoured to go to a certain place beforehand.

**Fergus Ewing:** Can the minister confirm that [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) is meeting its financial targets and that it is still intended that the loan repayments will begin on 1 May 2005?

**Mr McAveety:** The information that is available to us leads us to be confident that [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) is at the stage of its business plan at which it intended to be at this date. The initial years were not about generating substantial profits, which are intended to be delivered in the context of a longer-term business plan.

I assure members that the relationship between the Executive and [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) is not as submissive as Fergus Ewing suggested in his speech. We are happy to raise issues with [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) and VisitScotland to ensure that the public interest is looked after with regard to the development of the website.

A number of other issues have been raised by members and I will try to address them in the brief amount of time that I have. On training requirements, staff have a month-long training programme. We will take on board the comments that Jamie McGrigor made, but I assure him that we will endeavour to ensure that [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com)

is aware of the issues that it needs to be aware of in relation to customer relations. Elaine Murray raised the issue of the relationship between VisitScotland and the area tourist boards and other local providers. We need to find ways of improving that relationship; doing so will make a difference in the long term.

The fundamental issue that we need to address relates to the technical weaknesses of the system. In that regard, concerns have been raised about the problems with AOL. I give an assurance that the technical problems with AOL have been solved. The problems were not specific to visitscotland.com—in case anyone is paranoid about that—but also affected the Royal Bank of Scotland and Tesco. The main problem was at the AOL end rather than with visitscotland.com. Now that the problem has been solved, we have asked visitscotland.com to endeavour to ensure that it has in place ways in which it can address such issues much more expeditiously and effectively than it could before.

I hope that tonight's debate will make a contribution to ensuring that visitscotland.com meets the aspirations that were set for it and the aspirations of customers. We have an opportunity to ensure that Scotland is well placed in international tourism. One of our key agencies to ensure that we can take advantage of that opportunity will be VisitScotland and one of the key means by which we will do so will be visitscotland.com. I hope that, through tonight's debate, many of the issues that have been raised can be addressed, so that we do not have to return in a year or two to deal with the issues again.

*Meeting closed at 17:59.*

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