

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 16 December 2004

Session 2

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 16 December 2004

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 09:30*]

Defence Reviews

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Good morning. The first item of business is a debate on motion S2M-2165, in the name of Murdo Fraser, on defence reviews from a Scottish perspective, and three amendments to the motion. I invite those members who wish to contribute to the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons.

09:30

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Later today, the Secretary of State for Defence Geoff Hoon will rise in the House of Commons to make a statement on the future of the Scottish regiments. If, as we expect, he announces that the King's Own Scottish Borderers and the Royal Scots will be merged into one battalion and the remaining four existing single-battalion infantry regiments in Scotland will be amalgamated into one super-regiment, that will constitute an act of political vandalism against the Scottish armed forces. I hope that the Parliament will support my motion and send a clear message to Geoff Hoon and his colleagues at Westminster that the Scottish Parliament will not tolerate such behaviour and that it will speak up for our regiments that have served this country and the British Army so well over so many years.

My motion refers to the impact on Scotland of proposed defence cuts. This is not only about the Army. The Ministry of Defence's command paper published in July, "Delivering Security in a Changing World: Future Capabilities", set out in general terms a number of areas that were heading for longer-term restructuring and re-equipping. The paper also outlined a series of cuts in services, including reductions in manpower: 7,500 for the Royal Air Force and 1,500 each in the Royal Navy and the Army.

As members are aware, there has been a great deal of uncertainty about the future of Scottish bases and regiments. There was a particular question mark over RAF Kinloss and an announcement was made yesterday about the loss of a squadron based there. Other bases, such as HMS Gannet—the Navy's base in Prestwick, Ayrshire—could face the axe. There will be serious economic implications for Scotland.

However, it is fair to say that the primary concern for many in Scotland surrounds the future

of our six infantry regiments. The proposal is that the Royal Scots and the King's Own Scottish Borderers be merged and that all five battalions then be amalgamated into a super-regiment of five battalions. That proposal has been vigorously opposed with an energetic campaign headed by the save the Scottish regiments group, backed up by support from across the political parties.

The arguments in favour of retaining the existing six Scottish infantry regiments have been well rehearsed, not least during the members' business debate on the subject that I led in the chamber on 23 September. In the short debate this morning, I do not intend to repeat all those arguments, with which I am sure members are familiar. I will say, however, that there has been an attempt in some quarters to portray the proposal for amalgamation as a military one. Certainly, General Sir Michael Jackson, who has been pushing the plans, has no sense of regimental loyalty, coming, as he does, from a Parachute regiment background. However, we need to be absolutely clear that any decision that will be taken will be political and not military. It is up to the Army board, stuffed full of Ministry of Defence mandarins, to take the final decision. If Geoff Hoon, Alistair Darling, Gordon Brown or Tony Blair wanted to stop the plans going through, it would be entirely within their power to do so. There should be no attempt to pass the blame to the military.

This is not just a Conservative issue, although I am proud of the role that my party has played at the forefront of the campaign to retain our regiments. I am pleased that I have had the support of colleagues from other parties. Indeed, during my members' business debate, politicians from across the chamber spoke with one voice in defence of our six infantry regiments. In that spirit, I am delighted to say that we can accept the amendments from the Scottish National Party and the Liberal Democrats this morning.

However, I am both surprised and disappointed by the terms of the Labour amendment. I had hoped that we would have the support of Labour members this morning. I remind John Home Robertson that when he spoke in my members' business debate, he said:

"I hope that my colleagues at Westminster will prevail against the military top brass, in this case General Jackson."—[*Official Report*, 23 September 2004; c 10640.]

Similarly, Dr Elaine Murray MSP said:

"I express my unequivocal support for the retention of the identity of the King's Own Scottish Borderers"—[*Official Report*, 23 September 2004; c 10648.]

It seems that John Home Robertson has made a U-turn of his own. No doubt he will clarify shortly

the reason for his Damascene conversion. I refer him to remarks that were made by a spokeswoman for the First Minister, Jack McConnell MSP, and which were quoted in *The Scotsman* on 8 October:

"The First Minister has always made his views clear ... he recognises the need to modernise the army, to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

However he also thinks the identity of the six Scottish battalions is important, both to their local communities and to Scotland, and those identities should be protected within any new structure. He does not think that the suggestion to merge the Royal Scots with the KOSB serves that view."

I hope that those words mean that Mr McConnell will support my motion and that his Labour colleagues should feel no compunction in so doing.

We should be clear that retaining identity should not mean keeping cap badges as part of a super-regiment that will have one tartan and one regimental headquarters. We will settle for nothing less than the retention of six single-battalion Scottish regiments, and those who support our motion should be quite clear that that is what we mean.

What makes this issue particularly poignant is the fact that the Black Watch has just returned this week from Iraq, having served with distinction. The regiment has lost five of its men, whose funerals we have seen conducted. What a betrayal it would be of the service of those fine men for their regiment to be amalgamated—in effect, out of existence—by the Government. The sight of Geoff Hoon in Iraq last week with the Black Watch was sickening. One moment he was patting the brave troops on the back, and the very next, he was prepared to stab them in the back with the proposed amalgamations.

This Parliament can send a clear message today to Geoff Hoon and Tony Blair. We will defend our Scottish regiments; we will not have vandalism of our historic traditions; and we will not stomach a cut in our armed forces at this dangerous time.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the proposed cuts in manpower from the Royal Air Force, the Royal Navy and Army throughout the United Kingdom; further notes that this would mean the merger of the Royal Scots and the King's Own Scottish Borderers into one battalion and the amalgamation of all five battalions into a super regiment of five battalions and a reduction in jobs and operations at RAF Lossiemouth and Kinloss; believes that this will have an adverse economic impact on the areas affected by the cuts; further believes that the Scottish regiments are an important part of the tradition and heritage of Scotland; notes that the recent war in Iraq was the latest conflict which showed Scotland's regiments to be a modern, effective fighting force; believes that, in a time of increased commitments across the globe, our armed forces must have the necessary resources and structure to protect our

country, deter aggression and safeguard our vital interests in the wider world, and, accordingly, condemns any cuts and mergers and, in particular, believes that the six existing single battalion Scottish infantry regiments should be retained.

09:37

Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab): I will address some of the points that Murdo Fraser raised shortly, but before I go any further, I reiterate my support for the First Minister's position on the six battalions in the Scottish division.

I have strong personal feelings about the subject—first, as the son of a King's Own Scottish Borderer, and secondly, as a constituency MSP for the Royal Scots area. The Royal Scots and the King's Own Scottish Borderers are two of the finest regiments in any army anywhere on the planet. No one should forget that the Royal Scots is the first regiment of foot in the British Army and is affectionately known as Pontius Pilate's bodyguard because of its long record.

I was involved in the campaign against the plan to amalgamate those two regiments under the Tory Government in 1991 and nothing has happened to change my mind since then. However, one would have to be especially gullible to support any motion on the subject that had been lodged by the Tory party in this Parliament. We have a party that professes undying commitment to the sovereignty of the Westminster Parliament moving a motion in this devolved Parliament that challenges the authority of Westminster in relation to defence policy. This might be the season of good will, but I recognise humbug when I hear it.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD) *rose—*

Mr Home Robertson: I am sorry—I have only a short time to speak.

It gets worse. Here in the Scottish Parliament, which has no responsibility for defence, the Tories swear total commitment to six infantry battalions, the RAF stations, the naval bases and everything else. Yet what did they do when they were in power at Westminster in the Parliament that is responsible for defence? I have a very long memory. I was a member of the House of Commons Defence Committee when a certain Malcolm Rifkind sold Rosyth naval dockyard down the river. Rosyth had the best bid for Trident refitting, but a Scottish Tory Secretary of State for Defence took that contract to Devonport for political reasons.

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Mr Home Robertson: I apologise to the member; time is short in this debate.

I was on the Defence Committee when Tom King was Secretary of State for Defence. Members might remember the "Options for Change" white paper that was presented by that Tory secretary of state in 1991. At that time, the Cheshire regiment was deployed on a difficult and dangerous operation in Bosnia and—can we believe it—was under threat of amalgamation.

Tom King proposed to amalgamate the Royal Scots and the KOSB, but we managed to beat the amalgamation threat in 1991 because of the excellent recruitment and retention record of most of the Scottish infantry battalions. I am afraid that that case cannot be made as effectively in 2004. We all know that the Scottish infantry division is heavily dependent on recruitment from Commonwealth countries. If we can learn one lesson from that, it is that we need to do more to make careers in the armed forces more attractive to recruits and their families throughout Scotland.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Will the member give way?

Mr Home Robertson: I am sorry, but I do not have time. If the Tory party had allowed more time for the debate I could have taken interventions, but it did not do so.

In 1991, the Tory Government forced through the amalgamation of the Queen's Own Highlanders and the Gordon Highlanders. That amalgamation disrupted centuries of military tradition in the Highlands and the north-east. With the greatest respect to Murdo Fraser, we do not need lectures about military traditions from the party that wound up the Gordons. No amount of opportunist rhetoric can conceal the fact that we cannot trust the Tories on defence. Members should remember what they did to Rosyth and what they did to the Gordon Highlanders.

I do not believe that proposals to amalgamate regiments are ever initiated by politicians. No politician in his right mind would deliberately challenge deeply held local loyalties anywhere. The plans to reorganise the armed forces come from the military. They are driven by professional soldiers, who are rightly determined to learn the lessons that Lord Raglan did not learn before the battle of Balaclava: we must keep our forces and our tactics at least two steps ahead of the potential enemy. That means that we must have modern structures, which is the underlying issue.

It would take a brave politician to face down the chief of the general staff, General Sir Mike Jackson. I have met him a number of times, and I will say simply that he is an extremely impressive officer and that it does not surprise me that he is affectionately known in the armed forces—and has been for a long time—as the "Prince of Darkness". I have no doubt that he has a clear strategy for

more effective and flexible armed forces to deal with the new threats and risks of the 21st century, which he is driving forward in the Ministry of Defence.

Notwithstanding that, it should be possible to combine the best of our military traditions with the needs of 21st century military operations. The First Minister has expressed his strong support for the retention of the identities of the six Scottish infantry battalions in a modern British Army. The Black Watch has demonstrated the very best of Scottish military commitment and professionalism in the peacemaking operation in Iraq. I sincerely hope that when Geoff Hoon makes his statement in the House of Commons this afternoon, he will announce a new structure for the Army that will make it possible to continue the magnificent military traditions of all six infantry battalions in the Scottish infantry division in the Army of the future.

I move amendment S2M-2165.4, to leave out from first "notes" to end and insert:

"acknowledges the importance of Scotland's substantial contribution to the armed forces of the United Kingdom; notes the social and economic value of the military to communities throughout Scotland; believes that Scotland is rightly proud of the historic and current contribution of Scottish service personnel to the defence of the United Kingdom and to peacekeeping operations worldwide; accepts the need for the military to drive decisions about the structure of efficient armed forces for the modern world, and believes that the traditions, community links and identities of Scotland's infantry battalions should be maintained in the armed forces of the United Kingdom."

09:43

Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP): John Home Robertson gave us five minutes of history lesson and 50 seconds of fatuous waffle, which is what we have come to expect from the Government. I am astonished that the duly elected, democratic Labour Government of this country is going to be told what to do by the military. I thought that that kind of thing happened only in third-world countries—apparently not.

I quote from Kipling:

"For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' 'Chuck him out, the brute!'
But it's 'Saviour of 'is country' when the guns begin to shoot;
An' it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' anything you please;
An' Tommy ain't a bloomin' fool—you bet that Tommy sees!"

We can replace the word "Tommy" with "the Black Watch", "the KOSB", or any of the other regiments and we can bet that Scottish soldiers are not bloomin' fools and that they see through the Government.

I brought with me a stack of blueys—letters from the field, which were sent to me from Iraq by

soldiers who are serving in the Black Watch. The letters represent the views of soldiers, from privates to non-commissioned officers and senior officers. I will quote directly from some of the blueys so that the words of those soldiers are recorded in our *Official Report*.

"I have been sent here from (what was until now) a non-deployable post but, due to the lack of trained units Britain has to offer at short notice, there are no other units in a position to deploy rapidly."

"We are serving out here ... with an Artillery Regiment that is serving in a role more normally filled by an infantry regiment ... In a period of 18 months they will have the opportunity to train on their artillery weapons for one 2-week period, because they are being deployed as infantry to fill a gap created by Options for Change."

"The decision to reduce the armed forces ... can only add to the stress, strains and pressures already endured by us soldiers, wives and children. Some of us have been separated for 400 days in the last 2 years."

It makes me profoundly angry to read those messages and then to hear the managerial newspeak that emanates from a senior Government minister, who waffles away about how the emphasis is no longer on troop numbers but is on efficiencies and outcomes. Our soldiers deserve straight talking, not fatuous waffle, spin and deceit. They do not deserve the fatuous waffle that has spewed out of Westminster over the past few months and that we have just heard in the debate. The reality is that although money is no object when it comes to our weapons of mass destruction, the ordinary soldier is regarded as an expensive luxury.

I have heard it said that the United Kingdom has been involved in six wars in five years. I have not counted them, but if that is the case, we cannot expect our soldiers to be spread so thinly. Most people who join the Army do so in the knowledge that at some time they might be expected to fight. Perhaps they do not anticipate that they will fight as often as they do—we have not anticipated that—or that they might occasionally be expected to fight in dubious circumstances.

In Scotland, most people who join up prefer to join a unit that has a strong and distinct identity. Young people go into the family regiment. In Perthshire, that regiment is the Black Watch, in which the ties are multigenerational and permeate the entire county and beyond. I believe that that is the case for all the other regiments. The experience of previous mergers, such as the one that led to the creation of the Highlanders in 1994, shows that it can take 10 years for recruitment to recover. Do we want that to happen to the whole of the Scottish division?

I will give the last word to a writer of one of the blueys:

"As a voter and a soldier I am writing to you for support, for you to question this decision and fight on our behalf to

reverse the decision to reduce our armed services, as I am fighting for my life out here in Iraq in support of the politicians."

Shame on those politicians, and shame on Labour front-bench politicians in the Scottish Parliament, who display their contempt by their absence.

I move amendment S2M-2165.3, to insert at end:

"and condemns the fact that these proposals have been developed while Black Watch soldiers and other members of the armed forces are involved in a dangerous conflict in Iraq."

09:48

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Every defence review that has taken place post-1945 has had its critics, but the current review has far more than its fair share. It is obvious that the Government will be more than happy to accede to General Jackson's request that the remaining five regiments of the Scottish division be amalgamated into one super-sized regiment. As has been pointed out, General Jackson's background is in the Parachute regiment, which is a single regiment of three battalions that are drawn from throughout the country. General Jackson seems to think that that is a good model, which should be adopted by everyone else.

The general has failed to identify a believable rationale behind his argument. He wrote to me to explain that a multiple battalion is the modern way forward, because it would allow him to end the arms plot and it would allow trickle posting between battalions. Who is he trying to kid? Trickle postings between regiments already take place and do not depend on having a super-regiment. General Jackson says that the officers and men of the Scottish division are behind his plan, but people like him give consultation a bad name. The retention of single regiments was not even an option in his so-called consultation. The argument that a multi-battalion regiment is a necessary pre-condition for modern 21st century warfare is utter nonsense. The all-arms battle does not rely on large multi-battalion regiments—quite the reverse. General Jackson does not help his argument when he tries to pull the wool over people's eyes in such a way.

I can put the case no better than did Brigadier Gary Barnett, a former colonel of the Black Watch, who said:

"We have seen no arguments that persuade us that battalions from large regiments are more operationally efficient or exhibit any advantage over single battalion regiments. It is clear to us that the advantages of a sense of belonging, continuity, regional connections, recruiting focus and esprit de corps far exceed the perceived disadvantages of the small regiment."

This is not the time to be proposing cuts in our armed forces. The Defence Committee of the House of Commons thinks that now is not the right time and the armed services think that it is not the right time. I believe that members of the Scottish Parliament should also send a message to the United Kingdom Government that it is not the right time. I say to John Home Robertson that we can speak for Scotland in this chamber.

How can a Government expect our armed forces to do more with less? When I left the Army some 10 years ago, I had served for two years in Northern Ireland and had also served in Gibraltar. In addition, I had done several tours in Germany—our garrisons are still there. In addition, we have troops in the Falklands, Belize and Cyprus and we have commitments in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and the middle east. When will those commitments stop? When will the Army's overstretch stop?

General John McColl, who is one of the most senior officers serving in Iraq, put it like this:

"You either work the Army harder or do less with them ... our capacity to conduct a number of these commitments is reduced with a reduction in the number of infantry battalions."

Yet Geoff Hoon, our distinguished Secretary of State for Defence, seriously proposes to cut some 6,500 men and women from the established strength of the Army, bringing it down to about the 100,000 mark. With that sort of strength, it will be impossible for the Army to carry out effectively the duties that we have placed upon it; the only other way it could do that would be if our commitments were cut. I am always an optimist, and I believe that serious terrorist operations in Northern Ireland are over, but we will need to station troops there for some time to come. Where does the Government expect to reduce our commitment? Are we signalling that we do not expect to be in Iraq for any length of time? Are going to cut and run from that unfortunate country?

The Liberal Democrats believe that it would be a mistake to cut our armed forces at this most difficult time in world affairs. We also believe that it would be foolish to deliver a self-inflicted wound by amalgamating our very effective Scottish infantry regiments into one over-large regiment for the whole country.

One of the reasons for amalgamating the Scottish infantry regiments is not based on sound military logic. If it were, surely the five Guards regiments—the Irish Guards, the Scots Guards, the Welsh Guards, the Coldstream Guards and the Grenadier Guards—should face amalgamation too. Why is that not the case? Because General Jackson would not dare: he knows that it is not a military argument to have one large regiment.

The Liberal Democrats will support the Conservative motion that is before us. That is the right thing for us to do. I am pleased that the Conservatives have accepted our amendment, as it expresses clearly the main reason why our six existing single-battalion regiments should be retained.

I move amendment S2M-2165.1, to insert at end:

"as the best way to maintain the operational effectiveness of the Scottish infantry."

The Presiding Officer: The open debate is tight, therefore I ask members to keep their speeches to four minutes.

09:53

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

It is interesting that John Home Robertson, in his speech today, lost track of the notion of the new politics and took the opportunity to come forward with an argument that was aggressive but not based too much on the facts. The truth is that the Conservative party has shown genuine commitment on the issue; this is the second time that we have brought the matter to the chamber. Our record speaks for itself.

John Home Robertson was keen to raise the performance of past Conservative Governments. Indeed, the "Options for Change" review, which took place in the 1990s, made certain attempts to merge regiments, not least in my own area. As John Home Robertson rightly mentioned, the Gordons were subject to merger. I was an active part of the campaign against that merger. I take great pride in the fact that I spoke out against the merger then and I am proud to speak out against it again today. That merger served to give us a valuable lesson, which we need to ensure that we learn here and now.

The north-east area, which I represent, covers an area in the north, which recruits for the Gordons—or traditionally did—and an area in the south, which recruits for the Black Watch. It is easy to compare the amount of reaction in those two areas to the campaign against merger. I have taken great pride in going out on the streets of Montrose with my good friend Sid Mather to collect signatures in support of the Black Watch to try to head off this disastrous amalgamation. However, there has been hardly a peep from the area in the north that traditionally recruited to the Gordons. Above all else, that indicates that the sense of regimental loyalty, which has been retained by the Black Watch—and which is important to the commitment that our Army gives—has been lost in the area in the north as a result of the merger of the Gordons.

We must remember that what we are debating is not only the merger of the Scottish regiments. As our motion makes clear, we are experiencing an across-the-board cut in defence expenditure that will have a significant and serious economic impact throughout many areas of Scotland, not least in places such as Moray where two air bases could be threatened over time. Given that economic responsibilities are firmly in the Scottish Parliament's area of responsibility, it would be irresponsible of us not to address the issues.

We need only think back to the performance of the squadrons at RAF Kinloss and to the number of fishermen and seamen's lives that have been saved in the north Atlantic and North sea as a result of the efforts of the Nimrod crews that are based at Kinloss. One can only worry about how such safety measures will be implemented in the future. I am sure that all members share those concerns.

We are concerned that the proposals to merge the Scottish regiments are mirrored in other parts of the British Army, not least in the Royal Marines. In the constituency of Angus, which is represented by my colleague Andrew Welsh on the benches opposite, we also have RM Condor, which is an important base for 45 Commando squadron. From the reports that are being circulated today, it would appear that the Royal Marines are likely to be subjected to the same kind of merger that the Scottish regiments are experiencing, with all the potential impact on areas such as Arbroath if the base is closed or changed significantly.

The impact that Arbroath has had on the role of the Royal Marines over the years never ceases to amaze me. I remember being on holiday in Poole in Dorset and being surprised to find that all the young women who worked in the hotels there had Arbroath accents. Once I had spoken to them, however, that was not hard to understand. They told me that many of them had married marines and had, over time, been transferred to Dorset.

The Scottish Parliament has a responsibility to ensure that we address the issues that are before the chamber today. We have heard from members such as Mike Rumbles who have genuine experience in the Army. A number of members have also had experience in the Territorial Army. We need to listen to that wisdom and vote accordingly at decision time.

09:57

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): I make it clear from the start that, as I have only four minutes, I do not intend to take any interventions. Members can barrack as much as they like; I will not give way.

We need to face the fact that nothing that we say in the chamber this morning will make one iota

of difference to the announcement that is due to be made by the Secretary of State for Defence later today. We had the opportunity to make our views known during the members' business debate that Murdo Fraser secured on 23 September. Indeed, some members who are in the chamber today took the opportunity to state their positions at that time.

Today's debate, on a reserved issue and in core parliamentary time, is all about the Conservative party making political capital out of whatever happens later today. I can understand the Conservatives doing that in the context of the probable general election in the next few months, especially given that they do not appear to be making much headway with the electorate. I speak in support of the amendment in the name of my colleague John Home Robertson. Whatever Roseanna Cunningham said about him, John Home Robertson has made his position clear: he made it clear on 23 September and he has done so again today.

I expect to be disappointed today, especially if we hear of the merger of the King's Own Scottish Borderers and the Royal Scots. If that was not going to happen, I think that we would have heard more hints by now, unfortunately. As I said in my contribution to the members' business debate, I whole-heartedly support the retention of the identity of the KOSB, which recruits from Dumfries and Galloway, the Scottish Borders and Lanarkshire. I believe, as John Home Robertson's amendment states, that the KOSB's traditions, community links and identity should be maintained. However, that may not happen. I make no bones about the fact that I will regret the merger deeply. If it happens, I believe that the KOSB will have been made the victim of recruitment and retention problems elsewhere. Nevertheless, no amount of posturing by the Conservatives or by any other party in the chamber will assist the KOSB.

Let me return to the facts. The debate is not about cuts in defence expenditure, even if it is portrayed as such. This year's UK spending review settlement will provide a 1.4 per cent increase in real terms per annum for the next four years in defence spending, which amounts to £3.7 billion. The settlement means that planned defence spending will have increased by 7 per cent between 1997 and 2008. On the other hand, planned defence spending fell under the last three years of the Tory Government by 15 per cent or £4.2 billion.

In 1994, as John Home Robertson said, the Queen's Own Highlanders was merged with the Gordon Highlanders. That was the second merger of regiments under a Tory Government in 35 years. In 1961, the Queen's Own Highlanders was

formed by the merger of two other regiments. Defence reorganisation has occurred under Governments of both political persuasions. Oliver Letwin has made a commitment that all departments should have 0 per cent growth in budget over the first two years of the spending review period. That means that, under the Tories, the Ministry of Defence would have its budget reduced by £2.6 billion, which would put even more pressure on the Scottish regiments, rather than less. Peter Duncan, Murdo Fraser and anybody else who speaks today can posture all they like about reversing those decisions; the Tories' shadow Secretary of State for Defence does not think that that is possible.

I have no experience of the military. It may well be that the creation of one Scottish regiment, with battalions retaining an individual identity, will have some benefits to serving infantry soldiers. I do not know. Like John Home Robertson, I continue to support the retention of six distinct battalions at the very least. I will say one thing, though. I will not vote for a Tory motion that will achieve absolutely nothing for the Scottish regiments. The vote will be taken after the announcement has been made and it will make not one bit of difference.

10:01

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I continue to be astonished by Elaine Murray. She argues that what we say in the chamber will not make a blind bit of difference. What she means is that the Labour Government at Westminster will pay absolutely no attention to Jack McConnell or the Labour Government here. That is a startling admission from Elaine Murray.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate, and to record the names of the young men from Fife who went to Camp Dogwood and did not come back: Kevin McHale; Stuart Grey; Paul Lowe; Scott McArdle; and their comrade Pita Tukatukawaqa from Fiji. In one week alone, Fife buried three young men, and the pain of the families goes on. As we welcome back the Black Watch, our thoughts naturally go to the families of those young men who have not come back. While those young men fought and died near Camp Dogwood, Geoff Hoon and Tony Blair were laying their own plans to get rid of those young men's regiment. Scotland's regiments are effective, professional and valued by everybody in Scotland and beyond. The recognition of that professionalism is why the Black Watch was sent to Camp Dogwood in the first place.

For all the strength of the American battalions, it was the Black Watch, with 850 men, which was sent to protect the backs of the United States troops. I have never believed that United Kingdom troops should have been sent to fight an illegal

war, based on lies, but they followed the orders that they were given by the politicians—the same politicians who will take the decision today to disband and amalgamate the Scottish regiments. Those are not military decisions. They are not based on military imperatives. They are decisions that are taken by politicians at Westminster who, as Elaine Murray has said, feel free to ignore the democratic will of the Scottish people. Those politicians will now airbrush proud family and local regiments from history. There is a huge feeling of betrayal in Fife about the plans, but then Tony Blair, Geoff Hoon and Alistair Darling would know nothing of that, because they sent our young men to fight and die and did not bother to come to their funerals.

The plans to amalgamate and disband are opposed by soldiers, ex-soldiers and the wider Scottish community. *[Interruption.]* If Elaine Murray wishes to intervene, I would be happy to let her, but she should not sit there and hiss at me.

Labour claims that it will retain the identity of the regiments by retaining the cap badges. That identity is rooted not in cap badges, but firmly in the communities that the soldiers come from. When that link is cut, there will no longer be a local identity. John Home Robertson commented about Rosyth and Devonport. It is true that the Tories awarded the contract to Devonport, but in 1997 the Labour Government had the opportunity to change the contract and it did not do so. The contract with Devonport continued.

This is a difficult debate for many people here, but there is great strength of feeling. A decision will be taken and, at 5 o'clock tonight, the Scottish National Party, like the Liberal Democrats, will support the Conservative motion because it is important—despite what Elaine Murray says—that the view of the Scottish Parliament is heard, and that that view is heard at Westminster.

10:05

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): As long as we spend more in the UK on the military than we do on transport, housing, and law and order, I will always argue for spending on militarism to be cut. However, the priorities for cutting defence spending should start with weapons of mass destruction. We must start with great white elephants such as Trident and the Eurofighter, which have turned into vast black holes of public expenditure, while the human defence resource barely stretches to a third of the MOD budget. Over the course of its entire lifetime, the Trident nuclear weapons system will cost a staggering £50,000 million—equivalent to the cost of 116 Scottish Parliament building projects. Trident is totally irrelevant in a world where the wielding of a craft knife on an aircraft does more to

change global politics in one hour than nuclear weapons ever did over 40 years. Clearly, I am not the only one who believes so, because it was the mantra of Labour in opposition. Indeed, I even have a great photo of the First Minister sporting a lovely moustache at the Stirling Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament stall in the 1980s, proudly campaigning against the vast waste of public expenditure Trident was to become and still is today.

Scottish conventional troops have a role in the 21st century, but their primary role is peacekeeping, humanitarian work and disaster relief in a politically and environmentally turbulent world. I want to see the soldiers of the Black Watch on the telly, not involved in an illegal war in Iraq but performing humanitarian and peacekeeping duties, wearing the blue armband of the United Nations next to the red hackle. However, in designing a military that is fit for that purpose, I do not rule out that, at some future date, amalgamation, streamlining or efficiency savings in the Scottish regiments may be required. Indeed, flexibility in the Scottish force is needed to allow viable teams of specialists to get into areas to clear mines, while others restore drinking water supplies, for example. I do not know whether that flexibility can be delivered within the existing six regiments, but what I do know is that the current proposals have run roughshod over military personnel and civilians who share the deep sense of tradition, commitment to place and community, and intergenerational history of service.

The attitude of the Executive and the MOD is that there is never a good time for reorganisation of the military, given its on-going engagement in different theatres across the globe, but I could not think of a worse time to consider upheaval. Surely it is better to bring the British involvement in Iraq to a legal end, and then to work fully and meaningfully with all stakeholders on how the important elements of the regimental family can be twinned with the need for flexibility in the 21st century.

This situation is a mess. We should get illegal weapons of mass destruction out of the UK, we should refocus the military on a role that is fit for the purpose of a modern European democracy, and we should then discuss, with those who value the human resource of our services, how we can meet that role through reform.

10:09

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): Like John Home Robertson, I have family connections with the King's Own Scottish Borderers. My father joined the regiment at the start of the second world war, and proceeded most of the time with his friend and colleague Jock

Hunter, who came from Hawick. Unfortunately, Jock did not return from Arnhem, where the KOSBs were parachuted down. I also have connections through having, for a long time, campaigned in the Scottish Borders and in part representing the KOSB, along with other constituents.

There is no doubt that there are issues here to do with lack of morale. Morale is not some tenuous thing. Morale is at the heart of a soldier's ability to relate to other troops when they are in the most difficult situations. It cannot always be measured in statistics. Morale is based on having a connection with the regiment that sometimes goes back for generations, and a connection with the area from which the regiment comes. It is essential in dangerous, front-line situations in which soldiers must act almost immediately and as one with the other men and women who are around them. It is embarrassing to say the least—in fact, it is disgraceful—to put at risk the jobs of troops who are in such situations at this moment and to undermine their regiments. The timing could not be worse, but when did Geoff Hoon ever know anything about timing? He turned up earlier this month to flaunt himself in front of the same troops that he is going to cut.

Operational difficulties will also arise from the cuts. I am interested in Lord Guthrie's views, which were dismissed by Geoff Hoon. Unlike Elaine Murray, who admits that she knows nothing about military matters, Geoff Hoon seems to know about them, despite what those with experience tell him. Lord Guthrie says that cutbacks have left the Army

"dangerously small and over-committed".

We know that the nature of military action now is very different from what it was. I support much of what Mark Ruskell said. It is strange for a member who is a pacifist to talk about troops, but, like Mark Ruskell, I envisage the troops performing a humanitarian role, intervening and helping people to get to democracy. I hope that one day we will have no more wars. I support Mark Ruskell's view about getting rid of Trident and other real weapons of mass destruction, which eat into our economy and which we hope that we will never use against people who are vulnerable, as we are.

There has also been huge public opposition to cutting and getting rid of our regiments. That is no wonder, because the people know better than Geoff Hoon.

I will conclude with the submission that has been made on behalf of the King's Own Scottish Borderers to Geoff Hoon, who is featuring large in the debate. It is called "The KOSB Alternative Proposal" and was submitted on 19 November 2004. It submits

"that the regimental system can be retained, Scottish Regiments preserved, the problems of the arms plot eliminated, recruiting and retention put on a sound basis for the future and public expenditure on defence reduced."

I suggest that Elaine Murray reads the document.

Being a soldier is not just a job like any other job. To cut a regiment—to take it off the face of the earth and leave it with a cap badge—is a disgrace for which some of our troops might pay in other ways than simply losing their regiments.

10:12

Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): It is often said that government is difficult, but I find myself thinking that it must be difficult to be an Opposition MSP. Having nothing to offer the people of Scotland on the issues on which this Parliament was set up to legislate, the Opposition continually resorts to holding debates on issues over which we have no authority. The Scottish National Party has a group at Westminster but does not want a British Army. The Scottish Socialist Party and the Greens have no one in London and therefore cannot debate the issue there, so, to an extent, I can understand why those parties concentrate their efforts here. However, I find it difficult to have any sympathy for the Tories. They are the main Opposition at Westminster and have ample opportunity to raise defence issues there. They have the shadow Scottish secretary to raise specific Scottish issues for them with the support of the rest of the Tory group at Westminster behind him. On second thoughts, if that is the extent of their party's ability in London, perhaps we can understand why the Tories would rather have Murdo Fraser front the subject for them here.

I have always taken great pleasure in representing Hamilton, where the regimental museum of the Cameronians is housed. That regiment was suspended, but not disbanded, in 1968—the museum assures me that the regiment awaits any renewed call to arms—and the Cameronians' recruiting area of Lanarkshire was thereafter taken over by the King's Own Scottish Borderers, which already recruited in the area. Indeed, my father spent his national service in the KOSB during the Malayan emergency in the mid-1950s.

Elaine Murray has already outlined the importance of the KOSB, so I will not dwell on it, except to note that it boasts proudly of being the only regiment that fought for the Government in all three decisive engagements in the Jacobite wars: at Killiecrankie, Sheriffmuir and Culloden. That is a good enough reason, some might say, for preserving the regiment in perpetuity. Unfortunately, it also spent much of the 18th and 19th centuries suppressing the Irish, so it might

have fought against my ancestors at some stage, but I will forgive the regiment for that and take pleasure in defending its right to continue to exist.

I was also interested that the regiment notes on its web pages that, after all the battle honours that it achieved in the service of Britain over 300 years and following its operations in the first gulf war in 1991, it added to its list a vigorous campaign at home called operation Borderer. That was the fight against the Tory "Options for Change" proposals, which would have led to the regiment's amalgamation. The Tories were forced to reverse that decision, and the three centuries of history continued with an unbroken lineage.

I doubt that the Cameronians will be reformed to join the latest fight, but their successor in Lanarkshire, the KOSB, must be given a future. The Tories tried to destroy the KOSB themselves once. The nationalists might be scared in case the regiment comes back to haunt them, à la Culloden. The nationalists, like the Greens and the SSP, would have no need of any British Army regiment, so we will take no lectures from them.

Hypocrisy reigns in the Parliament this morning. We have to ignore the sanctimonious hyperbole that is emanating from various parties: those who want to turn the Army into an ambulance service or a military brass band and those who do not want a British Army at all. We need to ensure that Scotland's present needs are put first, and Scotland needs the King's Own Scottish Borderers.

10:16

Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): I join members from all parties in welcoming the Black Watch home and expressing condolences to the families of those brave five who lost their lives in the deserts of Iraq.

"I ... believe that a super-regiment would submerge and eventually extinguish all the individual loyalties, traditions and histories of the Scottish regiments as we know them. That might not matter to the MOD or to General Jackson, but it has created a profound reaction in Dundee, which has traditionally supplied the industrial muscle to balance the rural brawn that recruits from areas such as north Tayside and Perthshire have brought to the regiment."—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 17 November 2004; Vol 426, c 413WH.]

Those eloquent words are not mine, but those of the Labour member for Dundee East, Mr Iain Luke, in Westminster Hall on 17 November. Apart from Dundee itself, the region that I and many other members in the Parliament represent in whole or in part covers the Black Watch's entire recruiting area, and the reaction to the proposed change within Mid Scotland and Fife has indeed been profound. The issue is highly charged; it unites members of all parties and none. I was

present with members from the four main parties—sadly, there were none from the Greens or the Scottish Socialist Party—at the parade, drumhead service and rally in Dundee on 23 October that was organised by the lord provost of Dundee, the provost of Perth and Kinross Council, the provost of Angus Council and the convener of Fife Council.

I will make two principal points. In the words of my colleague, Sir Menzies Campbell, this is not a time for reduction in our armed forces,

“against the pattern of present commitments, not to mention continuing uncertainties in an increasingly volatile world.”

It is worth listing our commitments: active service in Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo and Northern Ireland; and garrisons in Germany, Gibraltar, Cyprus, Belize and the Falklands. The House of Commons Defence Committee, which is chaired by that distinguished Labour member, Bruce George, concluded in its fifth report of the session 2003-04 that the Army is already overstretched. Indeed, the strategic defence review argued for an increase in the armed forces of 3,300, not for the secretary of state's proposed cut of 6,500.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): Will Keith Raffan give way?

Mr Raffan: No.

My second main point is to counter the argument that the move to larger regiments will increase recruitment and retention. I will give the 2003-04 recruitment target and actual recruitment figure for the Black Watch: the annual target was 112 and the actual recruitment was 122, so 109 per cent was achieved. The links with the community are not only a matter of sentiment, tradition and history or of the honour to parade—bayonets fixed, colours flying and drums beating—through the cities whose freedom the Black Watch has. The links, the real and genuine roots in Perthshire, Kinross-shire, Fife, Angus and Dee, are the key to recruitment and vital to the esprit de corps—the spirit of the regiment.

It has been said on Mr Hoon's behalf that the proposed changes are for the Army to decide. The buck cannot be passed so easily. Even in Turkey, generals now defer to ministers, rather than the other way round. As Sir Menzies Campbell has said,

“it is Ministers and not Generals who must answer to the House of Commons. The proposals ... represent a major policy change, which Ministers have either to accept or reject.”

It is ministers who make policy. Those ministers alone will be held accountable by the House of Commons, the electorate and the brave men of the Black Watch.

10:20

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): It is my pleasure to close the debate for the Scottish National Party. This is not the first time that the Parliament has debated the issue, which was the subject of a members' business debate in September.

My colleagues in the House of Commons—particularly my counterpart Pete Wishart, and also Annabelle Ewing—have raised the issue numerous times in the House of Commons and in Westminster Hall debates. The essential point is that we must use every opportunity to express our opinion and our opposition to the proposals that Her Majesty's Government is likely to announce later today. My colleagues have taken every parliamentary opportunity at Westminster and we have the right to take the opportunity here.

Members will know that I have the privilege to represent the North Tayside constituency, which recruits formidably for the Black Watch regiment. In the past few months, I have visited the families of constituents who have been injured in Iraq and listened to the anguish of parents back here about their injured sons in Iraq and their worries about what faces their sons in a dangerous situation. We cannot disregard the attitudes and points in the letters that my colleague Roseanna Cunningham read out, because they represent the genuine fears and anxieties of very brave individuals who confront a danger that none of us will ever have to confront.

Our amendment focuses on the Government's disgraceful approach of questioning the Black Watch's future while that regiment was serving in Iraq. It is disgraceful that the debate has taken place at that time. The same situation will face the Royal Scots regiment, which is likely to be deployed in Iraq in January. Those soldiers will go there with enormous uncertainty about their regiment's future and it was right to raise that concern.

A big debate is taking place about the role and purpose of infantry personnel in our armed forces. I do not subscribe to the view that we need fewer infantry personnel. The Royal Scots are to return to Iraq more quickly than they should under Army protocols and the Black Watch has returned to Iraq earlier than Army protocols suggest because we have insufficient infantry to manage all the trouble spots, whether they are in Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan or Bosnia. Mr Rumbles made that point well.

Much of the debate has highlighted the regiments' identities, which the Labour amendment concerns. To say that if all the regiments keep their cap badges, that somehow makes the situation all right is to put up a

smokescreen. The First Minister has articulated that despicably dishonest position at question time.

I will make a substantial point about identity that I think John Home Robertson made in our debate in September, in which he said that once the link between the regiment and its geographical recruiting area is broken, it is only a matter of time before the individual identity of the regiment is lost. That is absolutely right, but the Labour amendment tries to brush aside that substantial point.

We have heard many pleas in the debate for people to establish a consistent position. Mr McMahon made a fantastic contribution by saying that hypocrisy reigns in the chamber. I will quote to him what his Westminster colleague the right hon Dr John Reid said in the House of Commons in 1993 about the Conservatives' plans to cut regiments. He said:

"It is a disgrace and a disservice to our soldiers that we are spending £3,000 million on a new nuclear weapon which is not needed—while we are putting them on the dole, giving them compulsory redundancy and disbanding infantry regiments which are needed to deal with the very threats that we now face."—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 24 February 1993; Vol 219, c 908.]

If that was not hypocrisy, I do not know what is.

The Labour Party should have the decency to reflect on its roots and to recognise that the waste of money on weapons of mass destruction is an error that it should put right. It should ensure that we have a military operation that is much more focused on preserving peace than on advancing the interests of war.

10:24

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): I find it strange to speak in the debate, because it is a Tory-inspired debate on a subject that is wholly reserved to Westminster and because I have no experience of involvement in the armed forces. However, I will speak because of the considerable constituency interest that the proposals have evoked.

Whatever people's personal views of our involvement in Iraq, I am immensely proud of the role that the Black Watch has played in the conflict. It has undertaken two tours of duty. When the second was announced, I wrote to thank the battalion for its contribution and to wish it a safe return. After the review was announced, I replied to every serving soldier who wrote to me—many of them are my constituents.

Roseanna Cunningham and others said that the Black Watch recruits extensively from Mid Scotland and Fife. It recruits extensively from west Fife and it was Fifers and others who paid the

ultimate sacrifice in the past months in the conflict in Iraq.

As I said, I have no personal experience of the armed forces but, like other members, I have family who fought for their country. Members of my mother's family served in the Black Watch and I had relatives who were killed when fighting for Britain in that battalion.

Murdo Fraser said that the ultimate decision will be taken today in another place. He also issued a rallying cry to maintain the six existing Scottish regiments. As John Home Robertson ably showed, Murdo Fraser made no defence of his party's previous decision to reduce the number of Scottish regiments. As Labour politicians know only too well through many years out of power, opposition is easy; government is much more difficult.

I wish the identities of all six Scottish regiments to be maintained. The clear geographical identities of those regiments are important for recruitment, although it must be acknowledged that recruitment is much more robust in some areas than in others.

Some members have claimed that Labour politicians have not spoken out on the issue, which is untrue. My Westminster colleague Rachel Squire, who is the MP for Dunfermline West, has been assiduous on the matter. She is also a member of the House of Commons Defence Committee. Other Labour MPs have made their views abundantly clear.

Whatever decision is announced later today, it is clear that all Scottish regiments' identities should be maintained.

10:27

David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): I am pleased to conclude the debate, but I am afraid that I have had to tear up my consensual speech, or at least the parts about the Labour Party. I wanted to deliver such a speech because my experience is that soldiers and former servicemen throughout Scotland are not really interested in party politics or in individual politicians saying that they have done more than others. Members of the King's Own Scottish Borderers Association were delighted when Sir Archy Kirkwood arranged a meeting for them with Geoff Hoon and I applaud that positive gesture.

I was deeply saddened by the Labour contribution to the debate. John Home Robertson may well have a long political memory, but his speech showed us why he did not have a long ministerial career—it was utter claptrap. Although he was involved in the campaign to establish the Scottish Parliament and in Scottish Constitutional Convention events, John Home Robertson seems

to have forgotten that a clear purpose that was set out for the Parliament and from a unionist perspective was to lobby Westminster on issues of importance to Scotland, so discussing the regiments causes no difficulty. I predict that the people who criticise the debate today will be the very ones who raise such issues when we have another Conservative Government at Westminster, as we surely will.

I was particularly saddened by Elaine Murray's speech. I hope that she will go away and reflect on it. A clear difference has emerged between the conduct of Government MPs at Westminster when the previous proposal was made—which I accept was under a Conservative Government—and now. Previously, the then member of Parliament for Dumfries—Hector Monro—did not try to sell what the Government had done when he disagreed with the merger of the Royal Scots and the KOSB. Even though the Conservative party was in government, he fought the merger. He said that he disagreed with it and he got things changed. That is the difference. Members have come to the Parliament today to try to sell not only the fact that regiments are being downgraded to battalions, but the double whammy of a merger in the case of the Royal Scots and the KOSB. Elaine Murray and her colleague Russell Brown would do themselves far more credit by standing up and saying, "This is wrong." I would certainly respect them if they did so, and I am sure that their constituents would respect them too.

Mr McMahon made an interesting speech. Last week, he and Mr Muldoon made a difference by not going along with the Executive on an issue on which they did not agree. As Major William Turner of the Kings Own Scottish Borderers Association pointed out to me this morning on the telephone, if all the Labour MPs who are affected by the military changes joined the Conservative, the Liberal Democrat and SNP members at Westminster, they could defeat the proposals. I agree with Roseanna Cunningham that they do not have the courage to do so. That is the reality. There is no point in trying to sell identity, as people understand that if regimental structures go, the identity will ultimately go.

The proposals are flawed, but they are political proposals. I was saddened when I read in the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* that Tony Blair—who was, unfortunately, unable to come to Dumfries to answer for himself—said that he was doing what he was doing because the military told him that he had to do so. He did not accept personal responsibility. Our serving soldiers and ex-servicemen would have much more respect for Mr Blair and his Labour colleagues if they were willing to say that they think that the proposals are a good thing and if they argued the case for them

rather than trying to pretend that things are being forced on them.

A lot has been said by Mike Rumbles and other members about Mike Jackson. However, Mike Jackson has made his position clear. He has been quoted as saying:

"I would much prefer increasing the size of the Army, but that's simply not on offer. I can either accept what's on offer—a reduced size of the Army—or go."

Major Jackson accepts that the decision is a political decision. There is still time to change that political decision.

I am sad that no minister has bothered to turn up for the debate. At least there was ministerial presence at Murdo Fraser's members' business debate.

During the afternoon, Labour MSPs can reflect on the position that they have taken today and perhaps still join us at this final hour so that there is a single voice from Scotland that says that we want our six regiments to be retained. Whatever the outcome of today's vote in the Scottish Parliament and whatever Geoff Hoon says in the Westminster Parliament, the one thing that Labour MSPs should be sure about is that the fight to retain our regiments will go on and the people who have the courage to fight will ultimately be victorious.

Reoffending

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-2158, in the name of Annabel Goldie, on justice issues with specific relevance to reoffending, and three amendments to the motion.

10:35

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): I am pleased to bring this debate to the Parliament and to speak to the motion in my name. The debate will enable the Executive's justice proposals to be examined. One might have thought that the Executive would have offered such an opportunity itself, but, of course, the Executive is—regrettably—no stranger to disrespect for the stature of the Parliament. It should come as no surprise at all that on 6 December the Minister for Justice launched Scotland's new criminal justice plan by press release. One might have thought that a plan that was described by the minister as "ambitious and wide-ranging" and that comprises five sections and 23 proposals would have merited at least a ministerial statement in the Parliament or an Executive debate. We all know that the Executive has debated far less important issues in the past, so surely an "ambitious and wide-ranging" plan merited parliamentary attention. Unfortunately, however, Executive arrogance transcends Executive accountability and, of course, parliamentary debates have the tiresome habit of being embarrassing for the Executive, which is certainly not part of the devolved governance game plan. Therefore, the Conservatives are pleased to rectify the Executive's omission and to bring the Executive's proposals to where they should have been brought in the first place—the floor of the chamber.

Of course, we should not be surprised that the Minister for Justice felt impelled to launch her criminal justice plan, but the public could be forgiven for asking where it has been. The Executive's record on crime is appalling. A crime is committed every 78 seconds. Since 1997, violent crime is up 16 per cent, vandalism is up 23 per cent, drug crime is up 38 per cent, figures for handling offensive weapons are up 49 per cent, figures for rape and attempted rape are up 34 per cent and homicide is up 20 per cent. Significant levels of unreported crime must be added to those figures. I am talking about retailers who cannot cope with the hassle of reporting shoplifting and about incidents involving broken windows, dented cars, disorderly behaviour and mindless acts of petty vandalism. Levels of reoffending are also giving cause for concern.

Therefore, an Executive criminal justice plan is overdue. Unfortunately, the plan is indicative of confusion, incoherence and paradox. For example, what is the underpinning strategy of the plan? I do not know and I suggest that no one else knows. However, I will offer a strategy. We should deter people from committing crime, detect them when they commit crime and, on conviction, ensure that the sentence reflects both the public's desire for punishment, protection and deterrence and the rehabilitation needs of the accused.

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): I have a brief question. What were the reoffending rates for various crimes under the Tories?

Miss Goldie: It is perfectly obvious from the statistics that I have just given that the overall rate of crime was significantly lower and that visible policing in our communities was significantly greater. There is a clear connection between the two.

I asked what the underpinning strategy should be. Do the five sections and 23 proposals offer implement of the strategy? They do not. We cannot protect communities and prevent crime as long as there are only 140 police officers on the beat at any one time throughout Scotland. Indeed, as more police officers are deployed by the First Minister for duty in our turbulent schools, the beat presence will diminish further. That is why we must prioritise the provision of more police officers, which alone would deter first offenders and repeat offenders from committing crime. Fear of being caught is an effective inhibitor. In addition, when the court considers that prison is the appropriate disposal, the sentence that is imposed should be the sentence that is served. That means an end to automatic early release, which my party has consistently advocated.

It is interesting that something seems to have penetrated the minister's mind. Apparently, she will consider ending automatic early release for prisoners who are convicted of sex offences. That is good, but to pick and mix who gets automatic early release and who does not is incoherent and illogical. If automatic early release should be ended for sex offenders, it should be ended for all offenders.

My party differs from Labour and the Liberal Democrats in that, instinctively, they do not like the concept of prison. They seek to avoid sending offenders to prison and to let those who are in prison out at the earliest opportunity.

Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): I listened carefully to what Miss Goldie said, but what is absent from her speech is any indication of how the Conservatives would try to break the cycle of reoffending through rehabilitation, training

or educational opportunities in prisons. All that they see is punishment.

Miss Goldie: That is not so. If Mr Raffan lets me continue, he will hear what he wants to hear.

The difference between my party and Labour and the Liberal Democrats is that my party regards prison as a sentencing necessity for certain convicted offenders. Where the courts deem that disposal appropriate, we would ensure that the capacity exists and that the full sentence is served. We are not coy about prison being a punishment, a deterrent and a necessary protection for the public, but we are insistent that the rehabilitation of prisoners and the preparation for their return to the community must be vastly improved, as must community support on release.

It is naive and simplistic to say that prison does not work when, under the Labour and Liberal Democrat regime, the full sentence is not served, rehabilitation is ineffectual, community support is frail or non-existent and there are not enough police officers in our communities to stop reoffending. It is true that we have full prisons but, proportionately, Spain sends nearly four times as many offenders to prison and its crime rate is about a quarter of ours. The picture in Ireland is similar.

Given the absence of any understandable drugs policy from the Executive it is no surprise that there is an unacceptably high proportion of prisoners with addictions who are offered no meaningful rehabilitation. My party supports drug testing and treatment orders at district court level, which would do a great deal to assist early intervention and rehabilitation and would reduce the pressure on our prisons.

In conclusion, the Executive's policies on crime have failed to address the fundamentals of deterrence and detection. While the Executive persists with the discredited option of automatic early release and neglects prisoner rehabilitation, unacceptable levels of crime and reoffending will continue.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the unacceptable rate of reoffending occurring in Scotland today; accepts that there is a place in our criminal justice system for a range of different sentencing options to address this problem but recognises that when a prison sentence is the appropriate disposal then prison is not simply a punishment but is intended to rehabilitate, deter and protect the public; believes that the way to reduce reoffending and subsequently the prison population is to reduce the overall incidence of crime in Scotland, and therefore calls on the Scottish Executive to increase the police presence in our communities to deter and detect crime and to end automatic early release from our prisons to ensure honesty in sentencing.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Hugh Henry to speak to and move amendment S2M-2158.3.

10:42

The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry): I am sorry, Presiding Officer. You took me by surprise. I thought that I was merely speaking at the end of the debate but obviously the arrangements have changed somewhat.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): The minister should give us his summing-up speech.

Hugh Henry: Members may well hear it twice.

I never fail to be astonished at the effrontery and sheer brass neck of the Conservatives when they try to lecture the rest of us on what should or should not be done in our communities. Annabel Goldie talks about police numbers, but does she seriously want us to go back to the level of policing that was available in our communities under the Conservatives? Does she want us to cut the number of officers patrolling the streets so that we reach the level that was established by the Conservatives? The truth is that since the Tories were kicked out of government we have increased the number of police who are available in our communities—

Miss Goldie: Will the minister take an intervention?

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): Will the minister take an intervention?

Hugh Henry: I will take an intervention in a few minutes. The members should let me get started—I am just warming up.

We have steadily increased police numbers. Since the Executive came to power, the partnership has delivered extra police on our streets. We are going further: we have also significantly increased funding for police services. Between 1999-2000 and 2004-05, spending on police increased by 31 per cent—more than twice the rate of inflation—and it will rise by a further 17 per cent in the period to 2007-08. We do not want crocodile tears from the Conservatives or their hypocrisy when they talk about police numbers.

Miss Goldie: The minister says that there are increased numbers of police, but does he accept that that has not meant more police in our communities? There has been a requirement to recruit more police officers to deal with the greatly expanded office duties in relation to issues such as the Macpherson report, asylum seekers, management of the sex offenders register and dealing with the European convention on human rights. Does the minister accept the Association of

Chief Police Officers in Scotland's view that increased resource is being deployed more readily towards technology and office back-up rather than towards putting policemen and policewomen back in our communities?

Hugh Henry: There is a range of complicated issues in Annabel Goldie's comments. We are committed to ensuring that police officers do the job for which we employ them and we are making sure that they are taken away from jobs that can be done more effectively by other people. We want the police to tackle crime and we have a record of commitment in relation to that. It is true that we now live in a more complex society but it is for the chief constables to decide how to use the record resources.

We should reflect on what Audit Scotland said in a recent report on police and fire performance indicators: clear-up rates for recorded crime are at the highest ever level, housebreaking is down, car crime is down and drug seizures continue apace.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): Will the minister confirm that, unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of drug seizures are still of cannabis and not the most dangerous drugs, such as heroin and coke?

Hugh Henry: I certainly want more seizures of drugs such as heroin and cocaine and we must remain vigilant about our continuing drug problem. However, the number of crimes recorded by the police is at its lowest level for nearly a quarter of a century. We should try to put some perspective—

Margaret Mitchell: Will the minister take an intervention?

Hugh Henry: No, thanks. I have taken two interventions already.

We must put the debate in perspective. It is for that reason that we tried to bring some sensible structure to the debate on what we do on crime, criminality and offending in Scotland, and that is why the Minister for Justice brought forward her proposals to tackle reoffending. We have taken a number of steps in relation to police and enforcement, including consideration of court reform, a comprehensive programme of modernisation of prosecution services, the Vulnerable Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2004 and hugely expanded youth justice programmes, but we know that there are other, more complicated issues that we need to address.

Why do so many people in this country go to prison and why do so many people reoffend when they come out? Is there a better way to address the problem? I pay tribute to members of the Justice 1 Committee, who are examining in a detailed manner what can be done to tackle that pernicious problem. It is a cheap shot for Annabel

Goldie to say that the Executive opposes sending people to prison. The Minister for Justice has made it clear that she believes that those who commit serious offences should spend a serious length of time in prison. Prison is about not just rehabilitation but punishment and the protection of the community, and we have demonstrated clearly that we are committed to that.

Mr Raffan: Does the minister agree that the Conservatives have shown time and again their failure to understand the complexity of drug misuse? The whole point of DTTOs and drugs courts is to get drug addicts into treatment and recovery and so break the cycle of reoffending. That is how we should treat people—unless they are guilty of serious offences—rather than sending them to prison, which is a waste of time.

Hugh Henry: Keith Raffan probably gives too much credit to the Conservatives. I do not think that they have a clue about what they want to do in relation to criminality and offending.

We believe that prisons are an important part of our judicial system. They are places where people should be punished and the community should be protected by our putting people away, but we must recognise that there is a certain point in a sentence when many people come back out into the community and we need to prepare them appropriately.

Stewart Stevenson: Will the member take an intervention?

Hugh Henry: I do not have time.

In "Supporting Safer, Stronger Communities: Scotland's Criminal Justice Plan", we unveiled an ambitious and wide-ranging programme to reduce reoffending. We believe that we need to press forward with reforms to protect communities, prevent crime and tackle drug-related crime. We want to continue to reform our courts, and we need effective interventions.

The Minister for Justice is clear that we can start to make a difference: by bringing together different parties and getting the Scottish Prison Service to communicate with local authorities more effectively; by creating new community justice authorities; by getting people to co-operate at a local level; and by having an overarching, strategic national framework with local delivery.

We need to reflect on why people are failing when they come back out of prison. It is right to ensure that someone at a local level takes responsibility. For too long, no one took responsibility: work was done in prisons and in the community, but there was no consistency or continuity and people fell through the gaps. Local community justice authorities will have responsibility for tackling reoffending and ensuring

that there is joined-up thinking. The minister has reserved the power to take action if those authorities should fail.

We have listened carefully to people who told us to leave the staff where they are just now and to leave responsibility with people locally, albeit in some new configurations. We agree with that and will work with people in their local areas. We want to ensure that they engage more effectively with the Scottish Prison Service and that the Scottish Prison Service engages more effectively with them.

I argue that what we have set out in our criminal justice plan is a very radical proposal, and I think that it will be effective. I must say in all honesty—not just to the Conservatives, who prompted the debate, but to other members of the Parliament—that there is no easy solution. We would be doing a disservice to the Parliament, to communities and to the wider public if we thought that we could come forward with a cheap slogan that would solve everything within a couple of months.

Some of the issues that Kenny MacAskill raises in his amendment are the right ones. What is it about our society, in which people drink too much, take drugs and turn to violence, which makes it different from some other societies in Europe and other western countries? We must get behind and address some of those problems. If we do nothing else, we will serve the country well if we encourage a mature and sensible debate.

The Tories are, yet again, scrabbling for some cheap votes with some cheap shots on issues that they do not really understand. Instead, we need a mature debate, which I think should continue for a number of months. I hope that we can reach some consensus in the Parliament on this issue.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Would you move your amendment?

Hugh Henry: Sorry, Presiding Officer. I move amendment S2M-2158.3, to leave out from “unacceptable” to end and insert:

“Criminal Justice Plan’s acknowledgement that the rate of reoffending occurring in Scotland today is unacceptable; agrees that prison should be used where prison is the appropriate punishment but notes that prison is also intended to rehabilitate the offender, deter the prospective offender and protect the public; agrees that prison must sit within a range of different sentencing options to address reoffending, and therefore notes the increase in police numbers compared to the numbers delivered by the Conservatives, the establishment of the Sentencing Commission to consider a number of issues including early release, and that the recently published Criminal Justice Plan includes measures to tackle Scotland’s high reoffending rates, reduce crime and the fear of crime and strengthen confidence in the country’s criminal justice services.”

10:53

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): I would have been happy to have moved the Deputy Minister for Justice’s amendment as well as my own. We have no real difficulty with its tenor, nor do we have much difficulty with most of the minister’s rhetoric. This appears to be an area in which we require to work together, not fall apart.

I fundamentally disagree with one part of Annabel Goldie’s speech. Perhaps I picked her up wrongly, but she seemed to say that because sex offenders are dealt with in one particular way, other offenders should be dealt with in the same way. I do not believe that, rationally, it is possible to deliver that. A small number of sexual predators are deeply dangerous and are not capable of the rationalisation that is required. They might not be mentally ill or capable of being treated in prison, but they might be either sociopathic or psychopathic and they need to be dealt with differently from other prisoners. To say that that small handful—thankfully, it is just a small handful—should dictate how everybody else is dealt with is not acceptable.

Margaret Mitchell: Does the member agree that, in any criminal justice system, there must be equality of treatment and that honesty in the sentencing of one offender should mean honesty in the sentencing of every offender?

Mr MacAskill: It must depend on the individual. If somebody is incapable of making a rational decision or is deeply dangerous because of some psychological flaw, it is our duty as a Parliament and as a society to deal with that person differently. A handful of people out there—as I said, thankfully, it is only a small handful—are deeply dangerous and we know them to be capable of reoffending if they are released. They are ticking time bombs. To say that somebody who has free will and choice and who has stolen a hunk of meat from a shop should be dealt with in the same way as a dangerous sexual predator is patently not correct. We have to deal with such dangerous people differently. Sadly, they exist and we cannot treat all prisoners in the same way as we treat that deeply dangerous minority.

Is there a role for prison in society? Absolutely. There is clearly a need to deal with dangerous people, from whom we have to be protected. Some offences are of such magnitude and of such gravity that none of the available sentences other than imprisonment is appropriate, even if the offender is not dangerous. However, that necessary role of prison is not one of crime control or prevention; it is the sentence of last resort. Simply imposing prison sentences will not dissuade people from committing crime. We must examine other methods, particularly rehabilitation. There are far too many people in prison, including

fine defaulters and people serving various short-term sentences. None of those people is capable of being rehabilitated or reformed in any way by prison; we are simply containing them for a period of time. In many instances, we are making circumstances worse.

I sat in on committee meetings listening to the evidence of Andrew McLellan and others as various questions were being asked. What is it that encourages somebody not to reoffend? Do they have a home to go to? Do they have employment that they can access? Do they have a family? In many instances, people who are locked up for a short sentence lose their employment and their tenancy and break their relationships with their parents, partner and whomever else, and the likelihood of their reoffending escalates. That is why short-term sentences do not work.

Sadly, Scotland is heading towards having the highest per capita prison population in western Europe. There are many European league tables that we should aspire to lead, such as those on economic growth, pension provision for the elderly and social provision for the needy. However, I certainly do not include banging up more people in our society than in any other civilised democratic community in western Europe among those aspirations. The Executive is culpable of doing that at the moment, and the Tories want to escalate the rate of sending people to prison.

Miss Goldie: Would Mr MacAskill care to comment further on the situation in Spain?

Mr MacAskill: Not particularly. The fact is that we are heading towards having the highest per capita prison population. That is something that we cannot take pride in. I agree with the points that Mr Henry made about that.

Our kids are not genetically programmed to commit more crime than youngsters in Dublin, Stockholm or anywhere else. The reasons have to lie elsewhere. There must be other factors, not just with regard to what causes crime but with regard to how other countries address the punishment for the crime. Simply to aim to bang up more people is a counsel of despair. I agree with the minister that there is no one magic bullet or easy solution to curing crime and the social problems that go with it.

Poverty is no excuse as far as causing crime is concerned. Societies that are far poorer than ours have lower crime rates. We had significantly greater poverty in this country in the 1920s and 1930s, yet crime was not at the same levels then. There is still clearly a link, however, and if people deny that link, they deny the obvious solution: we must address mass unemployment, social dislocation, community fragmentation and family fragmentation, all of which have occurred. In the

1980s, when the Tories brought in their new great hope under Thatcherism, they ruined many areas by creating mass unemployment overnight. Into the vacuum where once there was labour, toil and work, there came heroin into the veins of many people. The Tories stand culpable of that. It might not have been their intention, but that was the outcome, and they should show some humility.

Margaret Mitchell rose—

Miss Goldie: Will the member give way?

Mr MacAskill: I will take an intervention from either member.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Margaret Mitchell was up first.

Margaret Mitchell: Does the member accept that many of the people who are entering prison now have no experience of work and that it is possible to introduce them to work in prison, as a result of which their chances of employment are increased, which in turn stops them reoffending?

Mr MacAskill: No, I do not accept that as far as short sentences are concerned. When I met Mr Croft, the governor of Saughton prison, he pointed out that any sentence under six months was useless. The prisoner has a four-week induction period and another four-week period at the end prior to getting out. Most courses last a minimum of 20 weeks. Courtesy of simple arithmetic, unless people are sentenced to at least 28 weeks, there is nothing that the SPS can do with them other than simply control or contain them. Therefore, such short sentences do not work. In fact, they lose people employment prospects, rather than provide people with any skills with which to gain employment.

Although there is no simple solution, we should try to develop some consensus about where we go from here. That will need the Executive to trim a bit, and it will require members of Opposition parties to give a bit more. We cannot have a stop-start approach or keep chopping and changing. We cannot limit ourselves to one method, as there is no simple solution that will work overnight. Drug testing and alcohol rehab will not change our society overnight, because we are dealing with problems that have come about over two or three generations of long-term, deep-seated unemployment, in households where there is no work, no father figure and so on.

We need to work together to achieve a consensus. However, that consensus must not be simply to lock 'em up or hang 'em high. We must be tough on crime and must ensure that individuals take responsibility for their actions, but fundamentally our society and the Parliament that represents it must take responsibility for all our

citizens and communities and solve many of their social problems.

I move amendment S2M-2158.2, to leave out from "accepts" to end and insert:

"further notes that the causes of crime are manifold, involving social and economic dislocation and family and community fragmentation with drink, drugs and deprivation remaining at the root of much crime and antisocial behaviour; notes with concern that Scotland is heading towards having the highest per capita prison population in western Europe; calls, therefore, for a visible police presence in our communities and for prison to be reserved for serious and dangerous offenders; calls for action to be taken to ensure that community-based disposals are available for minor offences to ensure rehabilitation and best use of public funds; calls, therefore, on the Executive to ensure that it is not only tough on crime but tough on the causes of crime, and recognises that the solutions are multifaceted and require individuals to take responsibility for their own actions and for society to take responsibility for all its communities."

11:00

Colin Fox (Lothians) (SSP): I welcome this debate—[*Interruption.*] The bottles are starting to fly.

I begin by making the point that the number of people whom we send to prison is ultimately a political decision, rather than a judicial decision. In recent years, the prevalent political mood has been to send more and more people to jail for longer and longer. As Kenny MacAskill said, we build more jails and break more records annually for the number of people whom we incarcerate. The Conservative claims that the Scottish Executive does not trust prison and is not serious about sending people there are not backed up by the facts.

It is time to acknowledge that the prevailing political mood has been unhelpful in reducing reoffending levels and has failed to address the deep-seated problems in Scotland that relate to offending and reoffending levels. As the Deputy Minister for Justice knows, many people have said for a long time that sending people to jail for longer does nothing to reduce levels of offending and reoffending in our society. Among them is Professor Jacqueline Tombs of the Scottish Consortium on Crime and Criminal Justice, who has been proved correct yet again. The prevailing attitude, from which the Executive has done too little to dissuade people, is that prisons are holiday camps and that non-custodial sentences are soft options. Today our courts sentence more people to longer prison sentences than they did 10 years ago.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Colin Fox will have heard Stewart Stevenson's intervention about reoffending levels under the Conservatives. Does he acknowledge that those

levels rose only after we mistakenly introduced automatic ending of sentences when they were only halfway through?

Colin Fox: I am delighted that we have already secured an admission and an apology from the Tories. I hope that that is not the last one in the debate.

I hope that members will address the attitude that I have mentioned, examine where we are failing and accept that a change in direction is badly needed. As other members have indicated, reoffending rates are immensely disappointing. Eighty per cent of male offenders under 21 reoffend within two years and 82 per cent of all jail terms are for less than six months. The Scottish Prison Service admits that it can do little to alter the offending behaviour of people in that category.

Over the past year, as the Scottish Socialist Party's justice spokesperson, I have taken the opportunity to visit a number of Scotland's prisons. I am repeatedly told by the governors and staff whom I meet that the vast bulk of prisoners in their care ought not to be there. Eighty to 90 per cent of the prisoners in our prisons represent no threat to the public and are there because of a mental health problem or drug or alcohol addiction. Prisons are not the place in which to address the problems of people with those conditions and to rehabilitate them.

To add insult to injury, it is well established that first-time offenders often learn things in prison that ensure that they come out with worse attitudes than those with which they went in. When the Scottish Prison Service forecasts—as it did last month—that, on current trends, the Scottish prison population will reach 10,000 in the next decade, it is surely impetus enough for action and progress on this matter.

We need an altogether more imaginative and determined approach if we are to insist that offenders challenge their offending behaviour and, in return, help them to return to the straight and narrow. The cost per prisoner is £33,800 per annum, which is a costly failure.

I recognise the need for a range of sentencing options, as the minister and others have said. Diversionary activities and action to tackle the roots of the problem are particularly important. All criminal justice professionals agree that the most effective intervention is that which nips the problem in the bud. I support community programmes and restorative justice programmes. I also support the constructs programme to which the Executive referred in the document that it published last week. Those are steps in the right direction, although the constructs programme looks like an admission that strangling the

Airborne Initiative was a mistake. I also welcome the home detention curfews.

All members of the Parliament accept that communities throughout Scotland express a strong desire—which Annabel Goldie was right to highlight—for a local community police presence, dedicated to supporting the community's needs and answerable to it. The minister might want to reflect on the fact that, although the number of police has risen, they are not arriving in the communities that desire and need them.

There is a danger in the attitude that the courts currently take to community disposals and the fact that such disposals are being used for lower-end tariffs—to avoid fines, fiscal warnings and so on—rather than as an alternative to jail. We need to put more funding into community options, residential drug and alcohol rehab facilities, supported accommodation, community service orders and other measures. I look forward to resources being made available, so that if we turn in that direction, facilities are properly resourced and managed.

The Sentencing Commission must examine the public's failing confidence in the automatic early-release scheme. As other members have highlighted, it is illogical for an offender who is sentenced for four years to be out in two. The public are showing signs of losing confidence in the system. In principle, good behaviour should be rewarded and there should be earned remission. I am sure that the minister will give a commitment to consider that question.

I move amendment S2M-2158.1, to leave out from “the way” to end and insert:

“, since 80% of male and female prisoners represent no danger to the public, non-custodial sentences should be given much greater consideration and support; calls on the Scottish Executive to provide more specially-trained community police officers accountable to the communities that they serve in order to increase public confidence in the justice system, and reaffirms that, in cases where serious crimes have been committed, remission should be earned and fully recognised by both the wider community and the prison population itself.”

11:07

Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD): I agree with much of what Kenny MacAskill and Colin Fox have said, and with much of Kenny's amendment.

Preventing prisoners from reoffending is one of the key jobs of all the agencies that manage the rehabilitation of offenders. I find it amazing that today the Tory party has given us only an hour and a quarter to debate this important issue. It has been debated a number of times during Executive business, but today's debate is too short. That shows that the Tories have little to say on the matter, except that we should scrap early release and lock up people for as long as possible. During

the Tory years, that approach led to 70 to 80 per cent of juveniles reoffending.

Kenny MacAskill covered extremely well the thorny question of early release for sex offenders and I agree with his comments. The issue is being addressed by the Minister for Justice, and the Sentencing Commission will make its recommendations in due course.

Why are short prison sentences still seen as a solution for small-scale criminals? Although losing their liberty for long periods is the key punishment for those who have committed the most callous crimes, we must accept, as other members have said, that at present 82 per cent of prison sentences are for less than six months and that there is no statutory aftercare or supervision for those sentenced to less than four years. Prison is not working. Twenty per cent of the people in prison are there for fine defaulting, which is clearly ludicrous.

The Executive is tackling the problem with a criminal justice plan. Electronic tagging will become more widespread and more use should be made of it. We will also combine more community and custodial sentences. It is okay for the Tories to pander to the climate of fear that has been created in the United Kingdom and to plan to lock up people for longer, but that is not acceptable. We need to do more to show victims that strong restorative sentences provide the justice that they seek and reduce reoffending.

Restorative justice, with work to reduce reoffending, should be our twin-track approach to dealing with those convicted of a majority of crimes. The current figure of 55 per cent for those sentenced to between three and six months in prison is too high. The figure of 60 per cent for those who reoffend within two years is also too high.

I believe that the Executive has introduced policies that will improve the situation; indeed, the Liberal Democrats have put rehabilitation and restorative justice at the top of the justice agenda. That agenda will end unnecessary custodial sentences while ensuring that those who are convicted of serious crimes get the long sentences and rehabilitation in prison that they deserve and need.

Miss Goldie: Mr Pringle says that the answer to these difficulties is to divert many more offenders to community-based services. However, “Scotland's Criminal Justice Plan” refers to a proposal to fund 400 front-line police and social workers. Will he indicate how many of those will be social workers, whose burden of responsibility will increase significantly under his proposals, and how many will be police officers?

Mike Pringle: That has still to be worked out. As members have pointed out, we have put more policemen on the streets and into police services. The Executive is also addressing the fact that we need more social workers and is trying to encourage more and more of them to come through.

People released from prison need a home and a family to go to and must be supported. I recently visited the Fairbridge project, which has had an 80 per cent success rate in its efforts to support young people who are released from prison. In more ways than one, such an approach is far more effective than the draconian policies of the Conservative party, to my right.

I am glad to see that the Executive has listened to the consultation responses and some MSPs and has scrapped its plans for a single correctional agency. Such a move would have sent out the wrong message.

Margaret Mitchell: Will the member give way?

Mike Pringle: I am sorry, but I do not have the time.

I am pleased that the Executive will make it a statutory requirement for the Scottish Prison Service and local authorities to work together to ensure that they form effective local partnerships. That approach will mean that work will be as joined up as is necessary to get resources to those who need it most and will allow for things to be done outside traditional council boundaries.

I conclude by sharing with the chamber some of the good practice that is going on through a number of Executive-funded pilot projects to cut youth reoffending. During the Justice 2 Committee's inquiry into youth justice, Marlyn Glen and I visited the Dundee youth justice group, which brings together all the agencies in the city that work with young people and deals with problems such as truancy and exclusion that can lead young people into crime. The group also spearheads a zero-tolerance approach to youth crime in which all young offenders are fast-tracked into the system. That allows people to be dealt with quickly, which is what victims want.

However, the approach is two-pronged. For example, diversionary schemes to stop offending, such as midnight football leagues and other activities, have also been introduced. When we met offenders, they highlighted time and again the same problem of boredom, and we need to prevent first-offending as much as we need to stop reoffending. Crucial to the scheme is the victims of youth crime group, which helps to reduce people's fear of crime in their communities by keeping victims informed of what is going on. I hope that the chamber supports my view that such best practice should be rolled out across the country.

I call on members to support the Executive's amendment today and send out a clear signal that we will not return to the hang 'em and flog 'em policies of the Tories or their vague alternatives, but will work to reduce short-term prison use, provide real justice for victims and ensure that we get the reoffending rate down as quickly as possible.

11:14

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): The Deputy Minister for Justice got off on the wrong foot this morning, but I give him some urgent reassurance. We accept that these matters are complex and that there is no easy solution, but he must accept that time and again, in arguing against his approach, my colleagues and I have suggested cogent and reasoned solutions that would make for a safer Scotland.

I point out also that the Minister for Justice's announcements last week all centred on keeping people out of jail. The bottom line is that there is a mood abroad in the Executive that no prison sentences should be imposed for summary criminal charges. I know that the Executive holds that view, but it does not have the courage to introduce any such proposals.

We must be allowed to find out how we can make non-custodial alternatives work. For example, the last time that I looked, something like 83 per cent of cases in which a penalty was imposed involved a fine, but the most recent statistics state that the amount of unpaid fines comes to almost £6.5 million. People are simply not paying these penalties because the custodial alternatives are absolutely derisory. As we have said in the past, the answer is simple: fines should be deducted at source, from either salaries or benefits. The Executive refuses to go down that route.

As for other disposals, such as community service orders, the minister was quite right to point out that reoffending is a real problem, particularly for those who serve short prison sentences. However, the reoffending rate for people on community service is only about 2 per cent below the reoffending rate for people who have served prison sentences. The reason for the problem is quite simple: by the time that people go to jail or are subject to a community service order as a direct alternative to custody, they are already quite far down the criminal justice road.

Stewart Stevenson: I wonder whether Mr Aitken can provide the source of that information. My information suggests that the reoffending rate for people on community service is two thirds that of the reoffending rate for people who go to prison.

Bill Aitken: I do not have the figures to hand, but what I have said is my clear recollection of them.

Moving on, I believe that drug treatment and testing orders have their place in the criminal justice system, but why does someone have to be a multiple and repeat offender before they can receive such treatment? What about people such as shoplifters and the street prostitutes in Glasgow, many of whom are anxious to stop committing offences? How do they manage to get drug treatment? The simple answer is that if they want such treatment quickly, they must commit offence after offence until they can access the drugs court.

It is not good enough for Mike Pringle to say that there are more policemen in service and on the streets. Frankly, because of the other duties that the Executive has imposed on them, they are not out there providing reassurance. In fact, the policemen who have been taken off court duties are now part of the support unit patrolling the courts. The Executive has many questions to answer on these matters.

11:18

Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the Tories' debate, not least because their record on crime during their bleak years of power was abysmal. Under the Tories, crime doubled and the number of criminals who were convicted fell by a third; and a future Tory Administration would ensure that UK public spending would be cut by £20 billion.

To be honest, I did not quite know where to start in highlighting Tory double-talk on crime and public spending. On the one hand, the Scottish Tories tell us that they will substantially increase the number of police and procurators fiscal while, on the other, they say that they remain committed to cutting taxes and reducing public spending in the UK by £20 billion. Perhaps they will try to persuade the police and fiscals to offer their services on a purely voluntary basis—or perhaps they are just not serious about their commitments in this Parliament.

In a speech that he made on 4 December, David McLetchie conceded:

"In the longer term, the best way of reducing crime is by strengthening the bonds of what Oliver Letwin ... called the 'Neighbourly Society'".

However, his party believes that communities can be built and strengthened by cutting public spending and services.

Moreover, in his speech to the Conservative party conference on 7 March 2003, Mr McLetchie stated:

"Crime affects all of us to a greater or lesser extent whether we live in urban or rural environments. But, cruelly, it impacts disproportionately on some of the most vulnerable people in our society—the poor, older people, youngsters drawn into drug abuse and many within ... ethnic communities."

Does Mr McLetchie really believe that the way to help those most vulnerable groups is to cut public spending? Does the Tory party really believe that cutting financial support to drug rehabilitation projects, family support projects and the myriad other voluntary and community programmes that help to sustain our communities, in particular our poorest communities, is the best way to help them?

Miss Goldie: I am obviously reluctant to disturb the trail of fantasy, but I have to ask Karen Whitefield why, after five and a half years of Executive governance at devolved level in Scotland, we are in the position that we are in?

Karen Whitefield: I have to say that I was somewhat taken aback by Annabel Goldie's crocodile tears earlier today when she told us how concerned she was about vandalism and crime in communities. When I sat on the Justice 2 Committee with her, she was not too keen to support our proposals on antisocial behaviour, so I am not too convinced that she is serious about tackling the problems.

A Conservative Government would have real consequences for the people of Scotland. It would mean cuts to services, cuts in support for voluntary organisations and increased pressures on the very communities about which the Tories tell us they are suddenly so concerned. We have only to look at their time in government to see the reality. Between 1993 and 1997, the back-to-basics Tory Government actually cut police numbers in the UK by 1,132, and between 1979 and 1997, recorded crime rose by 81 per cent.

There is much more that I would like to say about some of the things that the present Government has done, in particular our Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004, our youth courts and our greater protection for vulnerable witnesses, to some of which Annabel Goldie was most vociferous in her opposition.

During their disastrous time in office, the Tories proved that they could not be trusted with the economy, they could not be trusted with jobs and they most certainly could not be trusted with our health service. They certainly cannot be trusted with crime, so nothing has changed. The Tories cannot even be trusted to be honest with the electorate in promising cuts in taxes, cuts in spending and, at the same time, increased resources to fight crime. They certainly cannot be allowed to rewrite history, as Annabel Goldie attempted to do today. The people of Scotland

have long memories and will not be easily fooled. I urge everybody to reject the Tory motion.

11:22

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): There is at least one thing that most of us will welcome in Annabel Goldie's motion—the recognition that the level of reoffending is, indeed, too high. However, it is clear that people on all sides of the debate recognise that. Hugh Henry's amendment recognises our failure as a society as a whole, which is important, but that recognition comes from all sides. Therefore, I question the tone in which the debate has been presented. It seems as if the Conservatives think that they are the only party with an agenda with any value or meaning.

Margaret Mitchell: Will Mr Harvie take an intervention?

Patrick Harvie: I would like to make some progress with my speech, and I have only four minutes.

I question some aspects of the Executive's approach, but I come from a completely different angle from Annabel Goldie. I question the idea of prison as a source of retribution and the idea that retribution is a purpose of the criminal justice system. So far, we have had more talk than action on rehabilitation and alternatives to custody.

Hugh Henry: Will Mr Harvie take an intervention?

Patrick Harvie: I am sorry, but I have only four minutes. I hope that Mr Henry will make his point in summing up.

However, I do not think that anyone would argue that the Executive has nothing valuable or meaningful to say in that regard.

I will deal with the motion and amendments. The call has come, as it has so often, for more police officers. It is important for us to recognise that, even though the increased numbers of police officers might not always be getting on to the streets and into the communities where they are needed, the other work that they are doing is not without value. When Annabel Goldie criticises all the other work that the police service does, that undervalues what the police are doing.

Miss Goldie: Will Mr Harvie take an intervention?

Patrick Harvie: I hope that Annabel Goldie will come back to that point in summing up, but I am afraid that, with only four minutes, I have to move on.

The purposes of prison are to punish, to deter, to protect and to rehabilitate, but no one seems to question what happens when those purposes

conflict. Anyone who has been into a prison must surely question the ability of the modern prison environment to be a rehabilitative force in someone's life.

I also question the idea that prison works. Annabel Goldie wanted to accuse Labour and the Liberal Democrats of instinctively disliking prison, and she expected them to deny the charge. I admit that I instinctively feel uncomfortable with prison. I accept that any society must, from time to time, use prison, but it is an unpleasant duty and we should use it as sparingly as possible. Instinctively, I dislike it and I do not think that it works.

On Kenny MacAskill's amendment, I had a great deal of sympathy with his words, which he spoke with passion. In particular, he argued quite clearly and convincingly that short prison sentences of six months or less have no meaningful potential to rehabilitate or to allow positive interventions. More than that, they disturb, disrupt and destroy existing life circumstances. That is an argument not for longer sentences, of course, but for alternatives to custody. I have a great deal of sympathy with Kenny MacAskill's amendment, as I do with Colin Fox's amendment, which also deserves support. Colin reminded us of the offensive reality that we are locking up, as a form of punishment, people whose behaviour is the result of health problems—more so than the "Prison works" brigade would like us to admit.

We should acknowledge what the Executive is doing, but we should urge it to go further and not to listen to the Tory call for more and longer prison sentences. Victim-offender mediation should be at the core of our sentencing policy. The Executive should end short-term sentences and should transform our prisons into genuinely rehabilitative environments.

11:27

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I rise to speak with a social justice hat on. As many people say, the causes of crime are manifold and are often rooted in impoverished societies, where people have little opportunity. For that reason, I think that the Tory motion is simplistic. It states the belief that

"the way to reduce reoffending and subsequently the prison population is to reduce the overall incidence of crime in Scotland"—

quite, but how is that to be done?—and goes on to say that the Parliament

"therefore calls on the Scottish Executive to increase the police presence".

That will not get rid of reoffending or of the reasons why crimes are committed.

There are well-documented links between poverty and crime, whether someone is the perpetrator or the victim. There is anecdotal evidence and visible evidence. If people live in one of those awfully described sink estates, they are more likely to be victims of crime and perhaps to be criminals themselves. There is nothing to give people ambition and achievement. There are children living on those estates who are born to fail, not just materially but because the educational opportunities and so on are not there for them. The situation has got worse since the post-war period. Post-war, people could move out of those situations; they could move from their council house schemes, but now people are quite often geographically trapped in those areas for generations.

We have to seek serious solutions and have a serious debate about why, five years down the road, we have more people in prison and more crimes. What is being done is obviously wrong in many respects. There are people who must be in prison to protect public safety and sometimes, though not always, property. However, I was on the Justice 1 Committee for four years and I am hearing things said in the chamber today that I heard four years ago. There is not time in prison for the majority of prisoners to undergo any kind of rehabilitation. There is not a substantial throughcare system to prevent prisoners who are released from going straight back into the situations that they were in before.

Statistics for poverty are really quite striking. There are nearly twice as many people in the UK who have relatively low incomes as there were 25 years ago. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's statistics are UK-wide statistics, but they link to Scotland, where we are actually worse off. According to those statistics, one child in five is living in a family that receives means-tested benefits. One child in three in Scotland lives in poverty. As I have said before, they are born to fail—even more so if they live in Glasgow, where there are 28 council wards where more than half of all children are in families receiving out-of-work, means-tested benefits. It is in those areas that we have a culture of drugs and alcoholism. Alcoholism fuels violence and violent crime and drugs fuel the petty crimes of theft, often against people in their own communities who are as poor as the perpetrators themselves are.

What I propose is not a soft option. We are not going soft on crime. We are trying to present substantive solutions. I know that the First Minister and the Minister for Justice have recognised that something must be done. "Supporting Safer, Stronger Communities: Scotland's Criminal Justice Plan" states:

"We know that an important element of reducing crime is

reducing exclusion and supporting families and children at risk",

part of which is to

"Prevent individuals or families from falling into poverty."

The First Minister did not take that on the chin when I asked him about it at First Minister's question time last week.

I quote from the Joseph Rowntree report, which states:

"the corrosive effect on society as a whole has become apparent, and tackling disadvantage cannot be seen just as a priority for helping one sectional interest with limited electoral clout."

We sometimes target effort in that way and that is wrong.

It is not easy to get the papers to report a debate in which we say, "The Scottish Parliament has decided to tackle poverty to reduce crime"—that is not very good for the tabloids—but it is a more substantial way forward than to say, "Let us have more police in the communities," which will not solve the problem.

11:31

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab):

Initially, I was surprised when I read the Tory motion. Until I got to the end of it, I thought that it could not be a Tory motion. I cannot disagree with much of what is said at the beginning; it is all so simple. We should reduce crime by having more police on the street and that, in turn, will reduce the prison population. It is a very simplistic analysis to say that prison works. The number of criminologists and people who study crime as a profession tells us that the issue is complex.

There is a rising prison population for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons is the lack of options in which the judiciary has faith, which is one of the matters that "Scotland's Criminal Justice Plan" addresses.

Labour believes in prison—let us get that straight. However, we believe in prison when it is appropriate and when it is the right sanction. There is a serious problem in our prison system. We know from Andrew McLellan's most recent reports that overcrowding is now so serious that it is holding back any real prospect of rehabilitation of our prisoners. Overcrowding means that so much time is spent managing our prisons that there is little time to address other issues. We must also address drug misuse in our prisons to create the time to rehabilitate prisoners.

Rehabilitation is just a word that we use to identify what we can do on society's behalf to support prisoners in an attempt to break the cycle of reoffending. Rehabilitation is not only about

cognitive skills and anger management; it is about education, training for employment and a variety of other matters.

I commend Kenny MacAskill for his speech and I cannot disagree with a word of what he said. There cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. Therefore, it is right to change the criminal justice system in its entirety to assess the issues that individual prisoners face. That is why I have a lot of faith in "Scotland's Criminal Justice Plan". For too long we have seen prisoners as a homogeneous group, when in fact there are a range of prisoners with a complex range of needs. We must ensure that we bear that in mind when we discuss the issue.

The logic of the Tory argument is that we will continue to lock up more offenders. If that is the case, we must accept that we will have to build even more prisons, but I have not heard proposals from the Tories on how to do that.

I whole-heartedly support the idea that there should be a single system. The prison system has been isolated from other parts of the criminal justice system for too long. It is obvious that continuity in sentence management is crucial. Many prisoners have previously been on schemes in the community and their participation is disrupted when they go into prison. It is crucial that the new arrangement ensures that we pick up those offenders.

Kenny MacAskill is right to say that there are issues about the rehabilitation of prisoners during short-term sentences; however, I am not in favour of abolishing short-term sentences. We must manage short-term sentences in the same way as we manage long-term sentences. We must do what we can when the person is in prison and recognise that things must also be done outwith prison. Issues relating to the Parole Board for Scotland must be addressed.

Community sentencing is said to be a better alternative to prison. We should stop making broad assumptions. It is clear that a period spent in custody disrupts a person's life, and that it is harder for them to get their life back after they have been in prison. We must see community sentencing as a different option in its own right. We need transparency not only in prison sentencing, but in community sentencing.

11:35

Colin Fox: The Deputy Minister for Justice said that he hoped we would have a mature and sensible date on what is a complex issue. I believe that a great deal that is of value has been said in the debate.

I share Patrick Harvie's instinctive dislike of prisons and his concerns about the slogan "Prison

works". My attitude is that in some cases we need prisons, but I have always been of the view that prison is the punishment. People are not sent to prison to be punished further; the punishment is that they have had their liberty taken from them. I share Patrick Harvie's sentiments.

There are contradictory currents in the debate. Annabel Goldie accuses the Executive of not being serious about sending people to prison. My complaint is precisely the opposite. I believe that the Executive is being too serious about sending people to prison. That is why we have record numbers of people in jail—as Kenny MacAskill says, we are close to having the highest per capita prison population in western Europe—and it is why further prison-building programmes are in the pipeline.

The Deputy Minister for Justice will remember that we have discussed the issue before. We are trying to get offenders to address their behaviour to prevent them from reoffending. Thirty eight per cent of prisoners under the age of 21 have been in care and 65 per cent of prisoners, who are in our care, have numeracy and literacy levels of an 11-year-old. On admission to Cornton Vale prison, 90 per cent of the women have drug dependency problems. I remind members that that is the constituency of people with whom we are dealing.

The Deputy Minister for Justice talked about the Executive's plan that was announced last week to establish a national advisory board and to force the Scottish Prison Service and the local authorities to work together to ensure that, as he said, someone takes responsibility for the appalling level of reoffending. I welcome those remarks and the attempt to monitor the situation. However, I cannot help but note that, if we are to solve the problem, we must address issues such as housing, employment and relationships. Support must also be provided to address drug and alcohol problems and mental health issues. When people come out of prison, where is the support for them from the agencies that deal with those matters? We must examine those crucial issues if we are to make any headway.

As Pauline McNeill and others made clear, community programmes offer us evidence that there are alternatives. Community programmes produce a lower reoffending rate than prison does. I admit that that is often because community programmes deal with people who have committed a low level of crime. Nevertheless, the evidence backs up the idea that working in communities to restore damage and to put something back into those communities works for both the offender and the communities.

We have been considering evidence from throughout the world. The Conservatives have repeatedly talked about Spain—and no doubt their

villas there—but I will focus on what happens in Finland. Reoffending levels in Finland were similar to ours, but Finland now has half our rate because 30 years ago it rejected the more-prisons-and-longer-sentences approach and instead uses conditional sentences, whereby prisoners can avoid prison if they obey certain conditions. That approach is similar to the use of home curfews, which the Scottish Executive has suggested. Extensive use has been made of curfews and community-based programmes in Finland. I believe that in Scotland we have a great deal to learn from that approach. I hope that the Executive will continue to study evidence from abroad.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): I ask Mike Pringle to close for the Liberal Democrats. Sorry, it is Donald Gorrie; I beg his pardon.

11:39

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): My speech will not be as good. False modesty is one of my characteristics.

We have heard evidence today that service in the community works. All three amendments have been moved cogently, effectively and reasonably, whereas, in the past, we have on occasions had to put up with speeches that were unreasonable and strident, with unacceptable tone and content. That shows that things can be improved.

I will start off in jail and work my way out of jail. In jail, we need an emphasis on education. Figures show that the literacy of reoffenders is poor. I suggested to my colleague Mike Pringle that we could have a policy that nobody was let out of jail until they could read and write, but he said that that was wicked and illiberal and that I could not do it. However, the concept of concentrating on literacy education is important.

Many members have spoken well about support packages in and out of jail for housing and jobs, as well as personal support. The point is not to send people to jail at all if that is not the right thing to do. Pauline McNeill said that we should not abolish short sentences altogether, which may be right, but we have to scrutinise them carefully. We have to persuade judges that there are better alternatives, because a lot of them are not yet convinced that reparation and work in the community are effective.

Pauline McNeill: I agree with Donald Gorrie on persuading the judiciary. If we increase transparency about what goes on in community sentences, that might give the public and, in turn, the judiciary confidence in that type of sentencing.

Donald Gorrie: I fully agree. We have to persuade the public that community sentences work and we must learn more about them.

A great variety of schemes can be used as alternatives to custody or to help people who are in trouble. We are still not very good at identifying them rapidly, maintaining a catalogue of the ones that are available and monitoring and supporting them. I know that the minister has produced big funds, but I am not satisfied that those well-intentioned resources end up supporting the right activities at the sharp end. We have to improve that.

Above all, we have to get stuck in much earlier to create communities in which people do not offend. That raises questions about boredom, which members have mentioned, and school discipline. We should consider providing more interesting activities in school for young people who are not so academic, involving the colleges, for example. That is beginning to happen, but it could happen more. We should provide sport, creative activities and outdoor education, which are challenging and interesting.

We have to attack alcohol and drugs in the community. At several meetings recently, I have been abused—other members probably have been as well—by people saying, “Oh, you’re doing something about smoking, but you’re not doing enough about alcohol, which is in many ways far more serious.” We have to address alcohol seriously.

Above all, we have to stimulate activity within communities. There are good ideas around for helping communities to help themselves, with individuals being active and creating jobs. We must learn from good practice in this country and abroad and do a lot more to create a community in which people do not offend so much.

11:43

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): Let us start with a nice consensual point that can stretch across the Parliament. The title of the motion is relevant and important—“Justice Issues with Specific Relevance to Reoffending”—so no disagreement there.

Donald Gorrie spoke about illiteracy, but perhaps the real issue is innumeracy. On that issue, the Tories will clearly be in the dog-house and in jail for some time, because this morning they have relied on the straw-man approach to debating. Bill Aitken claimed that the rate of reoffending was only 2 per cent less for people on community service orders compared with those who had been in prison, but he could not provide us with any numbers. My numbers are 60 per cent and 42 per cent, which others who have consulted parliamentary sources may also have.

I asked Annabel Goldie about the figures for reoffending under the Tories, because she was

trying to persuade us that it was axiomatic that the figures were better than they are now. However, she could give us no numbers. The reality is that the debate is based around a myth of a golden age under the Tories, which is not supported by any sensible examination of the issue.

Phil Gallie: I made the point that the incidence of offences after early release went up under the Tories, but only after we introduced automatic remission.

Stewart Stevenson: I was going to praise Phil Gallie and I take this opportunity to do so, but one honest Tory on the benches does not an honest Tory party make.

Reference was made to Fairbridge. Like others, I recently visited that project. Only 20 per cent of its graduates appear to reoffend. Such projects are well worth the effort that goes into them. With the Justice 1 Committee, I visited the 218 project in Glasgow, which works with many people who have been involved in prostitution and are in a cycle of incarceration, which it is to be hoped will be broken.

In its response to the Justice 1 Committee's inquiry into reoffending, Aberdeenshire Council said:

"By its very nature, the prison environment cannot of itself ... be conducive to achieving the desired outcome of reducing re-offending."

The majority of parties in the chamber have reiterated that view today. I quote from the Executive's "Re:duce, Re:habilitate, Re:form" in-street interviews, which go to the nub of what people are saying on the street:

"I think the minimum prison sentences are actually a waste of money. I think prison is a last resort for people who really are a danger to the public."

We welcome moves by the Executive to improve local relationships between criminal justice social workers and the Prison Service. Prison is part of a justice system that must address retribution, reform and rehabilitation, but the greatest of those is rehabilitation. Rehabilitation starts in prison, but must finish in the community. We must have a seamless way of connecting the good work that is done in prisons with the programmes to which offenders will connect once they leave prison. To do otherwise is to spend large sums of money to deliver little. I am happy to say that I will be supporting—as the opportunity arises—the Executive's amendment.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Hugh Henry to close for the Executive.

Christine Grahame: We will see if it is the same speech.

11:48

Hugh Henry: It is certainly not the same, because I had to make up my earlier speech as I went along and I cannot recall it word for word.

Before I talk about the value of the debate, I will deal with the Tories. As Stewart Stevenson said, Annabel Goldie has a problem with figures. We have seen her and Bill Aitken struggle this morning. On her call for more police officers, I remind her that there are more police officers today than ever before—nearly 1,000 more than when the Conservatives were in power. That is clearly having an impact, which is why the number of recorded crimes is down, why the number of house-breakings is down and why the incidence of car crime is down. The record number of police officers means that the police are clearing up more crime than ever before—47 per cent, which is the envy of other parts of the United Kingdom. However, that is only a start, because we recognise that serious issues in relation to violent crime need to be addressed.

Annabel Goldie also seems to have problems with her memory, as Stewart Stevenson pointed out. She made an issue of early release. I remind members that the law dealing with early release was set out in the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993. Perhaps Annabel Goldie would like to tell us which Government that was under. It was, of course, the Conservative Government.

Phil Gallie: Will the minister take an intervention on that point?

Hugh Henry: No, thanks.

The Conservatives are clearly hypocritical and inept.

In general, the debate has been good. All parties except the Conservatives believe that we need a mature and serious approach to the issue and they are willing to engage in a serious debate about what we need to do. I admit that there will be differences of emphasis and some small points on which we disagree, but none of the parties except the Conservatives disagrees on crime's links to poverty, deprivation and mental health problems. As Kenny MacAskill and Cathy Jamieson have said, we can agree that poverty is not an excuse for crime, but we can see the links between the two. The parties agree that, as Colin Fox mentioned, we must reflect on early release, which is why the First Minister and Cathy Jamieson have given a commitment to consider the issue in relation to sex offenders. It is right that we should start by considering people who have committed serious crimes, but we have also given a commitment to ask the Sentencing Commission for Scotland to consider the more general issue of early release as a priority.

We agree that community sentencing must be effective and that the judiciary and the wider public must have confidence in it. We agree that improvements can be made and that more work needs to be done in prison on rehabilitation to ensure that offenders are prepared properly for release and supported when they are back in the community. Many of those points on which we agree can be progressed confidently and positively.

The Conservatives' first point in the debate was to accuse us of having failed to have a debate on our criminal justice plan. We will have a debate on our proposals; we have already had such a debate, but we will give members the opportunity to debate them further, not just in one debate in the Parliament, but in the committees. Members will have an opportunity to engage because the problem that faces the country is far too serious to be swept under the carpet.

11:53

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): Despite what the Deputy Minister for Justice says, we have the opportunity to question and challenge him today only because the Scottish Conservative party used its parliamentary debating time to ensure that this important issue was discussed fully in the Parliament. Karen Whitefield should reflect on that point. It shows disregard for the Parliament—and, by implication, the people of Scotland—for the Executive to inform MSPs of the criminal justice plan via a press release rather than directly through the Parliament.

In section 1 of "Supporting Safer, Stronger Communities: Scotland's Criminal Justice Plan", which is on protecting communities and preventing crime, the Executive's first claim to fame is that its increased funding has led to record numbers of police officers. We readily acknowledge Hugh Henry's laboured point—he made it in both his speeches today—that the police service receives more funding than before, but he failed to point out that the vast majority of the extra police spend most of their time carrying out their new and greatly expanded duties, such as those that relate to the ECHR, the Macpherson report on racism and the maintenance of the sex offenders register, to mention just a few. I grant that those are all necessary activities but, as Colin Fox and other members have pointed out, that means that, at any given time, only 140 officers are available for foot patrol in the entire country, which is hopelessly inadequate.

The December 2002 report "Narrowing the Gap: Police visibility and public reassurance" revealed that 80 per cent of the public agreed that a more enhanced and targeted police presence would make people feel safer and reduce and prevent

crime. Given the feeling that a more visible police presence would help to make a safer and stronger community, it beggars belief that the Executive has not addressed that point.

Mike Pringle: Will the member give way?

Margaret Mitchell: I want to press on.

The second section of the criminal justice plan document is on tackling drugs in our communities. The Scottish Conservative party welcomes the drug treatment and testing orders—a point that Keith Raffan does not appear to understand—but we want the measure to be extended to include offenders who appear before district courts, not just those who have committed more serious offences. However, the positive effect of the policy is likely to be diluted substantially, if not totally negated, by the Executive's disastrous know the score harm-reduction policy, coupled with its decision to downgrade cannabis from a class B drug to a class C one. As I have said previously, members should be under no illusion that cannabis is a soft drug, as the adverse effects that the drug is known to have on the immune, reproductive and central nervous systems, among other effects, all too poignantly prove.

Mr MacAskill: I want to talk briefly about where we have come from rather than where we are. The member will be aware that the mens rea provision for a criminal offence in Scotland is that a crime can be committed intentionally or by wilful recklessness. Does the member accept that the consequences of Thatcherism of mass unemployment and poverty had social implications and that the Conservatives knew, or ought to have known, what those effects would be? Will the Conservatives now acknowledge guilt for the crimes that they perpetrated?

Margaret Mitchell: Frankly, no.

The third section of the criminal justice plan is about the reform of Scotland's courts. It is ironic but entirely typical of the Scottish Executive's muddled thinking that one of the key measures was to scrap Scotland's much-revered 110-day rule in favour of a 140-day rule. As a consequence, offenders—whom the Executive asserts it seeks to keep out of prison—will almost certainly spend longer behind bars in Scotland's overcrowded prisons. In view of that, I can hardly wait for the implementation of the Executive's proposals to make the courts work more efficiently and deliver justice more quickly and visibly. On the Executive's past record, those proposals will almost certainly achieve the opposite result.

In the fourth section of the plan, which is on effective interventions and sentences that fit the crime, the Executive pats itself on the back for piloting youth courts to fast-track offenders into court and gives a commitment to build seven

completely new prisons in the decade from 1999. That sounds impressive, but the same Executive gave a commitment to reduce youth offending by ensuring early intervention and then closed Longriggend remand centre, thereby ending the excellent work that was done there to assess offending behaviour and to address it through education as soon as youths were remanded in custody. Pauline McNeill highlighted that important work. The complete absence of strategic and logical thought from the Executive, which used to be indecisive and is now not so sure, means that it regularly ends up working against itself and has to introduce new measures to undo the damage of other measures that it has imposed on the justice system and the nation.

The final section of the plan is on integrated services for managing offenders. The Executive states that it intends to

“merge the Community Justice and SPS accreditation panels in spring 2005 to promote consistency in programmes for offenders in ... the community.”

However, the Executive and members such as Mike Pringle appear to be oblivious to the fact that it will not be possible to replicate best practice and deliver continuity of service in rehabilitation and work programmes in Scottish prisons as long as the Executive fails to ensure that adequate resources and contingency plans are in place to cover staff shortages in the Prison Service.

Once again, the Executive's rhetoric falls far short of reality, which is why we will not support its amendment. It is little wonder that the Scottish Executive, in its management of business, is content to schedule repeat debates in order to avoid being held to account on important issues such as reoffending and other justice matters. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Cabinet (Meetings)

1. Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Executive's Cabinet. (S2F-1291)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): At next week's meeting of the Scottish Cabinet we will discuss our progress towards building a better Scotland.

Nicola Sturgeon: In 2001, Susan Deacon claimed that the

“phoney war on waiting is over”

and promised to cut waiting times. A few months later, Malcolm Chisholm also promised to cut waiting times. Why should anyone believe the promise made by the current Minister for Health and Community Care to cut waiting times when the same promise has been made and broken by the previous two health ministers?

The First Minister: Because, in that time, we have seen dramatic reductions in the waiting times for treatment of Scotland's key killer diseases and every promise that has been made and guarantee that has been given to those who wait longest in our health service has been met by this devolved Government. Further, in addition to the targets that were set out clearly yesterday by the Minister for Health and Community Care, we have in place the investment and the reforms that we now know that the nationalists would deny Scotland but to which we are absolutely committed.

Nicola Sturgeon: I remind the First Minister, as he witters on about targets, that the number of in-patients who are seen within six months has declined each year since he became First Minister. Never mind that, however, as we are now to have a step change in policy. I would like to ask the First Minister about one aspect in particular. Yesterday, Andy Kerr said—and had it printed in bold type, so it must be important—that he will

“bring all of the available floor space (at former HCI) into intensive clinical use”.

If that really is a new policy, can the First Minister tell us how it differs from Malcolm Chisholm's promise in June 2002

“to maximise the use of the 60,000 square feet facility”

at the Health Care International hospital?

The First Minister: I know that the Scottish National Party has a slight problem with turning rhetoric and theory into reality, but the reality is

that we want to ensure that not only do we have that building but we have the capacity to ensure that that building delivers for Scottish patients. The thousands of Scottish patients who have already benefited from that new hospital will continue to benefit in the years to come, as will many more. That is in direct contradiction to the statements that were made yesterday by members of the SNP who were opposing the very reforms that will make a difference for Scottish patients—a position that is, incidentally, in direct contradiction to promises made by their current deputy leader only 18 months ago.

Nicola Sturgeon: The First Minister has just put his finger on his own problem.

Yesterday, Andy Kerr said that one of his never-seen-before policies was better workforce planning. However, how does that differ from Malcolm Chisholm's pledge two years ago to

"develop new workforce planning arrangements"?

The First Minister: As—[*Laughter.*] The SNP members will not be laughing in a minute. As Ms Sturgeon should be able to realise, it is possible at every stage in this journey to improve those waiting times, ensure that we bring down the longest waits and ensure that we continue to bring down the waiting times for those who are suffering or in danger of dying from the key killer diseases in Scotland. We will do that not only by maintaining the record levels of investment in our health service that we are making but by implementing the necessary reforms. As I just said, that stands in direct contradiction to the stated policies of the SNP.

Yesterday, Ms Robison, on behalf of Ms Sturgeon, told us that the SNP is totally opposed to the use of the private sector in Scotland's hospitals. However, only two years ago, Ms Sturgeon was telling us that a so-called SNP Government

"will never stand in the way of a patient receiving treatment in an empty private sector bed".

SNP members says one thing when it suits them on one occasion and another thing when it suits them on another occasion. They should be more consistent. They were not consistent on the issue of the council tax last week and they are not being consistent on the issue of the health service this week. They need to realise that the NHS in Scotland needs not only investment but reform. If it gets both, it will continue to deliver improvements for Scottish patients.

Nicola Sturgeon: Is it not the case that the only people who stand between patients and treatment are those in the Scottish Executive? Is it not the case that the First Minister's health policy has more repeats than the Christmas television schedules and that virtually every promise made in

the past five years has been broken? That is why the First Minister is now turning in desperation to the private sector—a move that expert after expert says will drain resources away from the health service. Was yesterday's announcement not simply the final admission of defeat by an Executive that, under the First Minister's leadership, has failed patients time after time?

The First Minister: I think that Nicola Sturgeon was pretty poor this week, too.

Three years ago, the SNP called on us to shift the focus from waiting lists to waiting times; now it calls on us to shift the focus back again. Three years ago, the SNP called on us to focus on the longest waiting times. We have done that, we have brought those waiting times down and now we will bring down the others too. Three years ago, the SNP called on us to focus on and prioritise Scotland's key killer diseases and we have saved hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of lives in that time because of the focus on cancer, heart disease and stroke. We will continue to focus on those key priorities for Scotland, but we will also ensure that all other patients get a better deal too.

Nicola Sturgeon: I put it to the First Minister that he can spin, but he cannot hide. Out-patient waiting times are up and in-patient waiting times are higher than they have ever been. That is not progress but regress and it is the patients of Scotland who are paying the price.

The First Minister: The 12-month guarantee for in-patients: met. The nine-month guarantee for in-patients: met. Bringing down the waiting times for heart disease treatment: met, and lives saved. Bringing down the waiting times for cancer treatment: met, and lives saved. Bringing down the waiting times for stroke treatment: met, and lives saved. Those are the real achievements of the Scottish health service. We will build on those achievements, not just by investing resources that the Scottish nationalist party could not even dream of, never mind deliver, but by ensuring that people in Scotland get the reforms in their health service that will deliver those changes and put patients first. That is in direct contrast to promises that were made in the past by Ms Sturgeon but yesterday contradicted and abandoned by Ms Robison.

Prime Minister (Meetings)

2. David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister and what issues will be discussed. (S2F-1292)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I have no immediate plans for a formal meeting with the Prime Minister.

David McLetchie: When they do meet, the First Minister and the Prime Minister might like to compare notes about their respective performances in dealing with waiting lists and waiting times in the health service north and south of the border. That would be a most illuminating discussion.

Will the First Minister tell us why the targets announced yesterday by Mr Kerr are conveniently set for the end of 2007, following the next election to this Parliament? Why was the Minister for Health and Community Care remarkably reluctant to give equivalent target figures for the end of both 2005 and 2006? Why can we not have some indications of progress before we next go to the polls? Is what we heard yesterday not a case of another health minister, another waiting times initiative and another desperate attempt to cover up the failures that we have seen in the past five years?

The First Minister: I know that we have been in this Parliament for only five and a half years, but most members have managed to notice in that time that we have quarterly reports of progress in the national health service and that the statistics contained in those reports outline the different changes that have taken place. It is critical that those reports should be made more transparent and more able to allow the health service to be held to account. That is precisely why Mr Kerr announced the changes in those statistics yesterday. However, it is wrong to say that there will not be proper progress reports between now and the end of 2007 because the reports that are made will show that progress.

David McLetchie: We are of course aware of the lack-of-progress reports that we have been given quarterly during the past five years on a range of issues and indicators on waiting times and waiting lists in hospitals. Is it not the case that the announcements that Mr Kerr made yesterday are, far from representing a so-called step change—to use a favourite piece of new Labour jargon—little more than a mouse? Is it not the case that the operations that will be commissioned on behalf of NHS patients from the independent sector will amount to little more than one tenth of 1 per cent of the health budget? Given that derisory statistic, is it not the truth that there is no clearly thought-out strategy on significantly increasing health capacity in Scotland to reduce waiting lists, and that all we have heard is another series of back-of-the-envelope solutions?

The First Minister: On Mr McLetchie's first point, I have already said that the waiting times for heart treatment, for example, are dramatically down from when the Conservatives were in power. That is saving lives in Scotland and he should not demean that achievement by the people who work hard in our health service.

It is true that we must ensure that there are further improvements, first by reorganising and improving the work of the health service and the staff who work directly for it, but also by using other capacity and other providers, which is precisely what the Minister for Health and Community Care announced yesterday. The minister will outline further progress on that as contracts are developed and signed. It is clearly possible for that to happen in addition to the existing capacity of the health service in Scotland, as providers themselves said yesterday evening. As a result, many patients in Scotland will be treated more quickly in the years to come. The Conservatives should have welcomed the initiative, but they were not big enough to do so.

David McLetchie: We did indeed welcome the initiative, because it represents a tiny step along a road that we alone in Parliament have been advocating for the past five years. The First Minister should apologise to the patients of Scotland for the five wasted years during which tens of thousands of patients languished on Labour's waiting lists, while Labour arrogantly turned away from the improvements to capacity that could have led to treatment for many of them.

If the initiative had been carefully thought out, then instead of the vague homilies about the use of the independent sector that are in the report that the Minister for Health and Community Care presented yesterday, on which little additional light was shed during the debate, we would have a good deal more information about the diagnostic and treatment facilities that are to be brought on stream and about the new, more flexible, mobile scanning units.

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Question.

David McLetchie: If the plans have not just been dreamed up in a desperate measure to ensure that the First Minister can be seen to be doing something, why were we not presented with much more substance than was announced to Parliament yesterday?

The First Minister: I will not conduct negotiations with private companies in public. Mr McLetchie, of all people, should understand that principle. He talks about capacity in the health service in Scotland. I remind him that in almost every category of staff in the health service, the number of staff is up dramatically from when the Conservative Government was in power. That is because of our commitment to the national health service, as opposed to his party's commitment to privatising and breaking up the national health service. We know exactly what the Conservatives would do with the extra money that is available for the health service—if they even kept it in the budget. They would use the money to subsidise

the operations of people who can already afford to pay for their operations, rather than do what we are doing and ensure that the money is used to deliver operations for patients on a basis of equity across the whole of Scotland. No matter what someone's background, income or personal financial circumstances are, in Scotland today they receive the same treatment from the health service, as the Minister for Health and Community Care outlined yesterday. Under the Conservatives, a person's ability to receive that treatment would depend on their ability to help to pay for it. That is wrong. The health service should be free at the point of need for all. That is our commitment and we will stick to it.

The Presiding Officer: There is one extra question this week, from Richard Lochhead.

Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP): The First Minister will be aware that at next week's fishing talks, Scotland's fishing communities will once again be at the mercy of the unworkable and failed common fisheries policy, which is why after First Minister's question time the Cod Crusaders will hand into the Parliament their biggest ever petition, in which 160,000 Scots call for Scotland to come out of the common fisheries policy. In relation to next week's talks—

The Presiding Officer: Question.

Richard Lochhead: Will the First Minister ask the Prime Minister to permit Ross Finnie to officially lead the UK delegation in Brussels? At least that would increase our chances of getting a good deal for Scotland. Given that we have led on education and health talks in the past and given that Scotland has 70 per cent of the UK fishing industry, why can we not lead on fishing?

The First Minister: I respect those who have been campaigning locally and those who have genuinely campaigned for their own industries and communities over the past two years. It is also important to recognise that the situation has changed over that time because of the Executive's efforts in Brussels and elsewhere to improve the situation of Scotland's fishing communities.

As a result of the efforts that have been made by this devolved Government, we now have, for example, a proper regional advisory council for North sea fisheries. The North sea regional advisory council will influence the decisions that are made at European level. It will build on those decisions to ensure that we get the regional management for the North sea fisheries that all of us have been looking for.

The regional advisory council was established precisely because of the actions of this devolved Government. Instead of undermining things, as Mr Lochhead does when he goes to Brussels, we have taken action with the support of the UK

Government. Year on year, we have gone to Brussels to negotiate a proper solution and to get changes to the European Commission's proposals that are in the interests of the Scottish fishing communities. Those efforts will continue. We will engage actively in the negotiations to represent Scottish fishing communities and ensure that they have a sustainable future. We are not shouting from the sidelines or trying to exploit and undermine the negotiations, as Mr Lochhead has done consistently, year after year.

Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)

3. Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland and what issues he intends to discuss. (S2F-1295)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I have no immediate plans for a formal meeting with the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Shiona Baird: The First Minister will be aware that the first session of the Parliament saw Scotland lead Europe in the implementation of the water framework directive, which was hailed as one of the most far-reaching and significant pieces of environmental legislation in 40 years. However, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency stated this week that it has a shortfall of £20 million in the budget that it needs to carry out its duties in protecting our water environment. Is the First Minister concerned that Scotland could plummet down the European league because of a lack of care for its environment? What does he propose to do about that?

The First Minister: No. The connection is an illogical one to make. It is natural for quangos, public bodies and others that we finance to demand more money. All of them seem to do that on a regular basis and SEPA is no exception to the rule. However, there is no direct relationship between that and our implementation of the directive, the object of which is to ensure that we in Scotland see significant improvements in the quality of our water supply.

The levels of investment that this devolved Government has pursued over the past five years prove our commitment to deliver on that overall commitment. The quality of water supply in Scotland has improved over that time and will continue to improve. The management of Scottish Water, which all members and parties in the Parliament have been critical of in the past, is now to be congratulated on the significant improvements that it is making. It is also to be congratulated on the efficiencies that allow it to make even better use of the investment.

Shiona Baird: The First Minister has not answered the question about the £20 million shortfall. The SEPA chief executive said:

"Although additional funds have been provided, they were not at the level we'd requested."

The First Minister is selling the environment short. At the very least, will he agree to look into the issue of the shortfall as a matter of urgency?

The First Minister: No. I do not equate the improvement of the environment in Scotland, by means of our investment in the environment, with the pumping of money into one particular body, agency or quango just because it has requested more money. The Executive has to make balanced judgments about our budget. We make those judgments because of the need for wider levels of investment.

In terms of the budget that was announced this year, what is important for the environment is not whether SEPA got every bit of money that it asked for but the fact that we will invest record amounts of money in improving how we recycle and manage Scotland's waste. It is also important that we will invest record amounts in the improvement of the quality of our water supply and in a whole range of other environmental measures that improve Scotland today and will improve Scotland in the future. SEPA should monitor that work, but it should do so within the budget that it has been allocated.

Smoking Ban

4. Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Executive still intends to introduce a comprehensive ban on smoking in public places. (S2F-1304)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Yes. The Minister for Health and Community Care signed the bill today and it will be published tomorrow.

Mrs Mulligan: I welcome the First Minister's reassurance. People to whom I have spoken in my constituency, particularly young people, say that whether one is young or old, rich or poor, one is entitled to be protected from the effects of smoking. Does the First Minister agree that, for that reason and for the sake of clarity, it is important that there are few—if any—exemptions to the ban on smoking in public places?

The First Minister: Yes. I would simply remind the chamber that, as we said in the chamber just one month ago, 13,000 people in Scotland die of smoking-related diseases every year; about 1,000 people—we know for certain—die from the effects of passive smoking; and the lives of many more may be affected by passive smoking. However, 70 per cent of those who live in Scotland do not smoke and two thirds of those who smoke want to give up. The best way to encourage those who want to give up, and the best way to reduce the

impact of smoking and of passive smoking, is to implement a comprehensive ban on smoking in public places. In the interests of our country and its future, we will do that as quickly as we can.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): Does the First Minister intend that the smoking room in the Scottish Parliament complex should or should not have a future?

The Presiding Officer: That is not really a responsibility of the First Minister. [*Laughter.*]

The First Minister: And isn't he glad about that.

At the risk of incurring the wrath of the Presiding Officer, I say that I have been on the record from the beginning as saying that I do not believe that the Parliament building should have a smoking room. I believe that it should be closed as quickly as possible.

Accident and Emergency Units

5. Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what recent discussions the Scottish Executive has had regarding the performance of national health service accident and emergency units. (S2F-1298)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Cabinet discussed the matter yesterday morning. Waiting times in accident and emergency have to improve and we therefore endorsed the target that was subsequently announced by the Minister for Health and Community Care yesterday afternoon. From the end of 2007, no one in Scotland will wait more than four hours from admission to an accident and emergency unit until discharge or transfer.

Alasdair Morgan: In announcing that target, the Executive has clearly recognised that the experience of some patients in accident and emergency is less than satisfactory, but given the totally different nature of accident and emergency from the rest of the hospital service, and given that the solutions are not covered in "Fair to All, Personal to Each", will the First Minister say what specific proposals he has for accident and emergency that will allow that target to be met?

The First Minister: One of the key things about the changes that are required in accident and emergency to meet that target is that we should use the best practice that exists in the many parts of Scotland where targets are being met. Tough targets have been set locally and have been met because of the way in which consultants, nurses and others are organising themselves in those accident and emergency units. One of the problems that we have in Scotland today is that there is not a consistent level of good practice throughout the country, which is why we are now setting a very clear national target, and we will

ensure that that best practice is replicated in every part of Scotland.

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): The First Minister will be aware of the uproar in Campbeltown about the closure of the assessment ward at Campbeltown hospital and the likely impact that that will have on accident and emergency services at the hospital. The ward was closed after no consultation with local people and without any alternative service provision being put in place. I ask the First Minister to put pressure on the health board to suspend the closure until a proper consultation is carried out, and the community is satisfied that alternative provision has been put in place.

The First Minister: The planning and provision of services at a local level is a responsibility of the local health board, which has to take that responsibility seriously. That should include, at all times, proper consultation with local people and a proper plan to be in place when service changes are taking place.

I do not know the exact circumstances of the local situation to which George Lyon refers, but if improvements are required to the way in which the health board operates in that area, the Minister for Health and Community Care will take that up with the board.

Colin Fox (Lothians) (SSP): Edinburgh's Royal Bank of Scotland infirmary has won the least coveted award for the worst accident and emergency waiting times in Britain, with 25 per cent of patients waiting for more than four hours for treatment. That is a worse performance than that of the old hospital in the city centre, which was built in 1723. Does the First Minister agree that the promises of hospital managers, who claim that the situation is better now, are clearly worthless and does he accept that critics of the private finance initiative scheme predicted the appalling record? Does he now wish that he had listened to the many warnings that bed and staff reductions would lead to the current erosion in the NHS's capacity to cope with demand?

The First Minister: Few people, beyond those who do not wish progress because of ideological baggage, would want to return to the previous situation in Edinburgh with the old hospital. Mr Fox might be one such person, but I suspect that those whom he represents do not agree with him.

The question partly relates to Mr Morgan's question. One improvement that can be made in accident and emergency units throughout Scotland relates to the fact that the process of registering and then seeing patients does not necessarily have to be consequential on the order in which they come through the door. One of the problems that existed at Edinburgh royal infirmary

was that people were having to wait until those who required major treatment were dealt with before fairly minor issues were seen to in the course of an evening's work. That has changed in the six months since the survey was carried out, and the hospital has learned from the experience, which seems to me a good thing for it to do. I hope that Edinburgh royal infirmary will be only one hospital in Scotland to learn from that experience and improve accident and emergency performance in the months and years to come.

Prostitution

6. Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Executive plans to take on the findings and recommendations of the expert group on prostitution's stage 1 report. (S2F-1308)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Ministers do not plan to make any decisions on the expert group's report until the three-month consultation on the report has been completed and we have had a chance to consider the responses.

Margo MacDonald: I thank the First Minister for his reply and comment on its wisdom. I also commend to him the expert group's findings because, as the Executive will find when it studies them, it manages to reconcile two conflicting duties of care. I ask the First Minister to consider seriously what the report says; we have managed to bridge the gap between the cities in Scotland.

The First Minister: I confirm that we will consider the report very seriously. We will also consider any representations that are made to us during the three-month consultation that began today.

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab): Does the First Minister agree that if we are serious about tackling the problem of street prostitution, one of the key issues must be to tackle kerb-crawling, which is one of the most odious forms of antisocial behaviour? Will he consider what progress the Executive can make on the partnership agreement commitment to legislate to make kerb-crawling a criminal offence?

The First Minister: One of the reasons why we have to consider carefully the expert group's report and the responses to it is that it makes a different recommendation from that commitment, which was agreed 18 months ago. As I understand it, the report, which has been published today, recommends a different legal route for tackling kerb-crawling. That is a suggestion worthy of debate and consideration and I hope that those who have campaigned on the issue, raised it on a number of occasions and wish to see action, such as Mr McAveety, will read the report carefully and,

if they disagree with the recommendation, make representations in the consultation to give us a chance to consider their point of view as well.

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): As there is, as Margo MacDonald indicated, a difference of opinion between different cities, will the First Minister use his influence to achieve a consensus or, if he cannot achieve that, to ensure that those cities that wish to progress in a different manner may do so?

The First Minister: There is an interesting policy challenge for Government in that. On the one hand, we have a desire for a consistent national approach and a strategy to tackle the problems that result from prostitution in Scotland today. On the other hand, we have legitimate demands to adopt local strategies that are felt to be more relevant or at least have some support—in the city councils in particular. We will weigh up the balance of the arguments from those two points of view. I expect the four main city councils to be among the respondents to the consultation.

12:30

Meeting suspended until 14:00.

14:00

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Enterprise, Lifelong Learning and Transport

Further Education Colleges (Disclosure)

1. Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what percentage of staff and students in further education colleges it estimates will require to be vetted by Disclosure Scotland in the next academic year. (S2O-4624)

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson): The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 will come into force on 10 January 2005, with the result that FE colleges must not knowingly employ people who are disqualified from working with children under the terms of the 2003 act. A disclosure will be required to ascertain whether a candidate is unsuitable for a college post. At this time, we are not currently aware how many FE college staff will require to be vetted by Disclosure Scotland. The 2003 act should, however, have no impact on the number of students who might apply for a disclosure.

Donald Gorrie: I thank the minister for that helpful reply. I am sure that he is aware that there is concern among college principals and others about interpretation of the 2003 act. There is concern that many adult students will have to be vetted if they share classes with younger students. The problem is uncertainty. Can the minister assure us that it will be made clear to FE colleges what the rules are and how they are to be interpreted?

Allan Wilson: I am pleased to give that assurance to my colleague Mr Gorrie. On the specific concerns of the college principals, to which he referred, there should be no change to the arrangements for disclosure in respect of college students, as I outlined in my first answer. I accept that there is concern about the confusion that the change will generate, but I understand that we are today issuing to organisations a guidance note to alleviate concerns and reduce confusion about the impact of the 2003 act.

Airdrie to Bathgate Railway

2. Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether its target of reopening the Airdrie to Bathgate railway line by the end of 2008 will be met. (S2O-4691)

The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen):

The development of the project is progressing well and we expect completion of the rail link by the end of 2008.

Karen Whitefield: I am grateful to the minister for that reply. Does he agree that it is important to the people of Airdrie and, indeed, to the people of West Lothian that work on the important railway link be started as soon as possible? Does he also agree that it is essential that the railway link provide access to the people of Plains and Caldercruix, and some West Lothian villages if it is to make a real difference to the rail infrastructure of central Scotland?

Nicol Stephen: I believe that there will be significant benefits from completion of the rail link, which will provide a link from Edinburgh right through to Glasgow. The communities along the route will clearly have a strong case to argue for stops when the matter comes before Parliament for scrutiny. We must get the balance right; we cannot have a stop everywhere a community wishes one. However, it will be appropriate to have a reasonable number of stops and Parliament will carefully scrutinise that issue in due course.

Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab): I am aware that the minister recognises that the Airdrie to Bathgate link is one of the most important transport projects that the Executive is committed to in terms of alleviating road congestion. Bearing that in mind, is the minister prepared to meet me, my colleagues Mary Mulligan and Karen Whitefield, and officials of the relevant local councils, as was requested in a recent letter from Mary Mulligan?

Nicol Stephen: The short answer is yes. It is important that there is a meeting about the project including the relevant local councils and MSPs. Risks are associated with the development of all major transport projects. We must keep projects of the scale and importance of the Airdrie to Bathgate rail link on time and on budget. It is important that everyone involved drives such projects forward. I am determined that we will deliver them effectively and quickly over the coming months and years.

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP): How much money is allocated to the project in the current Executive budget document, which goes up to the year 2007-08?

Nicol Stephen: The full current allocation for the project is in the region of £225 million. That includes an allocation for what the Treasury calls optimism bias. As we progress such projects, we try to become ever more certain about the costs and to drive out that optimism bias. The answer to Alasdair Morgan's question is £225 million.

Forth Estuary (Travel)

3. Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress is being made in improving travel across the Forth estuary. (S2O-4638)

The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen): The Executive is working closely with the Forth Estuary Transport Authority and other stakeholders to improve transport links across the Forth. That work includes initiatives such as the expansion of Ferry Toll park and ride and the improvement of rail services across the Forth rail bridge. We are also progressing the construction of a new crossing at Kincardine.

Scott Barrie: The minister will be well aware of the major traffic difficulties that people experience in trying to get across the Forth road bridge, especially at peak times. Hold-ups now commence prior to 7 am and there are still problems with rail services to and from Fife, notably in respect of reliability and overcrowding. What plans does the minister have to improve the appalling A8000 bottleneck, which plays a large part in the difficulties on the bridge? What improvements can be made to Fife circle and east coast main line services to increase the number of trains on those routes?

Nicol Stephen: As Scott Barrie knows, we are investing in new trains on those routes, which will significantly increase peak-time capacity. To bring about that major improvement, we are extending the length of the platforms at some stations to accommodate the longer trains.

As regards the ever-increasing congestion on the road bridge, the Forth Estuary Transport Authority is considering a number of ways to improve the situation in the long term. A key development that I want to be progressed as quickly as possible is the completion of the A8000 upgrade to dual carriageway. The Executive is offering every assistance to ensure that that happens on time and on budget and I believe that the project, which should get under way next year, can be completed by the middle of 2007.

Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): Will the minister join me in congratulating bridgemaster Alastair Andrew and his team on the efficient way in which they are managing traffic on the Forth road bridge? They cannot be expected to do that indefinitely. What does the most recent structural report that the minister has received say about the state of the bridge, especially since the opening of the main suspension cables, which I understand has caused concern?

Nicol Stephen: Those are matters for the Forth Estuary Transport Authority. I meet the authority and the bridgemaster regularly. They are doing a lot of good work and are looking to the long term.

As Keith Raffan knows, they are considering whether there should be another crossing of the Forth estuary. They are also examining ways of managing the traffic on the bridge through measures such as tolls that vary according to the time of day people cross the bridge and according to whether a vehicle has a single occupant. About 70 per cent of the vehicles that cross the bridge have single occupants, so there is real potential to reduce congestion on the bridge through innovative new measures.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): Is the minister aware that there is substantial demand for the A8000 to be upgraded speedily? If the minister was able to bring forward the completion date from 2007, that would be widely welcomed by the many thousands of commuters on both sides of the Forth who would be greatly assisted by reduced congestion, especially during rush hour.

Nicol Stephen: I understand the point that Lord James Douglas-Hamilton makes. I use the A8000 regularly and I see the huge amount of congestion that can occur.

The last time I met the bridgmaster, I discussed the issue with him. Along with City of Edinburgh Council, the Forth Estuary Transport Authority has a key role in delivering the upgrade of the A8000. I offered the bridgmaster every assistance that I can make available. We considered a timetable that could be achieved as quickly as possible, given the work that must still be done in terms of land acquisition and issuing the contract. I am confident that we can get the work under way next year and that we can meet the sort of deadline that I mentioned. If I can assist with anything that needs to be done to speed up the process, I will do so.

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I associate myself with the comments that have been made by other members, in particular Scott Barrie, on rail travel. I invite the minister to travel with Fife members on what passes for a rail service between Fife and Edinburgh. Can the minister update Parliament on the discussions that have taken place and the progress that has been made on encouragement of a fast ferry service from Fife to Edinburgh?

Nicol Stephen: Such a ferry service would have to be a commercial service. It would not be seen as a lifeline ferry link and so would not qualify for subsidy under European Union regulations. That said, I will not travel too far into the area of ferries.

On train services, I agree with Tricia Marwick that we need to modernise, improve and upgrade services to Fife. That will be one of the significant benefits of introducing the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line. As well as the improvements that the new

trains and longer platforms will bring, once the SAK line is completed in 2008, we will have opportunities to introduce more services. Significant improvements are on the horizon and my role is to drive forward those improvements to ensure that they are delivered as quickly as possible. There is real potential to grow the rail market between Fife and Edinburgh.

East Coast Main Line

4. Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with the Strategic Rail Authority on the franchise arrangements for the east coast main line. (S2O-4589)

The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen): Scottish ministers issued advice to the SRA in June this year about re-letting the east coast main line franchise. The advice was taken into account in the invitation to tender that was issued to bidders.

Iain Smith: As part of the discussions that are being held, or of the advice to the SRA, was the issue of direct services between Europe and Scotland via the east coast main line raised? The minister will be aware of reports in some weekend papers that Eurostar will renege on its promise to provide direct services between Scotland and Europe. Will he raise the issue with the SRA and with Alistair Darling? We need assurance from Eurostar that direct services to Scotland will be provided.

Nicol Stephen: I am determined that the current level of service on the east coast main line will be maintained and improved. Obviously, and ultimately, the cross-border services on the line are the responsibility of the SRA and the UK Government. The Scottish Executive's advice on those issues is non-binding, but that said, we have had constructive discussions with the SRA. I will take up the issue that Iain Smith raises when next we meet the SRA.

Scottish Enterprise (Sustainable Development)

5. Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive how it will ensure that Scottish Enterprise delivers environmentally sustainable development. (S2O-4685)

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Mr Jim Wallace): The Executive provides strategic guidance to Scottish Enterprise through "A Smart, Successful Scotland: Strategic direction to the Enterprise Networks and an enterprise strategy for Scotland". The refreshed strategy places sustainability at the heart of enterprise and competitiveness and makes it clear that the

enterprise networks must take account of the need for sustainable development in all their activities.

The refreshed document also makes an explicit link to the developing green jobs strategy. Our green jobs strategy takes sustainable development as its starting point and will examine the business opportunities that the commitment to sustainability can create.

Eleanor Scott: Although "A Smart, Successful Scotland" was recently refreshed, its focus is still economic growth. It does, however, include a line with which I agree:

"Economic growth and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive - resource efficiency and waste minimisation increase productivity and can drive economic growth."

To take that forward, will the minister instruct Scottish Enterprise and the enterprise agencies to follow the lead of many other businesses, countries and local authorities around the world in adopting a policy of zero waste? Such a policy would save resources, be a driver to innovation and save money.

Mr Wallace: Eleanor Scott is right to draw attention to that passage in "A Smart, Successful Scotland" and to underline the fact that pursuing sustainability policies and economic growth are by no means incompatible. By driving forward efficiency and resource efficiency and by pursuing the use of renewable energy sources, we can impact positively on companies' performance and finances. Furthermore, Scotland can show leadership in devising and manufacturing the technologies that will assist companies in implementing resource-efficiency measures.

Ministers have not formally adopted a zero-waste policy, but we are taking action throughout Scotland to reduce, reuse, recycle and compost waste as part of our national waste plan. That can lead to significant reductions in the use of landfill. The Waste and Resources Action Programme is a UK body that we help to fund. WRAP is working with retailers on how packaging and products can be designed to minimise waste. I believe that with good interface with business, opportunities for treating waste better can be highlighted.

Public Transport (Antisocial Behaviour)

6. Trish Godman (West Renfrewshire) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to make public transport less vulnerable to antisocial behaviour. (S2O-4664)

The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen): The Scottish Executive continues to work in partnership with local authorities, transport providers and others to reduce the levels of crime, vandalism and antisocial behaviour on public transport. Recent initiatives such as the closed-

circuit television programmes in the south-east of Scotland and in the city of Dundee are positive steps. We fully support First ScotRail Ltd's recently announced drive to protect its rail staff.

Trish Godman: The minister will be aware that earlier this year a bus driver was shot in the head by a youth with an air gun in Erskine, in my constituency, which caused great distress to his family and community. I am glad to hear of the minister's support for schemes such as the one in Dundee. However, my understanding is that such partnerships are not forming as quickly as they could or should.

Will the minister consider meeting representatives of the appropriate bodies, including the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive, local authorities and bus company representatives to encourage and support investment in schemes similar to the one in Dundee? I suggest that there would be no better place to start than west Renfrewshire.

Nicol Stephen: I would be happy to attend a meeting with Trish Godman at which issues relating to, for example, the tragic incident involving the bus driver in west Renfrewshire can be raised. I want more to be done about such issues throughout Scotland and will play any part I can in that. One of the reasons why we are forming regional transport partnerships is to drive forward the initiatives faster. Some local authorities have been progressive and have developed good relationships with bus operators and others, but we need to instil more urgency and greater momentum in other parts of the country. I would like that to happen.

Scottish Transport Group (Pensions)

7. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress is being made in making ex gratia payments to former members of the Scottish Transport Group pension fund. (S2O-4557)

The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen): Twelve thousand and thirty-two members and dependants have now been paid a total of £121.84 million for claims that were received before the cut-off date of 31 October 2004. Arrangements are now in place to distribute a further £3.8 million to beneficiaries who received their second payment previously. That money should be in their bank accounts before Christmas.

Dennis Canavan: What is the point of the Executive setting a cut-off date of 31 October for late claims, but then holding back a quarter of a million pounds from the pension fund surplus for further late claims that might be submitted after the cut-off date? In the unlikely event that further valid claims will be submitted, could members and

their dependants not be paid out of the Scottish Executive's contingency fund, instead of the minister holding back a quarter of a million pounds that belongs to the pensioners, which should be paid out now to those who have submitted valid claims?

Nicol Stephen: I have discussed the issue with Dennis Canavan on a number of occasions. We are trying to find the fairest possible way to pay out the available funds. The £250,000, in the context of a total of roughly £125 million, is a very small amount to set aside for cases of hardship and for circumstances in which there might be good reasons for a claim not being made before the cut-off date of 31 October. It is only fair, prudent and sensible to have set aside that sum. Two individuals have come forward after the cut-off date—their claims will be processed and paid in January from the retained sum of £250,000. That is a fair way in which to have dealt with the situation.

Justice and Law Officers

Fear of Crime

1. Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what assessment it has made of the level of fear of crime. (S2O-4604)

The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson): The overall level of recorded crime in Scotland is currently the lowest for a quarter of a century. However, I am concerned that serious and violent crime rates remain stubbornly high. We have revised the Scottish crime and victim survey to ensure that we have a better understanding of the public's perception of crime.

Mike Pringle: Given that many groups are determined to instil a climate of fear in us, typified by the recent media headline that said "Alert after 'Arabs' take photographs of Holyrood", what steps is the Executive taking to get across the message that the risk from crime, especially from terrorism, is extremely low? Will the minister resist any attempt to encourage a climate of fear in Scotland, especially in the coming months?

Cathy Jamieson: As I am sure Mike Pringle is aware, when I launched the criminal justice plan I said that I wanted to ensure that Scotland is

"a nation of opportunity, and not a state of fear."

That is why we must tackle the problems of crime in a number of ways. We have to ensure that we prevent and detect crime and that offenders are brought to justice swiftly. All that contributes to people's understanding that they perhaps perceive the likelihood of their being victims of crime to be stronger than it is in reality. However, that does not get us away from the fact that we require to

deal with the crime and antisocial behaviour that people see in their communities and with the problems in their areas. By tackling those problems, I believe that we will help the public to realise that we are getting to grips with crime.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Has the minister researched the effect on victims and the wider public of early release of people who have committed crimes of violence?

Cathy Jamieson: The member will be aware that I have asked the Sentencing Commission for Scotland to consider issues around early release. I say to Phil Gallie—as I have said to others—that there are other matters that we must consider, such as arrangements for early release of people who have committed sex offences, particularly those who have offended against children. It is not enough simply to consider early release in isolation; we must consider it in relation to supervision and monitoring of offenders once they are back in the community. That is exactly what the criminal justice plan sets out in more detail.

Restorative Justice

2. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to implement the partnership agreement commitment to expand the role of restorative justice as a means of improving the range and quality of sentences available to courts. (S2O-4678)

The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson): There are a wide range of restorative justice initiatives being progressed by the Executive. I recently announced an investment of £3 million over the next two years to double the number of restorative youth justice places throughout Scotland from 3,000 to 6,000. We are also investing more than £700,000 over two years to support implementation of a system of police restorative warnings for young offenders from ages eight to 15 and for 16 and 17-year-olds who are under supervision.

Patrick Harvie: I thank the minister for that answer and offer my support for the work that is being done in the youth justice system. Does the minister plan to roll out the diversion from prosecution, mediation and reparation schemes, which have been running successfully in seven local authorities since 1997? If she does not plan to roll out those schemes, will she tell us why restorative justice has a smaller place in the adult criminal justice system than it has in the youth justice system?

Cathy Jamieson: It is important that we evaluate what works. We have to get away from some of the sterile arguments that we have heard to the effect that only certain sorts of sentences in the community work or that only prison works. We

must have a range of options, which is why it is important that we consider the results of pilot projects when we get them. We know from the work that is being done that restorative justice projects are having an impact on the likelihood that young people will reoffend. The evidence on adult offenders is less sure at present, although we have to consider it. We will of course continue to seek effective remedies that reduce the likelihood that people will reoffend in order to show communities that we are tackling problems and that people have to give something back to the community or make direct reparation to victims.

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): In view of the great influence of misuse of alcohol on many of the offences that are dealt with by restorative justice, will the minister consider introducing to restorative justice an element of trying to deal with people's alcohol problems in the community?

Cathy Jamieson: We are already doing a number of things on that, in particular in respect of arrest referral schemes. I have visited some of those and have discussed them with the police and criminal justice social work departments. When people come into contact with the criminal justice system who have problems with, and whose offences are linked to, misuse of alcohol or drugs, we want the opportunity to be taken to intervene at that stage to deal with those problems as well as with the offence.

Craiginchies Prison

3. Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to improve facilities at Aberdeen's Craiginchies prison. (S2O-4593)

The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson): I visited HMP Aberdeen in August and saw for myself the problems that have been highlighted in the inspection reports. Current investment priorities are being targeted at ending slopping out. However, I have asked the Scottish Prison Service to update its estate strategy and to consider proposals to tackle the issues that face prisons in the north-east and in the Highlands.

Brian Adam: I thank the minister for her reply and for visiting the prison, which was a most welcome occurrence. Can she give me a specific idea of what the plans are in relation to visiting facilities, overcrowding and the women's unit, about which the local prison visiting committee has expressed concern?

Cathy Jamieson: The problems that Brian Adam highlights are the problems that I wish to address. There are difficulties around the reception area, health provision and visiting facilities. I also examined some of the prison in

relation to overcrowding. It is not the case that there has been no investment in Aberdeen prison; there has been investment in B hall and there has been other capital investment. However, we have to ensure that we upgrade the overall prison estate. It would be helpful if we could get all parties to support that, and it would be especially helpful if the SNP could be consistent and all members could support the building of new prisons, which will help to tackle the problems in some of the older establishments.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): I was pleased to join the minister in a very productive visit to Craiginchies prison; I know that she had a useful meeting with the visiting committee. Will she ensure that the Scottish Prison Service timeously produces proposals to address some of the problems at Craiginchies and that it will consider innovative solutions that make use of cross-regional services in the area?

Cathy Jamieson: The Scottish Prison Service is in no doubt that I expect it to report to me timeously around the end of this year or the turn of next year. I have asked the SPS to look across the prison estate, especially at some of the current issues in the north-east and at HMP Inverness. I had a useful meeting with Stewart Stevenson, and I have met Richard Baker and the prison visiting committees. I am well aware of what requires to be done; however, I emphasise that we are investing the equivalent of £1.5 million a week in upgrading our existing prison estate and that we require to ensure that we get the best value out of that investment.

Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con): I have visited the Aberdeen prison and have seen the changes there over the past two or three years. Nevertheless, the changes are pieces of sticking plaster. The truth is that the prison premises are too small to be developed further and cannot provide the additional facilities. Will the minister consider—it is part of her remit—the building of a new prison for Aberdeen?

Cathy Jamieson: I will consider all options in the light of the report that the Scottish Prison Service will produce. However, we must recognise that the important thing at present is that we deal with the problems of slopping out and overcrowding and that we look at the parts of the prison estate that have not had development plans or that level of capital investment. We will make the right decisions on that basis. I will not pre-empt the outcome of the report that will come to me from the Scottish Prison Service by making an announcement on the hoof today.

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The minister will be aware that the problems in Inverness prison are similar to those in Aberdeen prison; both are local prisons that

suffer from overcrowding. Inverness prison was built to cope with 108 prisoners but now houses 159 prisoners. They are mostly short-term prisoners or are on remand. Can the Executive examine whether there is an alternative to putting remand prisoners in prison? That would free up some space.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): Before the minister answers, I make it very clear that the original question was about Aberdeen prison. However, the minister skilfully slipped in a reference to Inverness in responding to the second question, so I will allow the question.

Cathy Jamieson: Of course I am concerned about the remand population. We have asked the Sentencing Commission to consider several issues in relation to the use of bail and remand. I am particularly interested to find out whether we might make more use of bail hostels or electronic monitoring as a condition of bail, in the hope that they would, in appropriate circumstances, assist us in ensuring that the right people are locked up and that those who can be are managed successfully in the community.

Community Reparation Orders

4. Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when it will introduce community reparation orders. (S2O-4634)

The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson): The Scottish Executive has put new legislation in place for community reparation orders that will require offenders to make reparation to communities for antisocial behaviour. They will be available to district and sheriff courts and will be piloted in Inverness, Dundee and Greenock for two years from early next year.

Mr McNeil: I thank the minister for answering the question as it appears in today's "Business Bulletin" and not as it was originally published. Together with my constituents, I am delighted that reparation orders are to be piloted in Greenock. Will the minister confirm what age of offenders will be forced to make good the damage that they do to their communities and what type of crimes will be covered?

Cathy Jamieson: I am grateful to Duncan McNeil for correcting the error that made the question into one about community repatriation orders. I was not entirely sure what part of Greenock and Inverclyde he was referring to.

It is important to recognise that the new orders will be available to the courts. It will be possible to use them to force offenders over the age of 12 to make reparation for antisocial behaviour by providing between 10 and 100 hours of unpaid work. The important point is that communities

must be consulted to help to identify the type of work that such offenders would be required to do.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: On the basis that his question is about reparation orders, I call Bill Aitken.

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): Does the minister agree that although the orders have a role to play in the criminal justice system, they will be effective only if the work is supervised so that it is carried out robustly, unlike in respect of community service orders, for which much of the work is not done?

Cathy Jamieson: I do not accept that the work that people are required to do for community service orders is ignored; the courts would take a dim view of that. I am, however, glad to see that Bill Aitken recognises that there is a place for reparation orders and robust community sentences. I am glad to see that the Conservatives have been converted to that notion.

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): This is the first time I have heard that the pilot will happen in Inverness. I welcome that and ask for more details of how the scheme will operate in Inverness, who will be running it and what funding will be put into it.

Cathy Jamieson: I will be happy to supply Maureen Macmillan with the relevant details. I hope that as she has welcomed the pilot, she will be able to monitor local progress and engage actively with the community organisations that might want to have a say.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 5 has been withdrawn.

Procurators Fiscal (Guidance)

6. Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what guidance it has given to procurators fiscal about how crimes of assault involving a weapon or implement should be dealt with. (S2O-4569)

The Lord Advocate (Colin Boyd): Guidelines are issued to procurators fiscal on a variety of subjects, including individual categories of cases. The guidance on assault emphasises the need for full information about the nature of the victim's injury, if any, and whether a weapon has been used. The use of a weapon is an aggravation that the court is entitled to take account of when sentencing.

Bruce Crawford: I am sure that the Lord Advocate will agree with me that all blade crimes are abhorrent. Recently, I met a young male constituent from Clackmannan who was cut from his nose to the side of his cheek. His assailant was charged with assaulting a young woman, theft, and assaulting my constituent. He pled guilty

to the first two charges but not guilty to the third. Incredibly, he was let off with his plea of not guilty, despite the fact that there were three witnesses.

I met the procurator fiscal to discuss the matter but I am far from satisfied with the answer I got. Will the Lord Advocate agree to meet me to discuss the circumstances of the case and to consider whether such situations might be avoided in future by issuing new updated guidance?

Colin Boyd: I assure Parliament that procurators fiscal take attacks with knives very seriously. There is a presumption that, if there is sufficient evidence, prosecution is in the public interest.

I do not know the circumstances of the case to which Bruce Crawford referred and, to be frank, even if I did I would not be prepared to discuss it in Parliament. All I can say is that in any case in which a plea is offered the procurator fiscal has a duty to consider the strength of the evidence and to act accordingly. However, if Bruce Crawford wishes to write to me or to the Solicitor General for Scotland, we will consider that matter and answer him by letter.

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): Is the Lord Advocate aware that in the drugs business a knife is often placed in the buttocks as a warning? Following the death of one of my constituents from such an assault, will the Lord Advocate tell me whether special consideration is given to the context in which knives are used? In particular, has consideration been given to coming down heavily on that particular use of knives?

Colin Boyd: The use of a weapon on any part of the body is a serious matter. Context is taken into consideration along with all the circumstances of a case, but I would have thought that if someone is a victim of having a knife inserted into their bottom it would not matter whether it was in the context of drugs or another context.

Prisoners (Employment)

7. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what action is being taken to help prisoners enter the job market on release. (S2O-4612)

The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson): We know that getting offenders into employment on release from prison can be crucial in reducing the likelihood of reoffending. The Scottish Prison Service is working closely with Jobcentre Plus, colleges and the voluntary sector to provide offenders with the support that they need to obtain employment.

Mary Scanlon: Does the minister agree that there should be better co-operation and

partnership with further education colleges so that courses and training that are started in prison can be continued on release? Will the minister acknowledge the overcrowding in prisons and agree that FE facilities have a role in reducing both that problem and reoffending?

Cathy Jamieson: I agree that we should maximise opportunities both in the prison setting, with basic literacy and numeracy programmes and the other courses that are available, and in FE colleges. Mary Scanlon will be interested to know that one way to ensure that that transition works is to ensure that people have the opportunity, under supervision, to come out of prison to attend college courses so that on release they can either enter employment or continue with their course. I hope that the Conservatives will support that key way to ensure that people do not reoffend on release.

Debt Arrangement Scheme

8. Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how its debt arrangement scheme will address loan sharks and illegal moneylending. (S2O-4670)

The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry): The debt arrangement scheme provides for the payment of debts free from the threat of diligence or sequestration. The scheme provides a more stable financial environment and reduces the risk that debtors in a debt payment programme will use unsafe lending. Illegal moneylending is a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry, but I can say that a project to tackle loan sharks has been established in Glasgow.

Christine May: Will the minister join me in congratulating Lynda Birrell and Scott Crooks from Fife Council's trading standards money advice service, who have achieved qualifications as approved money advisers? Does he agree that professional, independent money advice is essential in helping people to manage debts and, more important, to avoid getting into debt in the first place, particularly at the hands of unscrupulous lenders?

Hugh Henry: I congratulate the two money advisers in Fife who have been approved. Access to trained, qualified and experienced money advisers is essential if people are to be given the best possible advice, and the debt arrangement scheme relies on people having that accreditation. Some 150 advisers throughout Scotland have undergone the necessary training, although many of them have still to be assessed. I urge money advisers throughout Scotland to come forward, to go through the training that the advisers in Fife have been through and to be accredited so that we can ensure that those who suffer most from the

activities of loan sharks and illegal moneylenders have access to the best quality of advice.

General Questions

NHS (Workforce Planning)

1. Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Executive what role it envisages for the royal colleges in national health service workforce planning. (S2O-4669)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr): The Scottish Executive recognises the valuable contribution that the royal colleges can make to NHS workforce planning. The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and the Royal College of Nursing are represented on the workforce numbers group, which is a sub-group of the national workforce committee. The group leads on workforce planning arrangements and on the production of the national workforce plan. In addition, the Scottish Executive Health Department has regular discussions with the various royal colleges on workforce planning and other matters.

Richard Baker: When north-east members have meetings with Grampian NHS Board, the role of the royal colleges is always to the fore in our discussions on recruitment and workforce planning. In the minister's dialogue with the royal colleges, will he ensure that the colleges consider taking positive action to address recruitment issues and to review their approaches to service delivery proposals so that such issues are not rigidly fixed to population in a way that fails to meet the needs of remote and rural areas?

Mr Kerr: I am more than happy to continue the discussions that I have had with the colleges on that very issue. Our work on workforce planning and modernising medical careers points to some of those issues. I am sure that Professor David Kerr's report will have some interesting things to say about how services should be delivered in the less-populated parts of Scotland that nonetheless require first-class health care.

Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the minister share with us the outcome of his meetings with the royal colleges on the length of training course that is required for general practitioners who opt for an additional specialist qualification? Has he had any discussions with the Royal College of Surgeons about reducing the time that it takes for people to qualify as a surgeon?

Mr Kerr: I have had discussions on both those issues but, to be perfectly honest, they have not reached a conclusion. Clearly, such matters are difficult because they affect not only the quality of training of the individuals involved but the service

that they will be able to deliver within the NHS. We constantly seek to speed up the qualification of the different levels of clinicians in the health service, but we cannot do that by sacrificing quality of outcome or skill levels. That contradiction will always exist within the system. However, I am always happy to discuss with the colleges and others how we can ensure that our highly valued clinicians are adequately trained to the high standards that we have in Scotland in a way that gets them out there as soon as possible to deliver services to patients.

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): At his next meeting with the royal colleges, will the minister raise with them the accreditation of accident and emergency services in Scotland? There are concerns that the wider risk-assessment issues, such as travel distances for ambulances and for individuals, are not taken into consideration when decisions are taken on the closure of accident and emergency units. We need a broader strategic look at those issues.

Mr Kerr: Of course, that broader strategic look needs to take into account the equipment, resources and training that the Executive has made available to paramedics, whose careers have been developed. The physical location of facilities is not the only issue. Perhaps more important is the time that it takes for paramedics to get to a patient and what they can do for the patient when they arrive. That is much more critical for a person's survival than the travel time to their nearest A and E unit.

NHS (Linlithgow)

2. Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how the Minister for Health and Community Care's statement that the national health service should be as local as possible but as specialised as necessary is being applied in the Linlithgow constituency. (S2O-4663)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr): Patients from the Linlithgow constituency already have access to district general hospital services at St John's hospital in Livingston. They will also have access to the new services that Lothian NHS Board recently announced will be available at St John's. The important thing is that people get the right care in the right place. That place should be as local as possible, with services as specialised as they need to be.

Mrs Mulligan: We have had lots of discussion recently about the services at St John's hospital, but most people's experience of the national health service is through their local health centre. What action is the Scottish Executive taking to ensure that practice nurses deliver asthma clinics or diabetes support and that allied health

professionals such as physiotherapists or podiatrists are available, if only for part of their time, to support the local health team?

Mr Kerr: I could not agree more with that philosophy, which is the philosophy of the Executive. Our approach is to try to localise as much as possible of the care and treatment of our people. That is why we are continuing to invest in allied health professionals and why nurse-led clinics are holding more surgeries and dealing with more appointments. Additional facilities such as the renal unit at St John's hospital—which means less travel to Edinburgh for many of the member's constituents—and some of the other specialist clinics that we provide in the west Lothian area will give people the opportunity to receive services in their local community, to the high quality that we expect of all our NHS services.

NHS Fife (St Andrews)

3. Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with NHS Fife on the proposed hospital and health centre for St Andrews. (S2O-4590)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Rhona Brankin): The Executive has had the normal level of contact with the St Andrews project that it has with all projects. The Health Department approved the initial agreement on 31 July 2001 and the outline business case, which identified the preferred option, on 31 August 2003. Since then, the Executive has offered technical support as requested. Officials have attended project board meetings as observers and have supported individuals involved in the project, as appropriate.

Iain Smith: The minister will be aware that, at long last, NHS Fife has submitted the outline planning application for the hospital. Can the minister assure me that the Scottish Executive will continue to give the support that is necessary—including financial support—to ensure that the project goes ahead as quickly as possible? Does she agree that it is extremely important that, as we modernise our health service, we provide adequate modern diagnostic and treatment facilities for communities such as St Andrews and those in the east neuk of Fife?

Rhona Brankin: Very much so. As Andy Kerr has just said, the Scottish Executive welcomes the provision of integrated health care facilities such as those that are planned for St Andrews. We are clear about the fact that we want the hospital to be up and running as soon as possible. Executive officials will continue to offer any support that they can. In addition, all such projects have recently been asked to identify any development needs that they have, so that we may assist them to move forward. We intend over the next 12 to 15

months to provide a targeted programme in response to those needs. That should support the delivery of all such projects, including that in St Andrews.

Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): As someone who lives in St Andrews, I welcome the minister's answer. The new health centre cannot come soon enough. What assurances can the minister give to the people of nearby Cupar that their hospital—the Adamson hospital—will not be downgraded but will continue to provide an appropriate range of services for an expanding local community? Can she assure them that the hospital will not become a waiting room for the new St Andrews facility?

Rhona Brankin: In 2001 and 2002, NHS Fife consulted comprehensively on "Right for Fife". Malcolm Chisholm approved its proposals in December 2002. Ministers have no intention of reopening debate on the proposals. It is for NHS Fife to ensure that provision is adequate for the people who live in the health board area.

Genetically Modified Crops

4. Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress is being made on agreeing rules for co-existence between GM and non-GM crops. (S2O-4619)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Lewis Macdonald): Following initial discussions with a range of stakeholders, we expect to develop proposals that will be issued for formal consultation next year.

Rob Gibson: I note from the November issue of the National Farmers Union Scotland magazine *Scottish Farming Leader* that the Scottish Executive and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs have been conducting workshops on the co-existence of GM-free and GM crops. The report states:

"Measures to ensure that GM-free status was protected would be needed".

Does the minister agree that a code of conduct would be entirely inadequate and that liability for cross-pollination must be placed on GM crop growers?

Lewis Macdonald: Our intention is to devise a co-existence regime. As I said in response to Mr Gibson's initial question, we intend next year to put out to consultation the proposals that we develop. As the member indicated, those proposals are being developed on the basis of consultation with stakeholders, through workshops and other mechanisms, in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK. I do not want to prejudge any

conclusions that that process will reach, but the member will see the outcomes next year.

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Does the minister expect the co-existence and liability measures that he plans to implement in Scotland to be broadly similar to the measures that DEFRA is discussing in England and Wales?

Lewis Macdonald: We face common issues in the UK and across the European Union, therefore we want to work in partnership with DEFRA as far as we can to develop the proposals that we will put out for consultation. There will be a separate Scottish consultation, because it is within our competence to develop a different regime if we so choose. However, we and DEFRA will have to conform with European requirements in any proposals that come forward. That will apply as much to compensation issues as it will to other issues of concern in this area.

School Curriculum (Construction Industry)

5. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will include measures in the school curriculum to encourage more school leavers to work in the construction industry. (S2O-4673)

The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Euan Robson): Our response to "a curriculum for excellence" included proposals to pilot a new skills for work course in construction from session 2005-06, which will be delivered through strengthened partnerships with colleges and other providers. That will enhance existing provision in construction, which we have facilitated through funding allocations to local authorities under our enterprise in education strategy, "Determined to Succeed".

Mary Scanlon: I am very pleased to hear that response, because it almost answers my supplementary question. I was going to ask how the Executive intends to build better partnerships with further education colleges, give pupils aged 14 and upwards the opportunity to gain an insight into the construction industry and help with the training of apprentices, all of which will help to tackle the shortages that exist or are likely to arise in our building industry.

Euan Robson: The Executive acknowledges the importance of the construction industry and education's role in promoting it. Indeed, we will take the matter forward through our school-college review. Our ultimate objective is for all pupils aged 14 plus to have the opportunity to undertake, and to receive a qualification in, work-based vocational training. As the construction industry is very suitable in that regard, I endorse Mary Scanlon's sentiments.

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): Will the minister work in partnership with the ministerial team in the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department, which will receive a report from the cross-party group for construction on skills, training and the construction forum?

Euan Robson: I should point out that the school-college review is being jointly undertaken by two departments, but we would be delighted to receive input from the cross-party group for construction.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Jamie Stone.

Mr Stone *indicated disagreement.*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Stone, your name appeared on the screen and you gave me a very meaningful look. I will happily pass to Sylvia Jackson, from whom I much prefer to receive meaningful looks.

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): I recently discussed with the principal of Falkirk College the lack of further education provision at the Stirling end of the Forth area. Will the minister consider launching pilots that might bring not only the construction industry but other skills areas into partnership with further education colleges and schools?

Euan Robson: I am not familiar with the particular issue that the member raises, but I would be delighted to discuss it with her in due course. If there are any opportunities to do as she suggests, we will be happy to consider them.

Language Learning

6. Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how it can improve the number of young people choosing to study a foreign language. (S2O-4665)

The Minister for Education and Young People (Peter Peacock): Every pupil is guaranteed the opportunity to learn a modern European language from primary school onwards. An interim report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education on the provision of language training in Scotland shows that 98 per cent of primary 7 pupils are currently studying a foreign language.

Marilyn Livingstone: I am pleased with the progress that has been made and can cite many examples of best practice in the schools in my constituency. What steps are being taken, particularly in high schools, to promote vocational qualifications to students who may not be taking a language as part of the core curriculum?

Peter Peacock: As part of our curriculum reform process, one of the key things that we have done in recent weeks is to try to ensure that we are

providing enough opportunities for young people who are following a vocational route in their learning, as part of a wider package of learning, so that there is flexibility in the curriculum to allow choices such as studying a modern language. One of the things that we must do in Scotland, and at the wider UK level, is to ensure that our young people understand fully, particularly as they move through secondary school, that sticking with studying a modern language will help their career prospects in a variety of ways.

We have a malaise in this country that allows us to believe that because most of the world speaks English as a second language, we do not need to speak any other language. That is a fundamental error of judgment. Other countries are teaching their young people to speak many languages successfully, and our young people need to be competitive too, whether they are doing vocational training or not. That is why efforts are being made to allow young people to pick up a language at primary school and to study it throughout their secondary school career.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): Is the minister aware that there has been an alarming decline in the numbers of those who are qualifying as language teachers, with some 30 vacancies unfilled in September 2002 and in September 2003? Will he highlight the good career prospects that are available to those with skills in teaching modern foreign languages? That might be greatly in the public interest.

Peter Peacock: I am happy to endorse what Lord James has said in general terms. I am glad that he welcomes and recognises the fact that, under this Government, there are secure employment prospects for all our teachers. The approach that we are taking to workforce planning in our Scottish education system—anticipating changes in demand for teachers and where shortages are going to arise—allows us to identify much earlier than we ever did before where vacancies will arise in the future, so that we can increase the supply of teachers and training to try to fill those vacancies. That is the purpose of the modern workforce planning that we are doing, and it is proving successful in meeting demand.

Affordable Housing

7. Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to increase the availability of social rented housing and affordable housing to buy. (S2O-4659)

The Minister for Communities (Malcolm Chisholm): Over the next three years, we will invest £1.2 billion in affordable homes to rent or to buy. We have raised our three-year target for the supply of affordable homes from 18,000 to 21,500,

and more than 16,500 of those homes will be provided for social rent, with nearly 5,000 homes for low-cost home ownership.

Elaine Smith: The minister knows that I am always keen to commend the Executive on its radical homelessness legislation. What specific assistance is being provided to aid local authorities with the implementation of the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003? Is the minister aware of the circumstances in areas such as my constituency, where the sheer scale of homelessness allocations threatens to jeopardise regular housing allocations policy because of the lack of council housing?

Malcolm Chisholm: Apart from what I said about the future, I note that investment in north Lanarkshire housing is up this year by 20 per cent. I also notice that, at the last count, there were no families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in north Lanarkshire, and I welcome that.

The main challenges for North Lanarkshire Council, as for other councils, will be over the next few years. We have set the challenging target of abolishing priority need by 2012—in other words, giving all homeless people the same rights. I am determined to make progress towards that target in stages, in partnership with local authorities. We are committed to making a statement next year about how exactly we will do that. If there are specific current problems, I would want to hear more about them, although when I last looked at the figure for allocations from the waiting list to homeless people in north Lanarkshire it stood at 18 per cent, which is below the Scottish average. If the situation has changed since then, I would be keen to hear about that from Elaine Smith.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Christine Grahame.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I shall resist the temptation to say anything about meaningful looks.

Will the minister acknowledge that, after five years of the Lib-Lab coalition, we have seen a substantial increase in homelessness, which may very well be exacerbated by the recent regulations on the prohibition of bed-and-breakfast accommodation? Given that the right to buy is now seen by many providers as the villain of the piece, will he accelerate review of that policy?

Malcolm Chisholm: As Christine Grahame knows, the reason for more people being homeless is that more people have rights under our progressive homelessness legislation, which is probably the most progressive in Europe. In other words, everyone who is homeless is now entitled to temporary accommodation.

I thought that Christine Grahame supported the bed-and-breakfast regulations. Those families had a right to permanent accommodation under the old homelessness legislation. There is nothing new about that.

We are committed to conducting a review of the right to buy and producing a report in 2006. As I said when I was on television with Christine Grahame a week or so ago, we will consider all the options at that point. We will take into account what is required to meet by 2012 our obligations under the homelessness legislation.

Tourism

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-2166, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on tourism—ambitions for Scotland, together with two amendments to the motion.

15:01

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson):

I am pleased to open this tourism debate. It provides us with an ideal opportunity to reflect on another good year for Scottish tourism and to look forward to the future. Tourism is a crucial industry for Scotland. It is one of the largest contributors to the economy and employs a significant proportion of our workforce.

We have certainly come a long way since the dark days of 2001, thanks to the huge efforts of people who work in the tourism industry. I am pleased to be able to say that the industry is thriving. In the first six months of this year, visitor numbers from overseas increased by about 12 per cent compared with last year, and a 25 per cent increase has taken place in the number of visitors from western Europe. That is enormously encouraging. Occupancy figures for almost all types of visitor accommodation are booming and stand at the highest levels experienced in the past five years.

VisitScotland continues to do well. The statistics represent significant increases in turnover for many businesses throughout Scotland and increases in revenue for the Scottish economy. I am delighted to be involved in that work.

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): Does the minister believe that the increase in the number of budget airlines that are able to fly to Scotland from other destinations has helped to contribute to that growth?

Patricia Ferguson: The member is right. The increase in the number of direct flights into the country—and not just those by budget airlines—has had a significant effect. I will refer to that later.

The Executive's focus on tourism fits in with our wider strategy to grow the economy. The revision of the "Smart, Successful Scotland" strategy that was published in November sets out the direction for the enterprise networks and calls on others, including VisitScotland, to contribute to driving economic growth.

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): On the role of agencies in supporting economic growth, does the minister share my concern about a situation in my constituency that involves a redevelopment proposal for Taymouth castle? The redevelopment would result in the castle being

transformed into the first seven-star hotel in Scotland. The proposal is currently bogged down in Historic Scotland, and the developers and I cannot get any idea of when it may emerge. Can she give me a reassurance about when the proposal may emerge?

Patricia Ferguson: Mr Swinney is aware of my interest in the matter; we have discussed it on a number of occasions. It is important to point out that the historic environment is a crucial part of Scotland's tourism industry. Some 85 per cent of overseas visitors reckon that they will visit some historic monument or other during their stay. The Executive is committed to growing the economy and I am keen to see developments such as the one in which Mr Swinney is interested proceed, but as ministers we also have a responsibility to consider our historic environment and to act in its best interests. I understand that the application came to Historic Scotland on 10 November and that some information that is required from the developers is outstanding. As Mr Swinney knows, I have urged Historic Scotland to progress the matter as quickly as possible. I will keep the matter under consideration in the meantime.

We need to work together across the Scottish economy if we are to contribute to driving economic growth. We in the Scottish Executive share the industry's ambition to grow tourism revenues by 50 per cent over the next decade. That is a challenge for everyone involved, but it is achievable if we work together.

As an Executive, we have increased the funding that is available to VisitScotland by 28 per cent over three years. The recent spending review committed us to maintaining the record levels of investment in tourism marketing through to 2008. That is investment not just in tourism, but in Scotland's economic future. We have challenged tourism businesses to match our additional marketing funding, and I am heartened by their response so far.

Another success story, to which I alluded in responding to Mrs May, is the route development fund, which has established 14 new routes, bringing more visitors to Scotland. People can now travel here directly from Prague, Dubai and Newark, to mention a few.

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green): Does the minister have figures to show whether more tourists are being brought to Scotland than are being taken out to holiday elsewhere as a result of the route development fund?

Patricia Ferguson: Yes. Our experience shows that it is occasionally the case that in the first year or two of the development of a new route the traffic might be more heavily weighted towards people leaving Scotland, but that as routes

develop and we market along those routes, the number of tourists coming from those countries also increases. It is a two-way street. Many more visitors every day are taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by the new routes. Even more routes are under consideration, and we have doubled investment in the fund to ensure that the previous success continues.

Tourism is in good shape. I am determined that Scotland will not only continue to be a great place to visit, but will get even better. VisitScotland is proving to be extremely successful at enticing visitors to come to Scotland and should get at least some of the credit for our current position. However, I am determined to build on that success. With VisitScotland's increased funding, it will be able to use new and innovative marketing tools, such as the Scottish village, which will be used for the first time in Grand Central station in New York during tartan week to showcase the very best of what Scotland has to offer.

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con): Will the minister give way?

Patricia Ferguson: Not at the moment. I have taken quite a few interventions and I need to make progress.

I have also asked VisitScotland to examine how we can use our proposed ban on smoking in enclosed public places as part of marketing Scotland—an element of our marketing that we may soon share with New York.

We want to spread the message that Scotland is a must-visit, must-return destination. Our commitment to marketing is clear. However, if we want our visitors to keep returning, their experience while in Scotland must exceed their expectations, which is why we have given VisitScotland an extra £3 million over two years to strengthen and broaden its quality assurance schemes.

Alex Fergusson: Assuming that the minister is successful in attracting more people to return to Scotland, does she agree that when visitors venture out into rural Scotland, too often they are encouraged to stick to designated tourist routes? That discourages them from spreading out across rural areas and tends to keep them on a rather narrow path, often missing perfectly welcoming scenery and other attractions that lie off that path. Will she consider reviewing the tourist route network?

Patricia Ferguson: That is an interesting point that has not been raised with me before. My experience of talking to people who have come to this country is that nowadays people want a less fixed holiday. They want to be able to range much more freely throughout the country. I know that VisitScotland is interested in that, but I have not

had made to me the specific comments that Mr Fergusson made. I will chat to him about it later, if that is okay.

In total, the public sector commits £90 million a year to promoting Scotland, but we need to work more closely together, joining up our efforts, to ensure that we get the most from that investment. The efforts of local authorities and the enterprise networks as well as VisitScotland are crucial to our ambition.

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP): Will the minister give way?

Patricia Ferguson: I will not at the moment. I have taken quite a few interventions, and I need to proceed.

More funding is not the only way in which we can help to make Scotland the world-class destination that it deserves to be. I am proud to be involved with bringing major events to Scotland. We have proved time and again that Scotland is capable of hosting international events to an extremely high standard. We already host iconic events such as the British Open Championship and the biggest arts festival in the world, but we can do even more, which is why we set up EventScotland to deliver the Executive's major events strategy. We aim to make Scotland one of the world's foremost events destinations by 2015. EventScotland's remit is to attract, support and create major events that will attract international spectators, participants and media to Scotland.

Last year's MTV Europe music awards were a wonderful success and generated nearly £9 million of revenue for the Scottish economy. I will continue to look for further opportunities to bring international events to Scotland. One such opportunity is our work to attract the 2014 Commonwealth games to Glasgow. I recently had the privilege of attending the Commonwealth youth games in Bendigo, which is in Victoria, Australia. The Scottish team turned in a magnificent performance and finished fourth in the medals table. While there, I found out more about the benefits that Melbourne's Commonwealth games bid has brought to that area.

Let us not underestimate the benefits of international events in other parts of the United Kingdom. I was delighted to meet Lord Coe earlier today at Hampden park to offer strong Scottish support for London's bid to host the 2012 Olympic games. If that bid is successful, it will have important benefits for the UK's international profile and will bring more tourists to Scotland. I hope that many MSPs will make time to come to the reception that is being held in the Parliament building this evening, which Lord Coe will attend.

We must ensure that such events are not all based in our cities. I am committed to promoting

events that are held in our more rural and remote areas. Through its regional programme, EventScotland supports events throughout Scotland, such as the big in Falkirk festival, the Bowmore Blair castle international horse trials and country fair, the Edinbane festival and the wickerman festival. Rural areas can look forward to hosting more such events. The enterprise networks are working with the organisers of the Hebridean Celtic festival, which is expected to generate about £1 million of visitor expenditure during a four to five-day period.

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): Will the minister take an intervention?

Patricia Ferguson: I want to move on.

The mountain bike world championships will be held in Lochaber in 2007; it will be the last major cross-country mountain bike competition before the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and a key event in the qualification process for those games. Such events are of huge significance for the whole of Scotland and allow us to raise our profile on the global stage.

The image that we portray to our visitors affects directly our standing in the world. We all have a role in promoting Scotland to the world, but the tourism and hospitality sector has a particularly vital role in promoting Scotland internationally. We can never stop asking whether we are matching and exceeding the world-class skills and customer services for which many of our competitors are renowned. The success of tourism in Scotland will depend on meeting customer service expectations, which is why I want to focus even harder on skills and training.

I want to work with the enterprise networks to improve the training that is on offer to staff. I fully appreciate the effort that the enterprise networks and the new skills council, People First, put into improving skills. Springboard Scotland also carries out good work and I was delighted to launch its career pack, which aims to encourage more people to enter the tourism and hospitality industry as a career, in Aviemore a few weeks ago. Another good project that is aimed at stimulating excellent levels of service is the pride and passion initiative, which aims to enthuse every part of the tourism and hospitality sector throughout Scotland; I hope that all Scots will get involved in it.

Work to implement an integrated tourism network is well under way. I am pleased with the progress so far and confident that the network will support further growth throughout the tourism sector. From April next year, we will begin to see the results of all the hard work of those who are involved in the project in implementing an integrated tourism network that will offer a high-quality, seamless service to all our visitors and

tourism businesses. We must provide all our visitors with a high-quality information service that presents all that the country has to offer in an attractive and accessible way.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): Will the minister give way?

Patricia Ferguson: I do not have time.

I am keen that visitors and Scots have the opportunity to experience what every part of Scotland has to offer, which is why I want rural tourism to grow at the same rate as that in the cities. It is encouraging to see the work that is being done by the enterprise networks to improve accessibility to rural areas, such as the new air and rail links into the Highlands and Islands. In a country as diverse as ours, there is every reason for visitors to take advantage of more than a few aspects of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): You must finish now, minister.

Patricia Ferguson: I will have to miss out some of my speech and go to the end of it.

We need to engage with the tourism and hospitality industry as we take forward our reviews. I want to refresh the Executive's tourism strategy, which was originally published in 2000. At the moment, we are competing with 193 other countries for visitors and need to ensure that we are able to do that and that we encourage visitors not only to visit but to come back again and again.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the economic benefits of promoting the long-term growth of Scotland's tourism industry; approves of the Scottish Executive's ambition, shared with VisitScotland and the tourism sector, of achieving 50% revenue growth over the next decade; notes that this will benefit the economies of rural as well as city and urban areas in every part of the country; appreciates that this long-term growth can only be achieved by ensuring that the marketing of Scotland in UK and overseas tourism markets is further strengthened and that the businesses that comprise the tourism and hospitality sectors are encouraged to compete even more strongly and coherently in this most competitive of global industries, and welcomes the additional funding given to VisitScotland to help achieve this.

15:15

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport rightly referred to the importance of quality assurance. I hope that she will give some consideration to making those tourism providers that are not participating in the quality assurance scheme do so. We ought to have those providers registered. As well as raising standards, one of the advantages of the scheme is that it will enable us to identify how many providers there are and who

they are. In that regard, I note that the Executive said, in response to a question from me, that it was unable to identify that information. Indeed, industry sources suggest to me that some of the numbers that I have been given in answer to other questions are not desperately accurate.

It is agreed that the future of tourism is extremely important to Scotland. It creates possibly hundreds of thousands of jobs and has a turnover that is estimated to be in excess of £4 billion a year. I should point out, however, that not everyone agrees on the basis of that assessment. Perhaps we need to examine such areas to see how well we are doing and whether we can assess the size of the business in order to identify opportunities for the future.

Clearly, the market is worldwide. The minister rightly recognised the significant growth that we have experienced in the past year or two after a poor period. The growth in the number of overseas visitors—particularly from western Europe—has been significant. It is anticipated that that market will grow by 4 per cent a year over the next decade. We need to be ambitious and creative if we are to ensure that Scotland grabs as large a share of the opportunities as possible. However, we also need to be realistic about our position and recognise the weakness in our competitive position as a result of the fact that the strong pound and high fuel costs are working against the industry.

There is a significant role for Government in promoting and supporting the industry, but its success is down to the industry itself. The industry needs to address marketing, access and good tourism experiences. To a greater or lesser extent, there is a role for Government in each of those areas.

Perhaps it is understandable that we politicians have concentrated rather a lot on marketing. However, good tourism experiences are the responsibility not only of the tourism providers; Government has a role to play in that regard as well. We must ensure that the significant attractions that are provided by the public sector are of a high standard and are maintained to a high standard. Indeed, there might be a case for the delivery of the tourism experience to be rather less distant from its marketing. Currently, VisitScotland plays a primary role in the industry, but it is really only a marketing organisation.

To have a successful partnership with wider industry interests, it is essential that we have a climate of mutual respect and parity of esteem. In that regard, the current tourism network Scotland project is causing considerable strains in relationships between the partners. While there might be support for an integrated approach to marketing, the processes by which the new

structure will be arrived at raise a number of serious questions. Indeed, a tourism provider that is involved with one of the area tourist boards posed me five questions that the minister might care to answer when she sums up.

First, how will the shortfall in money—between £2.1 million and £4.2 million—be reconciled if the Scottish Executive is not providing further money for that end of the deal? Of course, that money relates to the existing shortfall in ATB funding and the potential loss relating to membership income.

Secondly, how will VisitScotland maintain no increase in its headquarters staff, when the minister's announcement contained plans that can mean only that there will be an expansion in staffing?

Thirdly, how are the expected redundancies of 10 to 15 per cent across the network to be paid for? That will certainly not be done from efficiencies in the first two years. Will there be moneys from the Executive? The minister might give us an idea later of both the level of the expected redundancies and the overall churn within the industry as new, different jobs are created by the new arrangements.

Fourthly, what will happen to the hubs? With little or no moneys left from the ATB set-up, will the hubs draw on moneys to survive that would have gone to all areas, including those that are prudent and financially healthy and which could subsequently lose out? Will there be such redistribution?

Fifthly, is VisitScotland taking on the pension liabilities of the 14 existing ATBs? Genuine concerns are being felt across the industry about the current deficit in the network of around £2 million and the potential loss of a similar amount of money from membership income. There is uncertainty about local authority contributions, redundancies—compulsory or otherwise—and their associated costs, and pension arrangements. There are concerns that those issues could lead to significant handicaps for the industry at this key time of change and opportunity. The early delivery of a detailed business plan is essential to build confidence and trust. As part of that process, the Executive should consider giving transitional support to help to address the industry's concerns. I seek the minister's assurance that she is willing to address those concerns and to do so through transitional support if necessary.

The minister gave us a long list of events and stated that those events are important for current and future Scottish tourism. I endorse that view. Such seasonal events have long provided us with opportunities to do business. For example, there are annual agricultural shows, which used to be more successful than they are now, highland

games, and the festival of Up-Helly-Aa. All such events are important parts of our heritage. They attract local people and visitors alike and they fit in with the family history niche market. Many exiles and members of their families return to Scotland, whether they are recent leavers or one generation or many generations removed from those who left an area. Perhaps we could encourage the General Register Office for Scotland to work with local family history societies and take their message on the road to the events such as those that I described.

My colleagues Nicola Sturgeon and Alex Salmond recently called for a winter festival to be built around St Andrew's day, Hogmanay and Burns' celebrations. Such celebrations have local and national resonances and offer opportunities not only to celebrate, but to bring welcome visitors to, or home to, Scotland to share in Scotland's heritage. We have music, book, film and drama festivals. They are not just for Edinburgh and are being built on. The advantage that they have over the minister's proposals is that they are recurring events. They happen annually or bi-annually and draw visitors back to Scotland again and again. Staging the Commonwealth games in Scotland, as welcome as that would be, would not guarantee return visitors. Supporting existing national and local events is more likely to attract repeat business.

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is just finishing.

Brian Adam: You gave the minister 14 minutes, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Yes, but the minister took a number of interventions.

Brian Adam: Niche strategies are successful here and elsewhere in the world. We must provide reasons for repeat business and the obvious repeat business will come from existing niche strategies. For example, golfing, ecotourism and researching family history will attract repeat business.

Access to Scotland is improving. The minister rightly talked about the success of the route development fund. However, to make all areas of Scotland accessible to tourists, we must ensure that all Scotland benefits from the route development fund rather than just the central belt airports, as is the case currently. The minister is right to identify the significant increase in the number of tourists from western Europe.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must finish now, Mr Adam.

Brian Adam: All Scotland's ports on the east side offer opportunities. I take the Presiding Officer's hint.

We need to be positive and ambitious about the future. I will leave it to my colleagues to fill in the gaps on structural funding and the ferry from Rosyth.

I move amendment S2M-2166.2, to leave out from "approves" to end and insert:

"further recognises that tourism requires good access and good tourism experiences as well as marketing strategies; expresses concern over the uncertainties introduced by the Tourism Network Scotland (TNS) project, including potential compulsory redundancies, the financial shortfall and lack of a detailed business plan; commends the development of niche marketing strategies and the extension of the seasonal events to ensure that all Scotland benefits from a growing industry; seeks continued commitment to improving access through the Route Development Fund and a strategy for dealing with the consequences of changes to structural funds, and calls on the Scottish Executive, contingent upon production of the TNS business plan, to consider making available transitional funding to address any shortfall due to potential loss of membership income, local authority funding, redundancy costs and the ongoing structural deficit."

15:25

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): We agree that promoting the long-term growth of Scotland's tourism industry will provide economic benefits for Scotland. After all, tourism is Scotland's largest industry. However, the Executive's plans mean that ATBs will be replaced by 14 local tourism hubs that will be responsible for delivering the national strategy—in other words, the Executive's strategy—in their areas. Businesses will not pay membership fees, but will buy those commercial packages that they wish to buy. The current system of local authority grants to ATBs will be replaced by partnership agreements between local authorities and VisitScotland.

Before committing itself to the restructuring, why did the Executive not solve some of the problems that the ATB members were already facing? The whole process has been dogged by uncertainty and indecision and there are still unanswered questions. In particular, how can funding for the new hubs be guaranteed without membership status and what will happen to local tourist information centres? Along with many people in the industry, we are concerned about the loss of local knowledge and expertise. The ATB network has branded VisitScotland's management style as

"centralist and hierarchical with no ability to meet local needs".

The network is also most unhappy about the

"completely inadequate consultation with ATBs about the proposals."

The tourism industry has had to endure endless Executive tinkering, along with a big drop in visitor numbers. We believe that the proposed structure is flawed, but I suppose that it must somehow be made to work in the best interests of the industry. That will be difficult, because the fundamental problem with tourism in Scotland is that the Executive, as in so many other areas, behaves as if it were the role of Government to lead the industry. Consequently, the Executive pursues an interventionist approach; it is obsessed with restructuring and strategy launches. Each minister—of whom there have been plenty—has been determined to make their individual mark rather than to create a climate in which Scottish tourism can thrive. We have ended up with a flawed new structure, which the Executive and VisitScotland claim will provide a raft of benefits, including that of stopping different ATBs exercising petty jealousies against one another.

Many people in the ATBs have raised concerns, especially about how the restructuring has been handled. Robin Shedden, who is the chairperson of the Scottish area tourist board network, said:

"One of the major justifications for the whole re-organisation was the need to introduce funding stability at local level. We do not see how the proposals for the new structure will provide this. Indeed we fear there is a real risk of things getting worse as membership income ceases with no guarantee that the shortfall will be covered by additional commercial income ... furthermore there are no guarantees that local authority funding will be sustained at its current level."

It is not surprising that area tourist boards are upset, because they have not been properly involved in the building of the project. A growing number of trade associations and private businesses are expressing their concerns about the lack of representation, influence and participation that they will have in the new system. They are also unhappy about their lack of involvement in the project up until now. Carolyn Baird of Perthshire tourist board said:

"We seem to be designing something for big businesses, which will welcome and be able to handle the system. However ... the majority of businesses that are involved in tourism are not big businesses. That is a major problem."—[*Official Report, Enterprise and Culture Committee*, 23 November 2004; c 1316.]

The remarks that I have cited were made by tourism professionals who know their industry inside out. We believe that it is an outrage that Scotland's biggest industry has had to suffer several years of delay and uncertainty because of the Executive's incompetence. The Executive's approach to restructuring the tourism industry is far too centralised and dictatorial and it will hamper rather than help tourism professionals. Why can the Executive not understand that local tourism operators know best how to promote local tourism attractions?

Patricia Ferguson: Will the member give way?

Mr McGrigor: All right.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I ask the minister to make her intervention quickly.

Patricia Ferguson: I simply want to make the point that an ATB chairman was appointed as a project director for the project and that he is working closely with VisitScotland on it. The process is by no means a one-way street.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are going into your last minute, Mr McGrigor.

Mr McGrigor: I beg your pardon—my last minute?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Yes.

Mr McGrigor: The Conservative party thinks that tourism is one of the chief drivers of the Scottish economy and that it must therefore be central to Government strategies that aim to boost enterprise. Why is tourism currently dealt with by the Executive's Education Department? We would create a department of enterprise that incorporated tourism, which would put tourism where it should be: firmly at the heart of Government enterprise policy. In order to raise the status of tourism as a career choice for young people, we would better promote vocational training in the tourism sector. We need professional Scottish tourism staff who take pride in the importance of their job.

We would invest an extra £100 million a year on roads and public transport in order to improve our tourism infrastructure. There is huge potential to develop historical and archaeological tourism and we would also seek to really promote Scotland as a destination for golf and other sporting events. We would encourage more marine tourism off Scotland's fascinating coastline and develop the freshwater and seawater angling that is first class in this country. Ultimately, the best way in which to encourage Scottish tourism is to give the maximum support to the development of our strengths and tourism assets instead of wasting resources on yet more centre-led strategies and restructurings.

On 28 November, I went to Aviemore for Scotland's national tourism conference. I heard Bob Cotton speak for the industry and call for no more regulation, a better transport infrastructure and more vocational skills training. The minister heard him too. That is what people in the tourism industry want, minister—please give it to them.

I move amendment S2M-2166.3, to leave out from "approves" to end and insert:

"urges the Scottish Executive to pursue a more ambitious target for growth in light of the aggressive policies being pursued by competitor countries; appreciates that long-term

growth can only be achieved by ensuring that the marketing of Scotland in UK and overseas tourism markets is further strengthened and that the businesses that comprise the tourism and hospitality sectors are freed from the Executive's policies which are hampering business growth and enterprise throughout Scotland; regrets the uncertainty and consequent damage caused to the industry by the Executive's handling of the tourism network restructuring process; further regrets the potential loss of local knowledge and expertise that may result from the centralisation of the tourism network, and calls on the Executive to ensure that both the local tourist information centres and funding for the new tourism hubs are adequately protected once the new network commences in April."

15:31

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): In fairness to the Highlands, I have to say that I do not recognise the situation that Jamie McGrigor described. Only last week, I attended a tourism conference hosted by Highland Council, at which it was clear that there is a real willingness on the part of the enterprise network, Highland Council, VisitScotland and the outgoing ATB to work to make things happen in the future. Of course, any time of change is not easy and I recognise some of the difficulties that are faced in Perthshire and Fife. However, we are where we are and we have to get to where we need to go.

I say to Jamie McGrigor that, in my experience, the tourism providers out there in the marketplace are not hugely interested in structures; they are interested in delivery. I think that, as long as a good-quality service is delivered to the industry, the providers will welcome the fact that they will not have to pay fees or membership.

I want to talk about a theme that is slightly connected to the one that Jamie McGrigor focused on—the differences within Scotland, or, as the French would say, "Vive la différence!" I consider Scotland to be like a diamond: it is a country of many facets, all of which are slightly different.

Historically, what used to annoy tourism providers in, say, Caithness about the Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board was that what Caithness was offering was fundamentally different from what was offered in Lochaber, Ross-shire or Argyll. The issue was how to sell the singularities of an area such as Caithness.

In the Starbucks age in which we live, all of us are being homogenised into one lowest common denominator product—

Alex Fergusson: Like the cheese industry?

Mr Stone: I will not mention the cheese industry—or, at least, not yet.

Let us take the example of the sale of wine. The marketplace has become much more sophisticated. People no longer go to the shop

and buy a bottle of whatever; they are now very choosy. The same could be said of cheese, which may be the reason why my brother is not doing as well as he was.

The same is true of the tourism product. No longer do we go for the general Scottish tartan or "The Broons"-cover experience; people want something different. Scotland's great strength is that it can play to those differences. I am talking about niche marketing, eco-tourism and, as other members have said, genealogical and cultural tourism. The fact that Caithness is as different from Lochaber as it is different from Ayrshire is a huge marketing point.

Mr McGrigor: I agree with much of what Jamie Stone says. However, the point that I was making is that surely information on the differences between the various areas can be supplied only by local professional tourism operators who live and work in those areas and not by an Executive view that is thrust upon them.

Mr Stone: It is not a matter of operators having views thrust upon them. The whole process has broadly been accepted in the Highlands, an area that Jamie McGrigor represents just as much as I do.

The jury is out. I believe that the new model can quite easily deliver areas' distinctive differences, which will be selling points. The proof of the pudding will be in the eating. It behoves Jamie McGrigor and me to work with the tourism industry, VisitScotland and Peter Lederer to ensure that such features are brought to the fore. We should do that in a constructive, not destructive, manner. We have a great chance to sell the individual attractions of different parts of Scotland.

I point out to Mr McGrigor that we face severe competition. Some eastern bloc countries are now competing out there and are dangerous in what they can offer. We can now fly to Belgrade in Serbia, a city that was in a war zone not so many years ago, stay in the finest hotel and have the finest of meals and the finest of wines at a price that none of us can compete with. We should think about what is happening with the enlargement of the European Union. It will not be easy for us. Turning to the tourism product, some emerging tourist destinations are getting people behind the counter who have six months' or a year's training—not just a week or a day about how to be a hostess or how to sell tourism. That is a big issue.

I return to our strengths. Genealogical and cultural tourism appeals to the sort of people who have slightly deeper pockets and who put their money where their mouth is, so we should sell that product. Mr Fergusson is a strong advocate of his

constituency, Galloway and Upper Nithsdale. Having visited that area in the past few days, I know that it is a singular product. I am talking about selling some of the history that different areas and places have to offer, such as Kirkcudbright in Mr Fergusson's constituency. What more could be done about art there, for example?

I wish, in a sense, to look both backwards and forwards. The issue is about realising the strengths of the past. If I could dig up every piece of turf in Caithness, I bet that I could find a few Skara braes. That is precisely what the discerning people—the more sophisticated market—will go for. The issue is also about the future. I conclude by mentioning the new Parliament building. I understand that, on some days, we have been crossing the 3,000 visitors per day threshold, which is pretty astonishing.

Let us look back at the great things that made Scotland what it is. Let us sell that and make it a tourism product. Equally, let us look forward to things that we could do in the future. It behoves us all to take this building and to sell it. There will be other opportunities that we will be able to sell, too. Let us face it: we are trying to get the maximum cash out of tourists' pockets into our coffers here in Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now come to the open debate. A considerable number of members wish to speak, so I will have to keep them to a strict six minutes.

15:38

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): It employs 9 per cent of the Scottish workforce, with more than 200,000 industry-related jobs. It contributes £4.5 billion to the Scottish economy each year. Moreover, if we add other public sector investment on to VisitScotland's budget, it attracts annual investment of more than £90 million a year. I am talking about the Scottish tourism industry today, which I hope we all want to grow at the rate described in the minister's motion.

If the industry is to grow at that rate, we must market Scotland effectively. Initiatives such as the route development fund, which the minister mentioned, and the establishment of tourism network Scotland—to which I will return later, as the proposal has contentious aspects—will help to focus minds on doing just that. Local authorities will be key players. As a former chairman of the Kingdom of Fife Tourist Board, and a board member after that, I unashamedly wish to focus on the kingdom of Fife in my speech.

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Like me, Christine May is a former council leader. Is she concerned that, on the back of a

tight settlement, councils might in the not-too-distant future make some irrevocable decisions about the amount of funding that should go into Scottish tourism? Does she acknowledge the concerns that the industry is expressing about that issue? There will be competition for resources for education, social work and tourism, for example. How will tourist boards successfully compete in the funding round?

Christine May: Mr Crawford knows as well as I do the difficult decisions that councils make every year. I intend to return to that issue later.

The tourism sector in Fife has grown consistently since 1998, as has Fife's share of the Scottish market. Visitor numbers have grown by 11 per cent and about 6 million visitor days are spent in Fife each year. Spending is up from £146 million to £197 million after inflation, which translates into jobs: full-time equivalent jobs are up from 4,500 in 1998 to more than 6,000 now, which is an increase of 32 per cent.

All that brings more than economic benefits; it brings social benefits for the residents and citizens of Fife. It is important to remember that tourism investment is for not just the visitor from overseas, but the day-tripper or the family on a day out, even though it is spent in the local area. Such investment should be integral to the community planning process in growing the economy, building safer communities, improving the environment and creating a better-educated workforce and better lives for people.

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
rose—

Christine May: I give way to Tricia Marwick.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before you take the intervention, I ask Mr Stone and Mr Fergusson to take their conversation outside the chamber.

Mr Stone: Apologies.

Tricia Marwick: I am grateful to Christine May for giving way. She is right to talk about tourism in Fife, but does she agree that, in her constituency of Central Fife, places such as the Levenmouth area and Glenrothes are not seeing the benefits of increased tourism that are felt elsewhere in Fife?

Christine May: I thank Mrs Marwick for that intervention, but I do not agree with her. I was just coming to the point that the investment in tourism infrastructure has allowed my constituents in Buckhaven, Methil and Leven to enjoy the benefits of the Fife coastal path, the 300 miles of the cycle ways network, the upgraded paths in the Lomond hills regional park and Rothies Halls in Glenrothes.

In 2005, Fife will become the first area in the country to have a carers-go-free policy, which will allow free access to visitor attractions, sports

centres, theatres and so on to people who are accompanying a disabled person. That is collaboration at its most basic to benefit the economy and tourism in Scotland.

I turn briefly to private sector investment. Although the St Andrews Bay resort is contentious, it now employs many of my constituents and many of those whom Mrs Marwick and Mr Crawford represent. The investment in facilities at Balbirnie House Hotel in Markinch, which is also in my constituency, and the business learning centre in Dunfermline at Lauder College have created additionality—they have brought new business to Fife and to Scotland, but they have also ensured investment in standards and service. I acknowledge the training that is being done in collaboration with Scottish Enterprise Fife—I stress that I am talking about the enterprise network, not the education department—whereby lots of people have been trained in customer care. Moreover, the ferry has carried almost 200,000 passengers, many of whom—about 20 per cent—stay overnight in Fife. That has been achieved through good partnership.

The Scottish tourism network project, which I mentioned earlier, is destabilising for staff in the industry. I ask the minister to assure us that the project will be handled as sensitively and quickly as possible so that we can sustain local authority funding and private sector investment.

A decade ago, Fife tourism was a Cinderella sector, clad in rags and struggling for cash. Now it is a princess, glittering, creating prosperity, supporting jobs and improving the quality of life for local people and visitors. Let us work together to ensure that the industry in Fife and Scotland grows to meet or exceed the targets that the Executive has set. I support the motion.

15:44

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): The value to the Scottish economy of our tourism product cannot be overstated. I hope that we all accept that secure long-term funding of the marketing effort to promote Scotland is a key element of ensuring long-term growth.

With that in mind, I want to raise with the minister the real fears in the industry about the funding of the marketing effort in Scotland as a result of changes to structural funds in the package from 2007 to 2013. I refer in particular to the impact that those changes will have in my region of Mid Scotland and Fife. The draft structural fund regulations for 2007 to 2013 are likely to mean significant reductions in the funding that is available for tourism in Scotland. That is disappointing, given that just over a quarter of the approvals that have been given to date in the

current east of Scotland programme have gone to tourism projects.

I am sure that the minister will be aware that, in Mid Scotland and Fife, tourist boards have been able to access significant amounts of European regional development funding over the past five to six years. Basically, that has kept a number of those boards solvent. Perthshire Tourist Board has identified that as an issue, too. The funding has also enabled the tourist boards to maintain and develop marketing programmes that independent evaluation has shown generate significant returns on investment. The Executive should be well aware of the potential impact on regional tourism bodies in the future of declining income from ERDF projects.

Christine May: Does Bruce Crawford agree that the challenge for us is to ensure that the partnerships are put in place so that, when that income from Europe stops, it is replaced and even increased?

Bruce Crawford: I agree entirely. Sadly, however, no proposals have been developed to date to address the funding gap that some of the bodies might experience from 2007. In the light of the changes to the structural funds, there must be urgent discussions about the future funding of regional tourism agencies.

Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Bruce Crawford: I want to make some progress on the issue.

A strategy must be developed to ensure that the agencies can deliver effective local marketing programmes, quality businesses and customer services.

The Executive still has much to do to persuade the vast majority of local tourism businesses of the benefits that the planned new structure will bring. Many are still unhappy and, as things stand, the environment is not a good one in which to launch the new VisitScotland. In particular, people are concerned that, despite the fact that the restructuring review began three years ago, there is still no VisitScotland business plan for the new network. It cannot be right that staff structures are being approved and people are being appointed before the new organisation even knows what its business plan looks like. The industry badly needs a business plan that sets out the priorities and areas of operation and describes how the network will work.

Patricia Ferguson: As the member knows, the deadline for the business plan is 31 December. My contacts with VisitScotland indicate to me that it is absolutely on target to deliver that business plan, which will then be in the public domain. I reassure Mr Crawford on that.

Bruce Crawford: It was almost three years ago that we started the whole review rolling. A deadline of 31 December for the business plan is, frankly, too late. Instead of attending Scotland's glittering prize givings such as the thistle awards, which has been described as

"a night when the stars came out to play",

perhaps the minister should be getting around the area tourist boards and talking to them a bit more in her new role.

Patricia Ferguson rose—

Bruce Crawford: The minister will have her chance to reply.

The tourism industry badly needs a business plan to be put in place. In any organisation—whether private or public—the business plan must come first and should drive what the structures look like. This is a classic case of putting the cart before the horse. No bank in its right mind would support a venture that went about its business in such a way and neither should the Executive. It is time that the minister sorted the situation out.

One of the major justifications for the reorganisation was the need to introduce funding stability at the local level. I am glad that Brian Adam has mentioned the concept of providing additional transitional funding because of the £2.2 million that will be lost.

In closing my remarks, I pay special tribute to Superfast Ferries, which operates the ferry service between Rosyth and Zeebrugge. That route has been an outstanding success and it is time to expand into other markets in continental Europe. By the end of the year, Superfast Ferries will have carried 500,000 passengers between the ports of Rosyth and Zeebrugge. The route has already put £150 million into the Scottish economy, with 32 per cent of the passengers being first-time visitors to Scotland. In January, Superfast Ferries was voted the best ferry overall by *Holiday Which?* and, in November, it was voted best ferry operator by the Scottish Passenger Agents Association. It is time to build on Superfast Ferries' outstanding success and to develop new routes into northern Europe. It is time to get passionate about our tourism industry, so I hope that the minister will support the call for Rosyth to be designated the hub port for the North sea.

I have listened to Jamie Stone wittering away while other members have been speaking. I just wish that he contributed more when he spoke.

15:50

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): Of course, the Fife to Zeebrugge ferry was supported by the Liberal Democrat and Labour Administration; it would not have happened otherwise.

Tourism is vital to my constituency of North East Fife, where it generates about £150 million of income every year and more than 3,000 full-time equivalent jobs, which means many more than 3,000 people employed. There are many small businesses such as hotels, guest houses, restaurants and souvenir shops. Tourism is also an important source of additional income for many of our farms, such as from the award-winning Morton of Pitmilny self-catering facilities.

A 3 per cent growth in tourism in Fife is estimated for this year, despite all the problems with the industry that we keep getting told about. North East Fife has excellent facilities; it is not just about golf at St Andrews. There are blue-flag beaches at Tentsmuir, St Andrews, Kingsbarns and Elie. We have the Scottish Fisheries Museum in Anstruther, Lomond hills regional park and Falkland Palace. Ceres has an excellent folk museum. There are also hidden gems such as St Andrews botanic gardens and Craigton country park.

Accommodation ranges from the five-star St Andrews Bay golf resort and spa and the Old Course Hotel to award-winning caravan parks. Transport facilities are improving because of the investment being made by the Liberal Democrat and Labour Executive in our rail links. We have already mentioned the Rosyth to Zeebrugge ferry and the route development fund, which is bringing more air passengers into Scotland. It is to be hoped that, ultimately, there will be airport rail links so that those passengers can get to Fife quickly.

Chris Ballance: If the member supports the expansion of the route development fund, which will mean extra flights, does he also support moving the Royal Highland showground to allow Edinburgh airport to be expanded?

Iain Smith: I do not believe that the Royal Highland show is site specific, unlike Edinburgh airport. There is no reason why the show cannot explore alternative sites. In fact, I am sure that we could find a good site for it somewhere in Fife. I have no problem with the relocation of the Royal Highland show if that is the right thing to do for the benefit of Scotland's economy.

It is important that, in promoting Scotland, we build on our strengths. North East Fife is clearly one of our jewels and the Kingdom of Fife Tourist Board has worked well with the private sector, through the tourist businesses, and the public sector, through Fife Council and Scottish Enterprise Fife. The tourist board has attracted a considerable amount of European funding and has shown what the area tourist boards can do. The ATBs are not all bad; as Christine May said, they have led to increased visitor numbers and income for the past five years.

However, we need to move on. Quality is crucial and I congratulate the St Andrews Bay golf resort and spa on recently winning the skills for success large company award at the ceremony that Bruce Crawford derided a few minutes ago. It is important that businesses get involved in improving the skills of the tourism industry and the St Andrews Bay golf resort and spa has shown the way for many companies.

I support the principle behind the new tourism network Scotland. It is the right way to go, although there are a number of concerns about how the scheme is being progressed, which I hope the minister will address when she is summing up. A funding gap has been referred to and there is a question about the loss of membership income. For example, 700 businesses in Fife contribute £185,000 to the current ATB and businesses across Scotland contribute £2.2 million to the ATBs. We need to find out how that money can be recouped. It will not necessarily come immediately from additional commercial income.

Another concern is that the new relationship between VisitScotland and tourist businesses will be commercial rather than the partnership that has been built up by the ATBs over a number of years. I hope that that can be resolved and that we can continue to have good will and partnership working.

There is concern that the tourism network is turning out to be not a merger but more of a takeover from the centre. We have to give some assurances to our tourist boards about that. The ATB chairs gave some fairly damning evidence to the Enterprise and Culture Committee about the failure of some of the processes that VisitScotland has adopted. There is particular concern that some of the working groups are not seeing the final reports that have been done in their name.

I hope that those concerns will be addressed. Robin Shedden, who was mentioned earlier and who happens to be the chair of the Kingdom of Fife Tourist Board, expressed concern at a tourism network Scotland project meeting. The minute reads:

"Overall, the ATB network did not feel it had ownership of the proposals and no trust in the process, which would result in lack of buy-in to enable staff to sell it to the industry."

I hope that that buy-in can be achieved and that the lack of trust will not continue.

It appears that key bodies and sectors have not been fully involved, such as the British Holiday & Home Parks Association—the association represents the caravan sector, which is also important in my constituency.

I have concerns about the proposal to set up a special purpose vehicle to promote business

tourism in the cities, because business tourism is also important in many other areas. For example, the convention and conference market is important in St Andrews and it will be important in Perth and Aviemore, given the new facilities that are being developed there.

We must recognise the fact that many tourism businesses do not have much confidence in VisitScotland. They have much more confidence in the staff of their local ATBs, whom they know and trust. VisitScotland needs to do something to build trust—obviously, it was not helped by the problems with the visitscotland.com venture. There is an urgent need for VisitScotland to address the issues that I have raised. If it shows willingness to devolve facilities to the area hubs, that will go some way towards restoring confidence. For example, in Fife there is expertise in golf tourism, so why should the golf tourism promotion business not be located in the Fife area hub? Perhaps outdoor activities could be promoted through the Perthshire hub. Such devolution makes good sense, but it will also give people greater confidence that there is a genuine partnership between the existing area tourist boards and VisitScotland.

I hope that the minister will address some of those issues when she sums up, but overall I support the motion.

15:56

Mike Watson (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): In this debate on Scotland's number 1 industry, it is important to make the point that tourism is not only vital to Scotland's economy, but sustainable. One thing that we can say with absolute certainty is that, if we could project ourselves forward 100 years, we would see that there was still a tourism industry in some form.

A point that has not been made so far—I have not heard it, anyway—is that 92 per cent of tourists who come to Scotland come from other parts of the United Kingdom. A considerable amount of work can be done to develop new tourism from other parts of Europe but, as other members said, there is a great deal of competition out there and we have to make sure that we are up to the challenge of responding to it. The Executive's response to that, particularly the considerable additional funding over three years and the insistence on marketing, is an appropriate approach, as is the establishment of EventScotland and the route development fund.

I remember that, when the Scotland in Sweden event was held two years ago, there were no direct routes between Scotland and Sweden. Those of us who went to Sweden to sell Scotland had to go via Amsterdam and come back via

Copenhagen. Within a year, through the route development fund, there were two direct routes linking Scotland and Sweden, which have enhanced tourism in Scotland. It is also important to note the role that the cities—

Mr McGrigor: Will the member take an intervention?

Mike Watson: No. I am sorry, but we have already heard a six-minute whinge from Mr McGrigor and I do not think that we need any more.

Our cities have a gateway role and 90 per cent of business tourism is handled through Edinburgh and Glasgow. That is an important contributor to Scotland's economy and we play it down at our peril.

I do not think that anyone would deny that the ATB review took longer than everyone would have liked. There are various reasons for that, but the fact is that we are where we are. One of the main points that emerged from the ATB review is that the trade wants better interaction between the national tourism strategy and its delivery at the local level. With the publication of the implementation plan framework in November, that is what we will get. Too much can be made of the fact that not everybody is fully signed up to all aspects of the project at the moment. The project is still on-going and it is not due to come into effect until April next year.

The Enterprise and Culture Committee held sessions on the ATB review in May and a couple of weeks ago at which the problems were identified. I say to the minister that there is still a bit of work to be done by VisitScotland on reconciling the views of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, some individual local authorities, the ATBs and some of their chairs. As members of the committee will know, only today we received a detailed e-mail from the ATBs, which says that they are not satisfied with the relationship with VisitScotland or the way in which the new network is developing. There is work to be done, but the project will provide the integrated approach that is necessary to develop tourism in Scotland effectively.

On the network itself, I have two points to make. First, I was pleased to hear the minister mention the important issue of quality assurance, which I was disappointed to see receives only five lines in the 18-page framework document. It may be a cliché, but it is vital that people not only come to Scotland but come back again. They will not come back unless their experience, as another cliché has it, exceeds their expectations. A registration scheme for all sorts of tourism providers is essential. Jamie McGrigor might call that more regulation, but we need such regulation.

I cannot think why any tourism provider—whether it be a tourist attraction, an hotel, a bed and breakfast, a cafe or a restaurant—would not want to sign up to a scheme that puts a number of stars or roses on their door so that visitors know what they will get. What is wrong with that? Why would anyone not want that? Such a scheme is not regulation but playing fair with visitors. It will mean that visitors are much more likely to get what they expect and to come back as a result. Quality assurance needs to be addressed more than it has been hitherto.

Secondly, it is often thought that public sector funding starts and finishes with the £40 million or so that VisitScotland receives, but a huge role is played by local authorities, which provide significant funding of between £8 million and £10 million, and by the enterprise network through the local enterprise companies, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. That is why, as has been pointed out, it is important that we ensure that COSLA is fully on side.

VisitScotland told the Enterprise and Culture Committee that good progress was being made on signing local partnership agreements with every local authority, but some of the COSLA representatives who gave evidence were not quite so clear on that. Given that the local partnerships will have responsibility for drawing up area tourism plans, work needs to be done to ensure that the local partnerships get not just financial buy-in but full commitment from local authorities and other tourism providers.

Bruce Crawford asked what guarantee we have that local authorities will not simply invest tourism money in education and other services. Surely any sensible local authority will see the benefit of investing in tourism. The money does not just go into some black hole; it brings extra money into the local authority, especially if that authority works with next-door authorities on joint ventures. Surely there is sense in that. I very much hope that the area tourism plans will be fully developed with local authorities.

Finally, I make the simple point that ATBs are vital. Although they will cease to exist from April 2005, their staff, expertise and knowledge of the industry provide important capital for tourism in Scotland. The ATB staff need to have confidence in the new structures. Whatever extra work needs to be done to assure the ATB and tourist information centre staff that they are an essential part of the future development of tourism in Scotland, I hope that VisitScotland will do it as soon as possible.

16:02

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con): Presiding Officer, before I

begin, I apologise to you, to other members in the chamber and to Christine May for conversing with Jamie Stone. That is not something that I recommend too often, but I am afraid that, sadly, I get rather over-enthusiastic when people extol my constituency's high-quality excellent field sports, in which Mr Stone is a regular and keen participant. Those field sports play a vital role in extending my constituency's tourist season into the autumn and winter.

The motion is sadly lacking in that it fails even to touch on the anxiety and uncertainty that currently enfold the sector at area level in a way that almost defies belief. We all accept that change will always create anxiety and uncertainty. The changes that are being brought about as a result of the introduction of tourism network Scotland are no exception to that rule, as many members have ably demonstrated.

The need for transitional funding, which members have mentioned and which is rightly highlighted in both amendments, is one of the main concerns of Dumfries and Galloway Tourist Board in my constituency. In moving from a membership-funded organisation to one that is funded by service delivery, there is bound to be a transitional period of financial uncertainty, which only the Executive can address.

There will be no automatic rush to purchase the new services by those who are involved in the industry. As I was told recently by an accommodation provider in my constituency, whether the new set-up is successful will depend entirely on the value for money of the advertising and marketing that it will offer to businesses. Any element of loyalty that may have been engendered by the previous membership organisation will no longer exist. As I was told, it remains to be seen what products will be put on the counter.

Brian Adam: Does the member therefore agree that a transitional fund will be needed to overcome the short-term difficulties that he has highlighted?

Alex Fergusson: Yes. In other words, which I think the member used, the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. In this case, former area tourist board members will want to see the proof before they purchase the pudding. There will be a gap, which will require the Executive's attention. I hope that the minister will be able to reassure us on that issue, if only to enable the hubs to put together some form of business plan and budget for this year. They are currently treading water and are completely unable to do so.

If the minister finds herself in reassurance mode, perhaps she can provide some reassurance on the future of eTourism Ltd, the somewhat mysterious company behind visitscotland.com. I have a simple question for the minister: how long

can the company survive? The latest returns from Companies House to the year ending December 2003 show a loss of £3.6 million. Turnover exceeds costs by only a tiny fraction and administration costs come in at £2.3 million. Unless something drastic is done, eTourism Ltd will be on course for bankruptcy some time next year, although a contractual commitment for a further £3 million that was made with Schlumberger Sema and that I presume has been passed on to its successor, Atos Origin, may help to extend eTourism Ltd's life for a further year.

Something may be very wrong, and I hope that it is pertinent in the context of this debate to ask the minister just what that something is. In my opinion, if we take a large information technology company with no tourism experience and the misguided assumption of VisitScotland and the Scottish Executive that internet bookings will rocket, and feed in the growing loathing that the general public have for call centres, we have a recipe not for success, but for a potential disaster, which may be just around the corner.

In answer to a parliamentary question that I put recently, the Executive indicated that internet bookings with no manual input stand at a miserable 6 per cent of total accommodation bookings. I also have a number of concerns about the definition of automatic bookings that was used in the response that I received. Answers are required, and I hope that the minister will be able to provide them today. If not, I ask her to provide them to me in writing.

The motion asks us to note a benefit to the economies of rural areas that will accrue from 50 per cent revenue growth. However, that depends on how well all areas are promoted. The recent experience of one of my constituents who attended Crufts dog show last month suggests that VisitScotland has a great deal to do as far as my very scenic rural constituency is concerned. On spotting a VisitScotland stand—I commend VisitScotland for promoting Scotland at Crufts—my constituent posed as an interested tourist and asked why on the displayed map everything west of Dumfries was a grey blur. That suggested that the area was basically empty, except for the designated tourist route from Dumfries to Ayr. On asking whether there was nothing worth visiting in the area, he was astonished—and I do not blame him for being so—to receive the reply, “Oh, but we want people to visit the real Scotland.”

I am sorry, but a' the airts of Scotland have a great deal to commend them. I am far from convinced that the current promotion of our country recognises that. Unless we get the promotion right, we can forget the Executive's supposed ambition, the targets and the self-congratulatory attitude. I reject the motion before

us and will support the amendment in the name of my colleague Jamie McGrigor.

16:08

Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP): I welcome this opportunity to debate the future of the tourism industry. As members have mentioned, it is already a key Scottish industry in terms of employment and wealth generation, but could and should be one of the more powerful drivers of Scottish economic growth over the next decade or so.

In that context, I am very disappointed with the motion that is before us today. It is long on rhetoric and exhortation, but short on policy substance, especially regarding the development of quality tourism products. We can have the best marketing operation in the world, but if the product fails to appeal or disappoints the consumer, we shall get nowhere near to realising the potential of Scottish tourism. It is time for the Scottish Executive to assist the tourism sector, not just by restructuring VisitScotland or giving it additional funding, but by taking significant responsibility for product development.

Let us take the heritage tourism product as an example of what is lacking and what is needed. The minister will be aware of the concerns that exist in Ayrshire about our consistent, long-standing failure to take full advantage of our unique Robert Burns heritage. I can cite many examples of that failure, not just the current crisis that is enveloping the Burns national heritage park in Alloway, to which I will return in a moment. Despite the rich legacy, there have been few or no serious attempts to develop a Burns trail or visitor attractions across the county. Local authorities, no matter whether they are councils or tourist boards, have demonstrated that they are not up to the task. Indeed, they cannot even be trusted to look after the physical heritage that they have inherited, including the Burns monument in Kilmarnock, which was recently all but destroyed by fire-raisers after lying for years unused, locked up and fenced off.

The common themes of neglect, procrastination, the shuffling-off of responsibility and the failure to realise opportunities are nowhere more evident than in the deplorable state of the Burns cottage and museum in Alloway, which should be the flagship asset of the Burns heritage industry in Scotland. Although in its day the museum might have been suitable for housing a nationally important collection of Burns manuscripts and artefacts, that day has long gone. It is no longer possible to keep, preserve, present and interpret that collection in a worn-out building that is more akin to an early 20th century cricket pavilion—with a leaky roof, to boot—than a modern purpose-built

museum. Given the building's state, it is not surprising that some of the most important manuscripts such as "Auld Lang Syne" and "Scots Wha Hae" in the poet's own hand have been removed in recent weeks for safekeeping in Edinburgh. That shameful situation is keenly felt by the local community.

Irene Oldfather: I invite the member to come to Irvine in my constituency and take the Irvine historical tour, which starts at the Burns museum and makes countless references to Burns's residence in the town. I am certain that he would enjoy it; it has certainly been given an accolade by the local community and visitors to Irvine.

Mr Ingram: I thank the member very much. I am sure that I will take her up on her invitation.

However, I want to return to the situation with the Burns cottage and museum in Alloway. Given that the Executive intends to market worldwide the 250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns in 2009 as the year of homecoming for the Scots diaspora, the prospect of a national embarrassment looms large. The problem has been compounded by recent decisions to dissolve the heritage park's joint board, which comprises representatives of South Ayrshire Council and trustees who have been charged with the cottage and museum's upkeep. An application to the heritage lottery fund to finance the new museum has been withdrawn and the council has tendered out the lease of the park's visitor centre, which currently cross-subsidises the cottage and museum, to commercial operators.

I do not intend to waste more breath castigating the council or the trustees, who will have to deal with the recriminations. However, I want to press the minister to intervene to sort out the mess. As I see it, there are three options. First, we could transfer the heritage assets from the local trustees to the National Trust for Scotland; secondly, we could set up a Scottish independent museums trust to ensure that nationally important collections that are not owned by the national museums are properly looked after; or, thirdly, we could establish a new, professionally run local trust that could attract local philanthropy. We could conceivably combine those options; however, further inaction will not be acceptable and I trust that the minister will respond positively and urgently to my concerns.

16:14

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): I am pleased to support Patricia Ferguson's motion. As she has already pointed out, tourism is very important to rural areas and, indeed, to Dumfries and Galloway. The effect on the local economy of the great damage that foot-and-mouth disease

caused to tourism in the south of Scotland in 2001 bears witness to tourism's importance, if any evidence were needed.

Dumfries and Galloway has bounced back well, and the two-year funding that the Scottish Executive provided to the tourist board—which was matched by European objective 2 funds—played a vital role in that recovery. I was, of course, disappointed that the Executive could not be persuaded to allocate further specific funding for the third year. It argued that that money was already in VisitScotland's budget, but VisitScotland denied that it was. However, Dumfries and Galloway Council stepped in and provided a sum of £250,000 to the tourist board. I often disagree with Dumfries and Galloway Council, but I think that it was to be commended in that instance. That proves that councils are prepared to support local tourism and to see its value.

There is no doubt that the tourist board has made excellent use of that funding, as can be seen on its very professional website at <http://www.galloway.co.uk>. My only complaint about it is that it is called "Galloway" and not "Dumfries and Galloway", but there it is.

Alex Fergusson: I have no trouble with that.

Dr Murray: I agree that Scotland as a whole must be assertively marketed. I agree that niche marketing of types of holidays, rather than of destinations, is a powerful tool in raising awareness of what Scotland has to offer and of where in Scotland those pursuits are on offer. At the same time, I hope that the reorganisation of the tourist boards into a VisitScotland network will still retain a strong local voice that is capable of representing the distinct features of the industry and of different parts of Scotland. That echoes what Mike Watson said.

I want to use this opportunity to bring to the minister's attention a couple of local developments that I recently discussed with Pip Tabor of the Southern Uplands Partnership. Incidentally, Pip argues that the south of Scotland should change its designation to the southern uplands, as he believes that that would give the region a more distinctive identity and one that is comparable with the Highlands. I think that that is an interesting idea.

The minister will be aware of the making tracks in southern Scotland project, under which heading the Scottish Executive provided £300,000 to help farmers and land-based businesses to develop a network of sustainable nature-based tourism projects in Dumfries and Galloway and in the Borders. That funding was supplemented by the European Commission's LEADER + programme for the region, and it provided grants to cover capital and start-up costs for new visitor attractions

and nature tourism businesses. Quality, collaboration, sustainability and customer care were the key focus.

One of the projects that received early funding under that programme was the Galloway red kite trail. It is in Alex Fergusson's constituency, which seems to be second only to Fife in the number of mentions that it has had today. I have had a considerable interest in the project, which established a circular trail around Loch Ken to complement RSPB Scotland's red kite release programme in the area. I was fortunate, back in 2002, to substitute for the then Deputy Minister for Rural Development, Rhona Brankin, in releasing the first group of young red kites to be reintroduced into the area. It was an extremely secretive operation, which involved me meeting secretly with RSPB representatives at a remote location and then stealing through the forest to the area where the birds were going to be released. At one point, we met a bunch of walkers and we all talked loudly about forestry to try to put them off the scent in case they suspected that we were there to release the red kites. It was great fun.

The red kite trail now features on the RSPB and Dumfries and Galloway tourist board websites, and the latter highlights the fact that it is actually easier to see red kites during the winter. Going to see them is advertised as a winter activity, as is watching the thousands of geese that overwinter at Caerlaverock in my constituency. Nature-based tourism is helping to extend the tourist season in Dumfries and Galloway outwith its normal span. The scope of nature-based tourism projects has expanded and now involves a whole range of partners. I was going to say a bit about them, but I think that I am probably going to run out of time. However, the point that I want to make to ministers is that there is strong concern that the making tracks project is due to finish in July, and I would be grateful to the minister for her advice on whether it might be extended or replaced by a similar dedicated project for southern Scotland.

I also want to draw the minister's attention to the exciting developments that are taking place in equestrian tourism in the region. A number of agencies got together to commission market research, which was presented at a seminar last month when the riders welcome scheme was launched. However, I have been told that it has been difficult to persuade Scottish Enterprise that equestrian tourism is a real opportunity. Perhaps Scottish Enterprise should have a look at the official website of north-west tourism in Ireland, on which equestrian tourism features prominently. However, I have to say that there is a rather amusing typo on that website, which says:

"It might be that one forgettable hour of your holidays when you sit on a horse for the first time."

That does not really market it terribly well. However, there is clearly an opportunity in that type of tourism, and I hope that Scottish Enterprise will come on board with those developments.

I am pleased that the Executive is ambitious for tourism in Scotland. However, I ask the minister to ensure that the southern uplands, as we should now possibly call ourselves, are fully recognised for the contribution that we could make, both to the local economy and to the national economy in the tourist industry.

16:20

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green): I endorse Elaine Murray's remarks about the southern upland region, as we seem to be about to call it.

Ninety per cent of our visitors rate the scenery as one of the reasons that they come, 90 per cent value fresh air and 84 per cent come for peace and quiet. A similar percentage of visitors will visit at least one historic building. If we are to grow our tourism we must protect and enhance those values. I visited one such location in the Borders region last week, the community of Craik, which consists of about 10 houses and is seven miles down a single-track road from the nearest village. It is about 12 miles from Hawick. The community is on the edge of a wood and it is surrounded by red squirrels, otters, badgers and orchids. The only development in the valley is the Forestry Commission Scotland's woodland. However, those people currently face development proposals for nine converted-barn houses, seven other houses, three large villas, 50 caravans, a shop, a car park and 63 log cabins—that figure is expected to extend in time to more than 100.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): Can the Greens tell us where they would put the houses?

Chris Ballance: My point is that the tourism that we should support is tourism that does not ruin the area on which it is imposed. For that community, their track will become tarmac roads, their view of the milky way will become street lights and their silence will be ruined. I would not put such a large development seven miles down a single-track road and I would certainly not do that in the name of tourism. That sort of tourist development will ruin that which attracts tourists there in the first place. The Executive's approach in the motion—grow tourism at any price; growth is the only goal—is deeply wrong.

Tourism can bring many benefits. It is a huge employer; it employs more people than the oil, whisky and gas industries combined. I mention the very successful Cream o' Galloway in my region, which makes my favourite ice cream. Cream o'

Galloway won the 2004 thistle award for tourism and the environment and has also been awarded a gold award by the green tourism business scheme. It has used tourism—agri-tourism—to sustain a small dairy herd, which would otherwise have been impossible given the current price paid for milk by the supermarkets. That is a fine example of sustainable tourism.

Our approach to tourism growth must be strategic. We must aim to make tourism businesses more viable by aiming for a more even spread of visitors throughout the year. We must encourage businesses to join the green tourism business scheme. VisitScotland must do more to promote the scheme and should support the scheme's call to develop its website in order to promote itself more effectively.

The green tourism business scheme today asked me to ask the minister whether she will lobby the Cabinet Office in London to ensure that it publicises the fact that the G8 summit will take place in a hotel that is a member of the GTBS organisation. Will the minister please do that?

Greater investment in people, skills and training is required in order to maximise the value of tourism. We need a clearer understanding of the impacts of tourism, greater involvement of communities in tourism planning and a public transport system that encourages tourists to use it. That should be the Executive's strategy.

Unfortunately, what we currently have instead is an extremely undignified row between the chief executive of VisitScotland and the area tourist boards. The row erupted during meetings of the Enterprise and Culture Committee. The area tourist boards complained of "centralised and hierarchical" management, "lack of representation", a "lack of accountability", a "lack of clarity" and warned of a "crisis in waiting". Philip Riddle called the area tourist boards "factually wrong". That claim is denied in an e-mail, to which Mike Watson referred earlier, from an area tourist board chief executive, who wishes to remain anonymous in order to retain his job.

Mike Watson: I clarify that the e-mail to which I referred was not from an anonymous area tourist board chief executive; it was from the Scottish area tourist board network. It was a letter to the convener of the Enterprise and Culture Committee. If Chris Ballance has not received his copy by now, it will be in the system. That is a different e-mail from the one to which he refers and it carries considerably more weight.

Chris Ballance: I thank Mike Watson for that clarification.

I do not know who is right and who is wrong in the argument, but the public spat is unhelpful. The move towards a centralised network was based on

consensus, but that consensus has been lost. The minister has inherited the mess, and while it is not her fault, it is her responsibility to sort it out. We have demoralised and fearful staff who are worried about redundancies and are operating in a new organisation with, as yet, no business plan. The situation sounds like another visitscotland.com transitional nightmare. The minister has until 31 March, when the new tourist season starts, to sort out the situation. Frankly, I do not envy her.

16:26

Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab):

The debate has been interesting and important for communities throughout Scotland, including my own in Cunninghame South. There is considerable agreement on key issues, such as marketing, quality and training. Our plans for the future of the tourism industry are rightly ambitious. A 50 per cent increase in tourism revenue over the next decade will be no mean feat, but we have a great commodity to market. Most speakers agree that we can rise to that challenge.

Mr McGrigor: Will the member give way?

Irene Oldfather: No, I have only five minutes.

Key to achieving that growth is improving our infrastructure, and not just our tourism infrastructure. We all recognise the uncertainties and sensitivities within communities around the new network, which I am sure the minister will address in her summing up, but the principle of having joined-up thinking and joined-up strategies to ensure that the visitor's journey is a pleasant one, from the moment they arrive in Scotland until the moment they leave, is essential.

On market challenges, not all our target tourist markets are the same. The dynamic of the US market, for example, is entirely different from that of the Scandinavian market. In the US, workers generally have two weeks' paid annual leave a year. Given the exchange rate at the moment, while we can get shopping bargains in the States, Americans who visit Scotland find the cost of accommodation, food and entertainment to be expensive. However, they are willing to pay in return for a high-quality experience. Quality is therefore paramount. We need all hotels, restaurants and transport systems to rise to the standards of the best.

Americans are interested in our rich traditions, our heritage and our architecture. For many of them, genealogy is becoming increasingly attractive, as are golf and green tourism packages.

The minister mentioned our commitment to tartan day in her opening remarks. However, I was interested to learn that the Northern Irish target a number of states in the United States, one of

which is Arizona, where I lived for a couple of years. I asked the Northern Ireland Office why it targeted Arizona, although I suspected that I knew the answer. One of the reasons given was the weather in Arizona, which is so hot—110° in July and August.

Arizonans who are used to the dry desert love to come to Ireland and Scotland, because they think it is wonderful that we have rain in July, and they appreciate the green fields. The Northern Irish have thought that to be an advantage in marketing Northern Ireland as a tourist destination. Given the rain that we have, Scotland is also a perfect destination. With the world becoming a smaller place, we need to look for such niche markets and tap into them.

I welcome the minister's views on how we can move forward in the United States and, instead of targeting tartan day on the east coast, move further west, because we can be too east-coast focused.

I mentioned the dynamics of different markets. The Scandinavian market is entirely different to that of the US. Scandinavians, who are used to paying about €14 for a brandy and €8 for a beer, think that Scotland is cheap.

In my constituency, a businessman who runs a small business at Irvine harbourside has taken a proactive approach by offering personally tailored packages to people, including airport pick-ups for people who use the cheap Ryanair flights into Prestwick airport. In Ayrshire, we have a wealth of world-class golf courses and sailing opportunities on our doorstep and the area is steeped in history and the Burns tradition. We can offer accommodation rates that are competitive compared with those in big cities. We often wonder how to ensure that people who come into Prestwick do not go straight to Edinburgh. Perhaps in her summing-up speech the minister will say how we can work with smaller partners in local communities. We must ensure that we have in place a strategy that shares the benefits of tourism throughout Scotland so that people do not just go from Glasgow and Prestwick airports to Edinburgh and the other cities.

Because we speak English, we are in a particularly competitive position in relation to the US market. However, we must not be complacent—it is important for our tourist industry that we concentrate on developing language skills. A joined-up strategy is vital. I acknowledge the minister's commitment to cut across departments to achieve results and I look forward to her summing-up comments. I support the motion.

16:31

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Few sectors have as much

potential to make a contribution to the growth of the Scottish economy as tourism has. The minister stated that VisitScotland's aim is to grow Scottish tourism revenue by 50 per cent in the next decade. As we have heard, in 2003, total tourism revenue was estimated to be about £4.4 billion. To assist the development of our industry, the marketing budget will increase by 28 per cent over three years to boost UK and US campaigns. The air routes that the minister mentioned in her speech are also welcome.

To be successful, we need the right people in VisitScotland doing the right jobs within the right structures. We also need the industry to have a clear ambition and to set the highest standards in communications and customer service. Members have mentioned the role of industry members. I was interested to read the comments of the director of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce in relation to its snapshot of tourism. She stated:

"There is widespread recognition that while government policy and national organisation is important, to succeed tourism businesses have to look first to themselves to raise standards and take ownership of marketing initiatives, particularly at a local level."

I agree entirely with that.

The new structures of VisitScotland have had a long gestation period and members have argued that they have had a difficult birth. However, in my view, those new structures are right. Some members have said that the review took too long, but the quickest decisions are often the wrong ones. The decision is the right one, notwithstanding the issues that arise inevitably from the implementation of the review, which Brian Adam rightly pointed out. I have worked closely with the Scottish Borders Tourist Board during the period of change and I welcome the Scottish Executive's response. The team in the Borders will benefit from the new structure and the freedom that will allow it to build on its successes.

There have been successes. The Borders is Scotland's leading short-break destination. The Borders team, which is led by Riddell Graham, understands its product and knows its market. Nobody expects me to say anything other than that the product is wonderful; the Borders is the most beautiful part of Scotland and it has an unmatched history, great cultural traditions and a friendly and welcoming people. The common ridings, our literature and our outdoor leisure activities are all part of our unique selling proposition.

Local industries know their USP and it is vital that the reformed VisitScotland knows Scotland's USP. Jamie Stone was right that the focus should not be on structures but on product, market and service. The new industry must be fit enough to respond to the fiercely competitive global market.

It must respond quickly to global trends, and customer needs and service-level agreements must be customer focused. The carer goes free scheme that Ms May described is an example of customer-focused tourism.

In the new year, here in the Parliament building I will host the last board meeting of Scottish Borders Tourist Board. I intend to thank the members for their work on behalf of my constituents, but also to discuss the future opportunities for tourism in the Borders.

Iain Smith's speech on behalf of his constituency would qualify him to be the chairman of the new local area hub and Adam Ingram's speech would qualify him to be the chairman of his local Burns society. It is right that they should have made such speeches—we are all proud of our local areas.

An indication has been given by Alex Fergusson, the minister and other members that areas such as the one that I represent are gateways for English tourists, who drive into Scotland on the historic routes of the A7 and the A68. The historic routes and the English gateways need to be supported by VisitScotland. As Mr Watson said, 92 per cent of our visitors are from the rest of the United Kingdom.

I want to highlight an aspect of the debate that has not been raised so far. Research has revealed that almost half of the 4.1 million visitors to Scotland's cities—indeed, half of all tourists who come to Scotland—are aged between 16 and 34 and have high to medium disposable incomes. They are attracted by many of the new and old activities that are on offer to visitors such as—to focus on the Borders—the common ridings, which are huge equestrian events, the international rugby sevens, the under-21 world rugby championship, which we hosted with Murrayfield, and mountain biking at the hugely successful Glentress mountain biking centre, which it is forecast will attract 400,000 visitors this year.

Incidentally, I wish the mountain bike championships in Lochaber, in Mr Ewing's constituency, well and I hope that the championships that follow what I hope will be a successful Beijing Olympics will be in the Borders.

I hope that, when the minister is with Lord Coe this evening, she will support my campaign to restore rugby sevens as an Olympic sport. It was cruelly taken away by the French in the 1920s. However, the inclusion of rugby sevens in the Commonwealth games and the Asian games shows that it is time that the sport was restored to its rightful place as an Olympic sport.

However, whether we are talking about T in the Park, mountain biking or stately-home weddings, rural Scotland offers as many attractions for younger visitors as our wonderful cities do. I am

therefore disappointed that the new website, myvisitscotland.com, costing £250,000, provides information to those aged between 16 and 34 only on Scotland's cities. That is wrong and I hope that the minister will have an opportunity to examine the matter.

The minister remarked that the industry is in good shape and, although there have been some sharp exchanges this afternoon, there has also been a wide consensus. If we are to gain the best benefit for our economy from tourism, we have to ensure that that consensus goes from the chamber to the industry as a whole.

16:37

Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife)
(Con): Although some might have reservations about Jack McConnell's description of Scotland as "the best small country in the world"—[*Official Report*, 7 September 2004; c 9882.],

we in the Conservative party share his aspirations to make it so, particularly in terms of tourism. In recent days, I have been fortunate enough to receive Christmas cards depicting the beauty of Scotland from various organisations and individuals. I congratulate Jack McConnell on his selection of Hamish MacDonald's painting of Glenscorrodale farm on the Isle of Arran as his official Christmas card. The picture is a fine rendering of Jack McConnell's childhood home and it bears witness to the fact that Scotland is a ravishingly beautiful country—a brand to die for, in fact.

In a wide-ranging and generally good-humoured debate, we in the Conservative party have highlighted the uncertainty and subsequent damage caused to the industry by the Executive's handling of the tourism network restructuring process. As Jamie McGrigor said, we regret the loss of local knowledge and expertise that might result from centralisation, but the hard fact is that we are where we are. I would like to concentrate my remarks on where we go from here. I believe, in particular, that we have to encourage the private sector to become fully represented in the new hubs.

I welcomed the minister's announcement that there has been a 13 per cent increase in numbers of visitors from overseas, what she said about the promotion of Scotland in Central station in New York and her declaration of her ambition for Scotland to host iconic international events. However, we await an answer from her about the shortfall in tourism funding identified by Brian Adam, Bruce Crawford, Alex Fergusson and others and information about how the new hubs will operate.

I agree with Jamie Stone and Alex Fergusson that we must continue to promote the attractions of

the richly diverse Scottish landscape and seascape as well as Scotland's unique cultural attractions. I am talking about all parts of Scotland and, in that regard, I should say that we support the idea of transitional regional funding to help the hubs to do their jobs in the period of transition.

This has been a particularly good debate for promoting tourism in the kingdom of Fife. Christine May, Iain Smith and Bruce Crawford have all done an excellent job in promoting Fife.

I make no apology for directing my remaining remarks to one of the brightest spots in Scotland's tourism landscape. Iain Smith rightly said that Scotland must build on its tourism strengths. If Scotland itself is a world brand, so too is links golf, with St Andrews and the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews—the world-ruling golf body—deservedly at the centre of what has become an international tourist magnet. Next year, the world's oldest golf tournament, the Open, will come home to St Andrews. The Open shares with the Wimbledon tennis tournament the accolade of being the world's most-viewed televised sporting event—500 million households worldwide watch those events. We simply cannot buy that kind of television coverage. Coincidentally, next year is also the 50th anniversary of the BBC's first coverage of the Open and its enhanced coverage of the event will be beamed around the world.

This year, as part of a £2.5 million, three-year course funded by the R & A, 14 young Chinese students are studying at Elmwood College in Cupar, which organises courses in green keeping and golf course management. The R & A plans to extend the scheme to allow youngsters from developing African countries to come to Scotland to benefit from the same expertise. They will help to spread the gospel of golf even further afield, which will attract many more tourists to Scotland. That is a classic example of how the private sector can help to develop and promote international tourism. We need more such examples.

We must build on our strengths and that is why I have lodged a parliamentary motion that calls on the Scottish Executive to support a bid to gain for St Andrews the coveted United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation's world heritage site status. Currently, Scotland has only four such sites: Edinburgh's old town and the new town make up one, and the islands of Orkney and St Kilda are two others. The Scottish location that most recently won world heritage site status is Robert Owen's New Lanark, which did so in 2001. I believe that St Andrews, which is the original ecclesiastical capital of Scotland, the home of the nation's oldest university and the town that gave the world the game of golf, richly deserves to be Scotland's fifth world heritage site. I intend to write to all relevant local organisations, including the

University of St Andrews and the R & A, to seek their backing for the initiative and I hope that I will be able to tell them that I have cross-party and Executive support for my motion.

I firmly believe that by building on our existing strengths in such a way—in particular, encouraging the private sector to take the lead in promoting the tourism industry in the way that I outlined—Scottish tourism will flourish as it should and that it will exceed the minister's target of 50 per cent growth over the next decade. As we say in our amendment, there is no reason why the growth should not be even more spectacular. That is why I support the amendment in Jamie McGrigor's name.

16:42

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): With the minister and, I believe, Mr McGrigor, I had the pleasure recently of attending Scotland United's tourism conference in the recently opened Macdonald Aviemore Highland conference centre, where I heard a number of inspirational talks about the future of Scottish tourism. Philip Riddle of VisitScotland gave one of them. Nicola Sturgeon, Brian Adam and I had a shortened version of that presentation just this week. One of its points is that research shows that Scotland and the Scottish people have qualities that bring people to our land. The qualities are to do with the enduring nature of Scotland, its drama and its human side.

Mr Riddle's thesis was that our character brought people here, which surprised me. As somebody who is capable at times of being personally difficult, dour, even confrontational and as expressive as a slab of granite from time to time, I was surprised by Mr Riddle's view. However, having considered it for a moment, I think that each of us is an ambassador for Scotland, and that applies particularly to members of the Scottish Parliament. We are in a privileged position and I am proud to say that, in order to deliver the duty that I feel is incumbent on me, I have taken it upon myself to be an unofficial tour guide for this building. I show a great many people around it, albeit with, I suspect, an alternative script to that which is provided by the official guides.

Mr Stone: Given my past role on the Holyrood progress group, I welcome the member's Damascene conversion. I offer to write a new script for him, should he need it.

Fergus Ewing: I normally prefer my own scripts. Any contributions will be considered in the millennium to come.

We should praise the efforts that many people in tourism have made. There is not enough time to

mention them all. I believe that Donald Macdonald persevered for a long time to set up the conference centre in Aviemore because of his commitment to Scotland. David Noble of the Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board has displayed diplomatic skills that are way beyond my ken. *[Interruption.]* I see that I am achieving a great deal of consensus this afternoon.

David Fox-Pitt is perhaps less well known. He is the driving force behind the Caledonian challenge, an event in which a huge number of people participate. He has raised £1 million for charity by getting people to walk the 54 miles down the west highland way. When Michael Matheson and I took part in the event one year, we got lost and did 56 miles—but that is MSPs for you. David Fox-Pitt has set up other events, such as the Loch Ness marathon and Maggie's monster bike and hike along the north shore of Loch Ness. Those are the types of events that we should be promoting. I hope that EventScotland will help Mr Fox-Pitt.

At times, the debate has resembled a travelogue, an advertorial or a non-hitchhiker's guide to the locality, so I wish to focus on some of the serious points that have been made. Mr Adam raised five pertinent and important questions, which I hope that the minister will answer. I think that Mr Riddle would agree that there is some doubt about whether the figure of £4 billion is accurate. That is not to say that I am rubbishing it, but I am not sure whether we are capable of measuring so precisely the contribution that tourism makes. That is worthy of another look.

Iain Smith and, in particular, Alex Fergusson commented on visitscotland.com, which I am extremely worried about—I think that the issue will come back to haunt us. I hope that the problems can be resolved, but I am not sure that the path ahead for visitscotland.com will be easy.

The fact that Scotland can be a costly destination was mentioned by a number of speakers. I am pleased to hear that the Greens are now in favour of the motor car, because that is how the people whom they are so keen to get to Scotland come here. We welcome that conversion.

Chris Ballance: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): The member is in his final minute.

Fergus Ewing: John Swinney, Adam Ingram and others mentioned the problems relating to bureaucracy and red tape, which are affecting the hotel in John Swinney's constituency, the Robert Burns museum in Adam Ingram's area and Castle Tioram in my constituency, where the problem has not been resolved for about seven years. So far in the first and second sessions of the Parliament, there have been six tourism ministers. Ministers

come and go, but the problem of Castle Tioram must be resolved in this session. I look forward to meeting the minister on that next week.

We are a country of 5 million people and there are 6,400 million people in the world. Even I, with my limited mathematical skills, can tell that 999 out of 1,000 people in the world are not Scots. That represents a huge potential market and opportunity for us. The SNP has taken a positive but critical approach today. I hope that our contribution to the debate will be seen in that light and I look forward to hearing the minister's response to what has been a useful debate.

16:49

Patricia Ferguson: I find myself in the fairly unusual position of being able to agree with Fergus Ewing, in that I feel that the debate has been interesting and good and that it has allowed us to agree—if we agree about nothing else—on the importance of growing tourism for the benefit of Scotland's economy and people. It has also been interesting in the sense that it has allowed us to see another two aspects of Fergus Ewing's character, other than the ones that he so ably described himself. I was surprised that he was able to be both self-deprecating and self-promoting at the same time but, given all his other talents, I should not have been.

Given that a number of points were raised in the debate about the network restructuring, I will address them at the beginning of my speech. Although Brian Adam raised most of the concerns initially, they were echoed in part by Jamie McGrigor and other members. In the time that is allotted to me, I will try to answer them and make further comments on the issue.

I am afraid that it is simply not true to say that the ATBs have been excluded from the key planning and decision-making processes of the project. As I mentioned in an intervention, an ATB chief executive was appointed as project director, is now a member of the VisitScotland management team and attends all the VisitScotland board meetings. In addition, ATB staff have been involved, and are still involved, in all parts and at every level of the project team. Several of the chief executives have led project groups and another has attended the fortnightly progress meetings that are chaired by the Executive.

Chris Ballance: Will the minister give way?

Patricia Ferguson: No. I took a lot of interventions in my opening speech.

Staff from the ATBs filled around 40 per cent of the places on the project teams that undertook the planning work and several are now involved in

implementation. I am extremely grateful to them for the hard work that they have put in, which has helped us to get to the stage that we are now at.

I intervened earlier on the subject of the business plan, which is an issue on which a number of members have raised concerns. It is important to remember that, taken together, the ATBs are running a deficit of £2 million in the current system. The project team is on target to produce its first-draft business plan for the network by 31 December, which is entirely on schedule and according to plan. A lot of work has yet to be done, but the indications are that once the efficiencies that are to be gained from network integration are achieved, the network will be sustainable.

Members also made points about local authority funding. Mike Watson made the point that local authorities have to understand the importance of tourism to the economy of their local area. I hope that that understanding will help to influence them to maintain their tourism funding. I welcome the indications that we have had from some local authorities that they would like to increase their funding.

I, too, am concerned about the situation of ATB staff. For that reason, I have asked VisitScotland to make a particular point of ensuring that ATB staff are given as much information as possible about what is happening in their ATBs. The objective behind the Executive's decision to integrate the network was to improve the effectiveness of the support for tourism growth at national and local area level. The intention behind the process is not one of cost cutting as such, although the integration of the ATBs into an integrated network will realise efficiencies.

I appreciate members' concerns on the issue of jobs. I hope that we are able to keep the number of compulsory redundancies to a minimum. Alex Fergusson mentioned the on-going uncertainties that people at the local level are facing. I am sure that that is true, which is why I was so keen that VisitScotland should make a special effort in that respect. In many areas, including my home city, ATB staff are positive about the opportunities that the network offers. I hope that that feeling is one that will spread.

Fergus Ewing: Will the minister give way?

Patricia Ferguson: No. I do not have a lot of time to answer all the points that were raised in the debate.

Iain Smith said that he hoped VisitScotland would devolve functions to network offices. I say to him that VisitScotland intends to do exactly that. The network is not about centralisation; it will play to the strengths of each individual area.

A number of members mentioned visitscotland.com, which is an issue in which I take a great deal of interest. It has provided an effective shop window for Scottish tourism and promotes Scotland to a global audience. It is performing well against its business plan targets and is generating significant business for the industry in Scotland. Since its establishment, visitscotland.com has generated some £22 million-worth of business for the tourism industry across Scotland. It was always anticipated that there would be difficulties at the beginning until it came into profit, but the management of visitscotland.com is confident that it is on track to achieve the profitability that it indicated.

Jamie McGrigor mentioned his belief that a single network could not do justice to Scotland's tourism diversity. The point about the network is that although it will apply a common standard and best practice, it will not stifle diversity. Frankly, I think that it would be silly for it to do so. It will market rural as well as urban attractions. Scotland's diversity is one of our key selling points.

Mr McGrigor: Will the minister give way on that point?

Patricia Ferguson: No, I really must make progress. Mr McGrigor and other members raised a lot of questions.

I was slightly surprised to hear Brian Adam indicating that the Commonwealth games might be a less attractive proposition than repeat events such as local activities. We do not intend for the Commonwealth games or other large events such as the MTV awards to be the only things that happen. We need a broad spectrum of events. We need to market different events to different audiences. Having the Commonwealth games in Scotland in the same year as the Ryder cup would be a magnificent achievement.

Alex Fergusson raised a point about signage. A review of tourism signage is currently going on. I will keep him advised as to what happens with that.

Adam Ingram raised some points about the important issue of Robert Burns, the collection of his work and the memorabilia and premises that, along with his poetry, immortalise him. I have taken a keen personal interest in the subject, which has been raised with me by a number of members representing Ayrshire. As recently as last week, I met some of those representatives, who brought their concerns to my attention. We are working with the National Trust for Scotland and others to safeguard the collections, a number of which have already been dispersed. We have been having work done to catalogue the dispersed collection. When we get to 2009, having had

Burns festivals annually along the way, we should not just have had a great year of homecoming; we should also be leaving behind a legacy for Ayrshire and the south of Scotland, where Burns is particularly important, which we can all be proud of. That is work in progress and we will continue with it.

Elaine Murray mentioned the making tracks initiative. I would be happy to meet her to discuss it. I was interested in her points about equestrian tourism, given that some 18,000 UK residents undertake a horse-riding holiday in Scotland at some point. That area needs to be developed. *[Interruption.]*

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

Patricia Ferguson: I was intrigued by what Chris Ballance said. The Executive is not saying that growth in tourism should be achieved at any price. I agree with him that one of the things that brings people to this country is our fabulous scenery. Our scenery and our environment are very important to the image that we market. That is why VisitScotland has been encouraged to increase—in fact, double—the number of people involved in its green tourism network.

We aspire to be one of the best small countries in the world. However, we are a small nation. We need to ensure that the many different tourism organisations and businesses work closely in partnership to maximise the benefits to Scottish tourism. We already have a good reputation throughout the world as a friendly and welcoming people, as Fergus Ewing said. We are also a country that can give its visitors the experience of a lifetime. I want us to build on that and to encourage our visitors to keep returning to Scotland. We cannot grow tourism on the warmth of the Scottish people and our fabulous scenery alone. We need to ensure that every visitor receives great service, a clean environment and value for money during their stay here. That goes for taxi drivers and shop assistants as well as hotel operators. As Fergus Ewing rightly identified, that also goes for every member of the Parliament.

We must all recognise that tourism is everyone's business. Only then will we punch above our weight and compete with other successful tourist destinations. However, we are rising to the challenge. Scotland has many icons that are the envy of the world. I will not list them now, but they include our rural areas, vibrant cities, contemporary architecture, culture, arts and festivals. Ted Brocklebank was right to talk about golf. Golf tourism is pitching high, with a 300 per cent increase in revenue over the past four years alone.

We have good reason to be proud and to be ambitious for the future. People from all over the world recognise our success, and we have an excellent track record in offering our visitors the experience of a lifetime.

I repeat my invitation to everyone interested in tourism to give us their views on the refresh of the Executive's tourism strategy. We think that that should be done in two areas: in making the most of information technology across the sector and in enhancing skills and training, an area that a number of colleagues identified. We will not be issuing a formal consultation, but we will work with VisitScotland and the Scottish Tourism Forum to seek the industry's views.

I believe that revenue growth of 50 per cent right across Scottish tourism will be to everyone's benefit. I point out to the Conservatives that that is not the Executive's ambition but the tourism industry's ambition. We in the Executive want to work with the industry as Scotland's team to understand that Scotland has tourism as its key business. I am convinced that we can achieve that ambition and we will support the tourism industry in it.

Business Motions

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S2M-2173, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a timetable for legislation.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) that the timetable for completion of consideration of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be extended to 21 January 2005;

(b) that the Justice 2 Committee reports to the Justice 1 Committee by 24 December 2004 on the Part 1 Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003: Draft Guidance for Local Authorities and National Park Authorities (SE/2004/276) and by 7 January 2005 on the Act of Sederunt (Fees of Sheriff Officers) 2004 (SSI 2004/513); and

(c) that the Justice 1 Committee reports to the Justice 2 Committee by 24 December 2004 on the Fire Services (Appointments and Promotion) (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (SSI 2004/527).—[*Ms Margaret Curran*].

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: We come to consideration of motion S2M-2174, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a timetable for stage 1 of the Council Tax Abolition and Service Tax Introduction (Scotland) Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Council Tax Abolition and Service Tax Introduction (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be completed by 23 December 2005.—[*Ms Margaret Curran*].

17:01

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): The effect of business motion S2M-2174 is seriously to undermine the role and value of members' bills in this Parliament. The Council Tax Abolition and Service Tax Introduction (Scotland) Bill, in my name, has generated huge support throughout Scotland. Last year, a System 3 opinion poll recorded 78 per cent support for replacing council tax with an income-based alternative. What form that alternative takes is for Parliament to debate, but the council tax must go, for the sake of Scotland's pensioners and ordinary workers.

The bill proposal was subject to a wide-ranging four-month consultation before being introduced legally and properly on 11 November. The unacceptable motion that is before us seeks to delay consideration of it for an unprecedented 10 or 11 months. That sad motion comes to the chamber with the support of only three of the seven representatives on the bureau.

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):

Does Tommy Sheridan share my anger and concern that the Labour convener of the Local Government and Transport Committee admitted to the bureau that he alone took the decision that the bill would be delayed until after the summer recess and that the committee has never had a chance to consider the proposal or its own work plans? Does he acknowledge the support of other Opposition parties in the face of profoundly undemocratic practice by the Executive parties?

Tommy Sheridan: I thank the member for her intervention. This whole political fix is compounded by the fact that a committee convener can come to the bureau without having consulted the committee. I am sure that if a convener from an Opposition party had done that, the bureau would have taken a dimmer view of the suggestion.

The motion is a political fix to prevent Parliament from debating council tax abolition for another 12 months. Such a fix is expected from the Labour and Tory alliance, because those two parties support the council tax, but the Liberal Democrats' opposition to council tax is exposed today as a sham. The Liberal Democrats are voting to avoid even debating the abolition of council tax, let alone allowing the Parliament to decide to ditch the council tax.

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): Does the member not accept that we have established a national debate on the council tax? We are setting out an independent review of local government finance. Does not the member think that time should be given for that independent review to take place and for it to be reported on before we consider his bill, which is not just about abolishing the council tax but about introducing a national socialist service tax?

Tommy Sheridan: Sit down. That was a typical, lily-livered Liberal Democrat contribution. What the Liberal Democrats are deciding to do is to kick council tax abolition into the long grass for another three years.

We have the opportunity to debate the abolition of council tax and its replacement with an income-based alternative in January, to give our pensioners and ordinary workers some financial assistance. The Liberal Democrats are siding with Labour and the Tories, who defend the council tax. Today, the Liberal Democrats' opposition to the council tax is exposed as a sham—they should be ashamed. The Council Tax Abolition and Service Tax Introduction (Scotland) Bill should be considered from January next year, not next September or October.

I urge members to oppose motion S2M-2174.

17:05

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Ms Margaret Curran): The Parliamentary Bureau heard from Mr Sheridan at its last meeting. Mr Sheridan was somewhat quieter at that meeting, but so was I. The bureau properly heard from Mr Sheridan and the convener of the Local Government and Transport Committee and took the decision that it did. The committee has other business to undertake and we must give reasonable preference to that.

Tommy Sheridan: Will the minister take an intervention?

Ms Curran: I assure Mr Sheridan and all members that there are no political fixes at the bureau. What Mr Sheridan and others have to take on board is the fact that they do not have a majority in the Parliament. We properly have to listen to the majority as well as to the minority voice.

Tommy Sheridan: But the majority of the bureau—

The Presiding Officer: Order, Mr Sheridan.

The question is, that motion S2M-2174, in the name of Margaret Curran, 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)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 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)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (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)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (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)

Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 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)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 84, Against 42, Abstentions 1.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Council Tax Abolition and Service Tax Introduction (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be completed by 23 December 2005.

Decision Time

17:08

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):

There are 11 questions to be put as a result of today's business. In relation to this morning's business, if the amendment in the name of John Home Robertson is agreed to, the amendments in the name of Roseanna Cunningham and in the name of Mike Rumbles will fall. If we proceed to the question on Roseanna Cunningham's amendment and it is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Mike Rumbles will fall. In relation to the debate on justice issues, if the amendment in the name of Hugh Henry is agreed to, the amendments in the name of Kenny MacAskill and in the name of Colin Fox will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S2M-2165.4, in the name of John Home Robertson, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2165, in the name of Murdo Fraser, on proposed defence reviews from a Scottish perspective, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)

McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (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)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (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)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 50, Against 66, Abstentions 11.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that amendment S2M-2165.3, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2165, in the name of Murdo Fraser, on proposed defence reviews from a Scottish perspective, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (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)
 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)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

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)
 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)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, 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)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)

Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 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)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 50, Against 72, Abstentions 5.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that amendment S2M-2165.1, in the name of Mike Rumbles, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2165, in the name of Murdo Fraser, on proposed defence reviews from a Scottish perspective, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)

Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (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)
 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)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (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)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

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)
 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)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 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)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)

Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 60, Against 55, Abstentions 12.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that motion S2M-2165, in the name of Murdo Fraser, on proposed defence reviews from a Scottish perspective, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (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)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (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)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

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)
 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)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 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)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 61, Against 59, Abstentions 7.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament notes the proposed cuts in manpower from the Royal Air Force, the Royal Navy and Army throughout the United Kingdom; further notes that this would mean the merger of the Royal Scots and the King's Own Scottish Borderers into one battalion and the amalgamation of all five battalions into a super regiment of five battalions and a reduction in jobs and operations at RAF Lossiemouth and Kinloss; believes that this will have an adverse economic impact on the areas affected by the cuts; further believes that the Scottish regiments are an important part of the tradition and heritage of Scotland; notes that the recent war in Iraq was the latest conflict which showed Scotland's regiments to be a modern, effective fighting force; believes that, in a time of increased commitments across the globe, our armed forces must have the necessary resources and structure to protect our country, deter aggression and safeguard our vital interests

in the wider world, and, accordingly, condemns any cuts and mergers and, in particular, believes that the six existing single battalion Scottish infantry regiments should be retained as the best way to maintain the operational effectiveness of the Scottish infantry.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-2158.3, in the name of Hugh Henry, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2158, in the name of Annabel Goldie, on justice issues with specific relevance to reoffending, 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)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 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)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 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)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 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, 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)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 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)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (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)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 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)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)

Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 93, Against 24, Abstentions 10.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The amendments in the name of Kenny MacAskill and Colin Fox therefore fall.

The next question is, that motion S2M-2158, in the name of Annabel Goldie, on justice issues with specific relevance to reoffending, as amended, 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)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 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)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (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)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 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, 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)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 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)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 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)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (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)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West 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)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 95, Against 19, Abstentions 13.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament notes the Criminal Justice Plan's acknowledgement that the rate of reoffending occurring in Scotland today is unacceptable; agrees that prison should be used where prison is the appropriate punishment but notes that prison is also intended to rehabilitate the offender, deter the prospective offender and protect the public; agrees that prison must sit within a range of different sentencing options to address reoffending, and therefore notes the increase in police numbers compared to the numbers delivered by the Conservatives, the establishment of the Sentencing Commission to consider a number of issues including early release, and that the recently published Criminal Justice Plan includes measures to tackle Scotland's high reoffending rates, reduce crime and the fear of crime and strengthen confidence in the country's criminal justice services.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-2166.2, in the name of Brian Adam, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2166, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on tourism, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 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)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 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)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 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)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 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)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 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)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 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)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 35, Against 92, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-2166.3, in the name of Jamie McGrigor, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2166, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on tourism, 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)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (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)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West 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)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

AGAINST

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)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)

Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 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)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 18, Against 82, Abstentions 27.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S2M-2166, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on tourism, 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)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 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)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 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)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 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, 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)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 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)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)

Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 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)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (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)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West 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)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 95, Against 18, Abstentions 14.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament recognises the economic benefits of promoting the long-term growth of Scotland's tourism industry; approves of the Scottish Executive's ambition, shared with VisitScotland and the tourism sector, of achieving 50% revenue growth over the next decade; notes that this will benefit the economies of rural as well as city and urban areas in every part of the country; appreciates that this long-term growth can only be achieved by ensuring that the marketing of Scotland in UK and overseas tourism markets is further strengthened and that the businesses that comprise the tourism and hospitality sectors are encouraged to compete even more strongly and coherently in this most competitive of global industries, and welcomes the additional funding given to VisitScotland to help achieve this.

Knife Crime in Glasgow

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-2038, in the name of Frank McAveety, on knife crime in Glasgow. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the unacceptable number of incidents involving knife crime in Scotland and particularly in the east end of Glasgow; believes that the Scottish Executive, Strathclyde police and other key agencies need to work more effectively to tackle this problem; considers that a range of measures to deal with knife crime are required, and believes that the Executive should consider measures such as restricting access to the purchase of knives, ensuring appropriate programmes are in place to educate young people on the dangers and consequences of carrying and using knives, speedier and effective sentencing for those convicted of knife crime and ensuring that the police have effective powers to deal with those who carry and use knives.

17:20

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab): I thank those members who have supported the motion and those who have expressed an interest in a debate on this particularly difficult and complex issue, which needs to be tackled over the next few years. I thank the considerable number of members who have stayed on this Thursday evening to contribute to the debate on how we address the issue.

In essence, concerns were raised over a month ago when, during a very difficult weekend, a number of significant events took place in my constituency that resulted in loss of life. Not all those events involved knife crime, but to have had four murders in one weekend is a unique statistic that is nothing to be proud of and which needs to be tackled. Combined with that, there was a fatalism. People shrugged their shoulders as if they accepted that that level of activity was a necessary aspect of life in Glasgow. Certainly, given the historical background, we have become immune over the years to many issues that we should perhaps still be outraged by. We ought to wish to tackle those issues in a consistent and comprehensive fashion. Thus, those recent events combine with a history of regular use of knives in street crime and in violent incidents, not just in my constituency but across west and central Scotland.

The statistics involve misery not only for the victims concerned and for the families who must live with the loss of loved ones, but for many young men who, having become involved perhaps for the first time in serious criminal activity, find themselves convicted and required to spend a considerable period of their young lives in jail.

During the past 10 years, prior to the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, the Westminster Parliament provided measures in the Offensive Weapons Act 1996 and the Knives Act 1997. It was no coincidence that members of Parliament who represent the areas of Glasgow that have been particularly affected by knife crime were central to much of that development in the House of Commons. Those measures were necessary and essential but, nearly 10 years on, we still have a persistent and long-term problem with knife crime in Glasgow and the west of Scotland.

If people care to look at them, the statistics on the scale of the problem are quite chilling. Already in 2004, at least 26 murders have taken place within the greater Glasgow area. In E division, which covers a significant part of my constituency, we have had five murders in 2003 and 2004, with almost 30 attempted murders. The figures show that the impact on individuals from those incidents was substantial. The most frightening statistic from Strathclyde police is that the area has three and a half times more murders that are committed with a knife than England and Wales have.

Given that knife crime in Glasgow and central Scotland is massively higher than in comparable cities in the rest of the United Kingdom, there must be something particular not just to the economics and social circumstances of our communities—although I share many members' concerns about those—but to the mindset and mentality that seems to encourage such activity. The fact that, in the past three years, 89 young men under the age of 21 have committed murder is a chilling statistic that we need to address.

I welcome the Executive's very recent positive commitment—which was the result of pressure that several members brought to bear in the chamber—to tackling knife crime. When I asked the First Minister at question time more than five weeks ago whether the Sentencing Commission could take responsibility for the issue in order to hasten things on, the First Minister went much further than that. He said that, rather than wait for the Sentencing Commission, the Executive would identify how we can deal with issues relating to knife crime. I welcome the commitment that the First Minister and the Minister for Justice have made, which I hope will be amplified by the Deputy Minister for Justice when he comments on those major measures.

I welcome the doubling—from two years to four—of the sentence for the possession of knives and offensive weapons. I recognise that the police need more powers to stop and search, especially in areas where they believe that there is a history of knife-related incidents. We must tackle the issue of easy access through retail outlets to

weapons that can be used in such incidents. We must be willing to work with licensees throughout Scotland to address the issue of the availability of weapons.

As I indicated in my question to the First Minister, even if we did all the things that I have described individuals would continue wilfully to have the mindset and to bring together the weapons for events on Friday or Saturday evenings. In my constituency, there have been ridiculous cases of people constructing weapons to use in public parks when engaging in what we call territorial gang fights. We need to send out a consistent message that if people possess such weapons, we will take substantial action to address the issue. That is why I welcome the fact that Strathclyde police, in particular, has undertaken to make tackling violence much more central to its work.

The more important development that I want to be sustained—I invite the minister to respond on this point—is the targeting of resources on the locations where incidents take place. Through statistical development research and work across the public agencies, we should identify ways in which to work effectively in those communities. If we take out the city centre wards of Glasgow City Council, the tragic statistics are that 50 per cent of the six wards with the highest levels of violent crime are located in the constituency that I represent. Those areas are Calton, Parkhead and the Gorbals. There are substantial issues that we need to address.

I will use the last minute of my speech to identify ways in which the Executive can continue with the progress that it has made. We need to work with health agencies to ensure that reported incidents of violent crime—especially those that affect accident and emergency units throughout Glasgow—can be fed into the research, so that the police can target their resources. I welcome the initiative by Strathclyde police to locate police officers in local secondary schools, especially in the east end of Glasgow. That will have a long-term benefit in changing attitudes. I welcome the First Minister's commitment this week in Aberdeen to make that initiative a role model, but it must be resourced and supported through direct grant.

We must send out a strong message about firmer sentences. I welcome the progress that has been made so far, but I recognise the aspiration of families—especially families down in England who have lost loved ones—for much firmer statutory sentencing for people in possession of knives or other instruments that can be used in violent crime.

We need to be consistently vigilant. Too many lives are blighted and too many people are affected by this problem. Dr Rudy Crawford of the

accident and emergency unit at Glasgow royal infirmary said recently:

"If people could see our resuscitation room, soaked in blood and a young man lying dead with his chest cracked open ... they might see things differently."

If we keep that picture at the heart of what we do, develop the measures that have been announced recently and continue to work on this issue, I hope that many of the young lives that are blighted by this tragedy will not be blighted in the future. I hope that the Executive will respond to my concerns.

17:28

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I thank Frank McAveety for securing the debate. Dealing with knife crime is an issue that I have pressed vigorously, and I know that other MSPs, both in and outwith Glasgow, have done the same. On 20 October this year, I lodged a motion that highlighted the horrific murders to which Frank McAveety alluded, not just in his constituency but in other areas of the west of Scotland.

As Frank McAveety mentioned in his speech, the problem is not limited to the east end of Glasgow, where his constituency is located, but affects the west of Scotland as a whole. We must tackle the serious issue of knife crime throughout that area.

I recognise that the Executive is taking measures to stamp out knife crime, but I have concerns about the raising of the age for buying knives from 16 to 18. I do not have reservations about increasing the age limit as such, but I am concerned that people who are intent on carrying such weapons will simply use kitchen utensils instead. Indeed, Frank McAveety has alluded to the fact that the same thing happens in schools. Teachers have told me that pupils use compasses and even pencil sharpeners as implements of violence. We should not get too het up with the belief that simply raising the age limit will stop the problem. Instead, we must send out a message to the general public and the youngsters whom we are trying to educate that we need a cultural change in the west of Scotland to address the problem of people who carry all types of weapons.

I am concerned by the suggestion that Frank McAveety made in his speech, and in a press release, that there should be a police presence in schools. Youth club members and groups of young people in the street have told us that even the presence of a policeman in a school was seen as a badge of pride by some young people who cannot be told that knife culture is wrong. I have my reservations about posting policemen in every school. Perhaps the pilot scheme in Aberdeen—

Mr McAveety: I mentioned the point simply because of the positive experience at St Mungo's

Academy, where the head teacher was initially worried about the perception of having policemen on school grounds and the role that they could play. However, I have witnessed at first hand how that police officer has substantially changed young people's attitudes. If the police could play that kind of positive, proactive role, their presence would be worth while and could genuinely tackle a particular undercurrent in communities throughout central Scotland.

Ms White: I take Mr McAveety's point. However, although I might welcome such a move as part of a pilot scheme in some schools, I am not sure that it would work in all schools. We need a culture change instead. We also need decent sentences that mirror the seriousness of this crime, because only that approach will send out a message to people who carry and use knives, whether or not they do so for their own protection.

Members have mentioned in many debates that it is crucial to have policemen on the beat. As a great believer in prevention rather than reactive policing, I feel that the best way forward would be to have more police on the beat with stop-and-search powers to stop kids carrying and using knives. We must have a culture change, which is why I have already called for an investigation into the terrible knife culture in Glasgow. Unfortunately, the problem will not be eradicated overnight, but we must convince the public that this heinous crime can be dealt with by having more police on the beat, better education for young people and an investigation into the causes of knife crime. I look forward to the minister's response.

17:32

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I, too, congratulate Frank McAveety on securing this debate on an extremely important issue. However, I want to begin by challenging the still current stereotype of Glasgow as a highly violent place. I have heard friends, particularly those who live down south and who perhaps do not know Scotland as well as we do, talk about the city in those terms. The stereotype is perhaps overblown in many people's minds. After all, I lived in Manchester for four or five years and was mugged three times, twice at knife-point. I have never felt as safe as I have in Glasgow, although, as a youngster and now as an adult socialising in Glasgow city centre, there have been times when I have not felt safe. My point is that I have felt a lot less safe in other cities. However, as the motion makes clear, no level of knife crime is acceptable and I welcome the opportunity to debate the issue.

I welcome proposals for a licensing scheme for knife sales. No one will argue that all knives that are sold, including those that are designed for sporting use, are used for legitimate purposes.

Indeed, we would all welcome steps to increase the minimum age for knife sales and to ban certain categories of weapons. However, such measures are not enough on their own. Anyone who wants a knife will always find an opportunity to get hold of one or, as Frank McAveety pointed out, to construct one.

It is clear that enforcement has an important role, but as we discussed in this morning's debate on justice we must accept that increasing sentences and locking people up for longer does not guarantee long-term protection. The public need and deserve protection from people who pose a genuine risk. However, that protection will be little more than a temporary fix if their imprisonment does not involve meaningful efforts to rehabilitate them.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): Patrick Harvie and I share a belief in restorative justice and we believe that locking people up is not the solution to crime. However, does he accept that we must embrace the introduction of stiff mandatory sentences for the carrying of knives if we are to break the cultural problem that we have?

Patrick Harvie: That will be appropriate in many cases, but the next point that I wanted to make concerns the cultural aspect of the problem.

We need to acknowledge that, for many young people, the motivation for carrying a weapon is not random aggression or a desire to attack. For some it is, but for many it is not; for many, it is the feeling of being under threat in their own communities. Many young people who carry weapons overestimate the number of their peers who do the same. The fear feeds the fear, and our response needs to recognise that. Once those fears are compounded and more people carry weapons, because they believe that their peers are doing the same, and once knives are present and available in conflict situations, what might have been a relatively minor incident can become a tragic one.

Our response needs to engage with those reasons, motivations and perceptions, because enforcement by itself, although necessary, is insufficient. Working with young people to discuss and challenge their perceptions as well as their fears, and listening to them, must be a vital part of our response. When we legislated on antisocial behaviour, much of the intervention, although it was required, was done in the wrong order. We need to deal with youth work first, then to review existing systems such as youth justice and children's hearings, and then to consider enforcement. I hope that the same mistake is not made in this instance.

17:37

Ms Margaret Curran (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab): I join other members in thanking Frank

McAveety for securing the debate. I also take this opportunity to draw to members' attention the work that he does—and has done for many years—in his constituency on the issue. I know first hand that he has drawn down resources and developed many models that have prevented young people from getting into serious bother. His work on that should be well acknowledged.

I asked for dispensation to speak in the debate; I wanted to speak in my capacity as a constituency member because of my deep concern about the scale of knife crime. I realised, of course, that I had to ask myself for dispensation, so I very generously granted it.

Like Frank McAveety, I see almost daily the impact of knife crime; I see its scale, the range of knives that are available and the culture of knife crime, which members have mentioned. Frank McAveety is absolutely right to talk about statistics on murders and serious assaults in the east end of Glasgow. The human tragedy that they represent is incalculable, not only to the victims and their families, but to the perpetrators and their families.

Of course we must make our streets and communities safe, but we should never be complacent and accept a culture in which a young person's horizon cannot be extended beyond gang warfare or beyond the idea that knife crime is somehow enjoyable. As Frank McAveety has, I have talked to many police officers and was recently told a story—at the beginning of this week, in fact—about an incident in which police officers had cause to attend a mother's house to find out the whereabouts of a 15 or 16-year-old boy, to be told by the mother, "Oh, I haven't seen him since he went out last night gang fighting." That is the culture that we need to change.

I accept the point that Patrick Harvie made; we cannot accept a culture that allows young people to think that they need to carry a knife to feel safe. It is our failure if we have created a society in which young people feel that that is the only way they can make themselves feel safe.

I do not want to get into a competition with Sandra White about who has the most dangerous area, and I well respect the point that she made, but Frank McAveety and I have to talk about the east end of Glasgow and the disproportionate amount of murders and serious assaults there. Police officers have given us evidence of that. A simple dispute in our communities becomes serious because of knives. An altercation between two individuals on the street can become serious assault or even murder in our communities because of knife crime. The police officers in our communities tell us unequivocally that carrying of knives is the determining factor that takes us to the top of the league for murder and serious assault. We must do something about the situation and we cannot be complacent.

I understand the point that Patrick Harvie made, but let us not be fooled about how dangerous Glasgow can be. We should not, despite our commitment and passion for our city, allow ourselves to cover over some of the human tragedies that happen.

I congratulate the Glasgow *Evening Times*, which manages to strike the balance between allowing ourselves to be proud of the city and articulating its great strengths, while being prepared to have the courage to face the challenges in our city. It is important that we do not collude in promoting an outdated stereotype that media people in particular want to promote. We must take the opportunity to face the challenges.

I agree that we must prevent knife crime. We must divert young people who are using knives into better activities; we must widen their horizons, provide them with other means to articulate their opinions and enable them to move on beyond the exclusion that they may feel. However, we must not be soft and we must be prepared to introduce sanctions for behaviour that we feel is inappropriate. As a society, we must be prepared to say what is and is not acceptable. We might not solve the problem of knife crime easily at a stroke, but we must use every opportunity to turn around the culture and reduce the scale of knife crime and the use of knives.

I say to Hugh Henry—he knows that I will say this—that the range of knives that is available on the streets of Glasgow is shocking. I understand that some young people will make weapons out of other objects, but it is disgusting that some people are prepared knowingly to profit from the misery of others. We cannot let those people play their part in lives being blighted.

I congratulate Frank McAveety again on securing the debate. Let us send a message out to all agencies that the matter will become a number 1 priority for Parliament and the Executive.

17:42

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): I, too, congratulate Frank McAveety on bringing the matter to Parliament. It is a matter of the greatest concern and I know that all my colleagues who represent Glasgow constituencies and wider regions share that concern about the damage that knife crime can do to individuals and families.

A number of issues have come out of the debate. First, Patrick Harvie was correct to talk about the stereotype of a Glaswegian, which some people still like to go on about. A classic illustration of that featured in a recent advert. I was able, with the assistance of a Labour secretary of state down south, to have the advert withdrawn.

That is not to say that we do not have our problems in Glasgow; we must recognise them. It is still far too frequently the case that young men in Glasgow, when they go for a night out, put the blade in their pocket with the same alacrity and facility as the rest of us would put on the aftershave. We must get away from that culture. We must also get away from the culture in which on a nice summer's night instead of going out to play football or something like that, people under 16 go to a public park or an open space and engage in gang warfare. That is the situation that pertains.

We all have a part to play. Margaret Curran was correct to criticise people who sell knives for profit when it is apparent that they are being purchased for nefarious purposes. I can understand that someone may use a knife in their work and I can understand that someone may use one for culinary purposes, but can someone explain to me the purpose of a sporting knife? I can understand that a small knife could be used for fishing, but the knives that are being sold as sporting knives are murderous weapons. That is not an exaggeration.

What should we do about the problem? First, in some cases parents must ask themselves serious questions. In many cases—Margaret Curran gave an example—parents know that their children go out carrying knives. There can surely be no more terrifying irresponsibility than that.

The police must start to take action on the same basis as they did a number of years ago. Stop and search powers were introduced under the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980. Those powers should be utilised much more frequently and in a much more determined manner. Every knife that is removed from the streets potentially prevents a murder.

We have to examine the courts system, because it is taking 10 to 11 months for cases to come to court, which is not acceptable. The Executive has to address that problem. Cases should be fast-tracked. They will not, in the main, be long or complex trials. There will probably be only three witnesses—two police officers and the accused—so it should be possible to fast-track them.

I disagree with Tommy Sheridan on mandatory sentences. It may seem to be a strange juxtaposition that I agree with the Executive, and with Hugh Henry in particular, but mandatory sentences do not work because unfortunately people are occasionally trawled in the net who should not get the jail. Mandatory sentences are not the answer.

We have to do things that a few years ago we would not have thought about. Who would have thought it would ever come to our having police in schools? I would have objected to that, but if it will

help, let us do it. We cannot allow the situation to continue when literally every weekend there is heartbreak and distress and young lives are ruined.

17:46

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): This is an important debate and, like other members, I congratulate Frank McAveety on securing it. It is perhaps not surprising that the debate has been raised by a Glasgow member and that Glasgow members from across the political spectrum are participating in it because, regrettably, knife crime is at its worst in Glasgow.

During the safer Scotland safer streets campaign, Strathclyde police took 428 knives and 370 other weapons off the streets of Glasgow in only eight weeks. Across the west of Scotland as a whole, 7,500 people have been the victims of knife crimes and I would not be surprised if many more such offences have gone unreported. Scotland has the worst record for stabbing murders in the whole of Europe, apart from Northern Ireland and, oddly, Finland, which we often hold up as an example in other policy areas.

Young people who frequent the pubs and clubs of Glasgow city centre or who live or walk about in many of the suburbs—particularly, but not only, in deprived areas—are well aware of the culture of violence that too often prevails, and of the number of people who believe that it is appropriate to carry weapons. No one doubts the problem, nor the resolve of the Scottish Executive and of political parties across the board to deal with it effectively, but there is no one simple solution. In our 2003 manifesto, the Liberal Democrats called for support for police initiatives to detect and tackle knife crime, and for tough sentences for people who are found in possession of knives. The Executive's five-point plan for a crackdown follows from that and from similar proposals by Labour coalition colleagues.

However, I understand from a conversation that I had this morning with a defence solicitor whom I met on the train that the procurator fiscal in Glasgow determined some months ago to prosecute possession offences routinely in the district court, rather than in the sheriff court. If that is true, whatever the pressures of court business, I cannot believe that it sends out the right message. Possession offences should be prosecuted in the sheriff court. Indeed, if there are associated aggravating circumstances or previous history, consideration should be given to prosecuting on indictment. I ask the minister to discuss that issue urgently with the Lord Advocate.

Bill Aitken: I ask Robert Brown to accept that what he was told this morning is true, but that the rationale was that sentencing in the district court

would be much more robust than has been the case in the sheriff court for similar offences.

Robert Brown: I am prepared to accept that that was the intention, and that there must be a saving in court time, but cases being tried in the sheriff court sends out a message that their being heard in the district court does not.

The test of success is not the number of weapons that are confiscated, nor is it the number of violent or potentially violent criminals who are put behind bars, but the crime rate on the streets. It is no use at all if we cannot crack the culture of aggression on the streets, to which other members referred, much of which is associated with or fuelled by alcohol, and stems from fractured individuals who are produced by there being too many fractured homes and too many fractured communities. It is interesting to note that the safer Scotland campaign to which I referred also confiscated 6,517 litres of alcohol, which is enough, I would guess, to keep quite a large pub going for weeks.

In short, we must not forget to be tough on the causes of crime as well as on the criminals. Today's debate is not the time to pursue that, but I urge Parliament to remember that catching the carriers of machetes and the perpetrators of violence is just the start. Protection of the public by locking up those people is a vital part of the armoury but, in other contexts, we have debated the relative failure of prisons to change behaviour, and we have debated whether such people have to be let out again.

I repeat that our effort must go towards creating a zero tolerance approach to violence in the home, at school and in the streets. However, zero tolerance also means tackling the risk factors that stir people to act in such ways in the first place.

The motion is right to mention the need to cut off the supply of knives at source and the need for programmes to educate young people. Sometimes, there is a foolhardy or bravado element to knife carrying and sometimes the weapon is intended to cause serious damage to others. In any event, members are united in putting across the message that it is not acceptable to carry knives and other weapons. As Margaret Curran said, today's debate will assist in that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: To allow all members who wish to take part in the debate to do so, I am willing to accept a motion without notice to extend the debate by 10 minutes.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by 10 minutes.—[*Hugh Henry.*]

Motion agreed to.

17:51

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): I congratulate Frank McAveety on bringing this important debate to Parliament, although I am a bit uncomfortable discussing it. We have been here before—the problem is not new. I missed the Frankie Vaughan amnesty on weapons, but I was around in the mid to late 1970s and was caught up in the peer pressure of local gangs in Glasgow's housing schemes. We happened to be right in the middle of two big gang areas—we had the Kross on one side and the Krew on the other and we were a tiny wee gang called the toddler SPE, which represented the swing park end. In those heady days, it was acceptable to run behind the big boys who were involved in the theatre of gang warfare at Crookston Castle hill, where they would chase one another to and fro, throw a few bottles and carry very large swords.

There was rarely any physical contact, which is why I talked about a theatre. However, at that time young lads like me, of 13 or 14 years, thought that it was all right to carry weapons. For a couple of months I carried a knife—if my mother had known, she would have skinned me alive. I never thought that I would use the knife, but because everybody else carried a knife I thought that I should carry one—just in case. The problem in Glasgow is that the culture of the 1970s has been carried through the 1980s and the 1990s and is still very much alive and kicking today.

It is contradictory of me, as a socialist who believes passionately in personal liberty, to suggest that Parliament must grasp the nettle and go for the much tougher approach of mandatory sentencing. It is unusual for me to be tougher on crime than Bill Aitken is, but the point is that we must crack the nut and make carrying knives, never mind using them, taboo. We must have a zero-tolerance approach. It is unfortunate, but we must introduce a mandatory sentencing system that includes a robust appeals and monitoring system so that we can address the odd exception in such sentencing. That would send a message to primary and secondary schools that a person who even carries a weapon will end up with years in jail, which could lead to a change in culture.

The measure might not work and we might end up simply locking up more people, which none of us wants, but what we have done until now has not worked. Far too many accident and emergency units in Glasgow are filled at the weekends with ripped faces and stabbed bodies, predominantly of young men. They are the tip of the iceberg; Frank McAveety was right that many slashings and stabbings that perhaps do not need medical treatment are not reported.

The problem is huge and sometimes, when we are faced with huge problems, we need radical

solutions. As I said, there is no guarantee that mandatory sentences of three or four years will solve the problem. Maybe they will not but, then again, perhaps 10 years from now we will not be having debates such as this because the message might have got through that even carrying such a weapon, never mind using it, will result in such a loss of liberty. The gravity of the problem that faces us needs such a radical and grave response.

I congratulate Frank McAveety on securing the debate and I apologise to the minister because I might not be able to stay to hear all of his response. However, I will read it in the *Official Report*; I hope that the minister will address whether mandatory sentencing is at least being considered.

17:56

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): Like others, I congratulate Frank McAveety on his motion. It is fair to point out that knife crime does not follow boundaries—certainly not local government boundaries—and that there are big problems with knife-related crime in West Dunbartonshire. I am sure that the minister will say the same about Renfrewshire, Lanarkshire and other areas.

The one consistent pattern is the link between poverty and deprivation and the level of knife-related crime. That is not to say that knife crime is a product of poverty—only a small minority of people carry and use knives—but what we have in some of the communities that have been mentioned is a culture of confrontation that is associated with fear. Fear encourages people to carry the instruments of violence and, in certain circumstances, to use them.

We have to make it quite clear that there can be no tolerance of knife-related crime. As others have pointed out, we have gone through cycles of knife-related crime and cycles of dealing with it. To some extent, if we are able to tackle this issue with energy, enthusiasm and co-ordination, we know that we can make a difference. Perhaps we will be unable to eradicate knife crime, but we know that previous initiatives have reduced the extent of it. We need to start to consider such initiatives again.

Knife crime is not only a problem in the streets. There have been recent cases of burglars leaving knives at the bottom of the stairs of houses they have burgled with the intent of sending a message to the occupiers that they should not mess with the burglars and should keep out of their way. The use of knives to threaten violence is as great a menace to us as is the use of knives in street violence.

What can we do about knife crime? First, we have to tackle the availability of knives. It is difficult

to separate the sale of kitchen knives from the sale of machetes and the sporting knives that Bill Aitken mentioned, but I do not believe that it is beyond the wit of man to identify a mechanism that identifies the kinds of knives that are more likely to be used in connection with this kind of violence. We can consider licensing schemes for the sale of knives to ensure that, as far as possible, we prevent instruments of violence from falling into the wrong hands.

Further, we can examine the way in which the police intervene. As Bill Aitken said, perhaps we can use existing legislation and encourage the police to identify what they think are the most effective ways of taking knives off people. We can consider sentencing policy, as some members have said.

We should also consider diversionary activities. What alternatives are we going to offer the young men—and it is predominantly men—who are involved with knife crime, to encourage them to take a different route in life?

This is an example of an existing pattern of resourcing that is not dealing with an endemic problem. If there is an issue with knife crime—it is one of a number of issues that are concentrated not only in Glasgow but throughout west central Scotland and in poorer areas rather than better-off areas—that is telling us something about how we prioritise and address the issues. We need to identify not only the way in which we allocate resources but the different ways in which we can use those resources—to make use of our energy and commitment to solve the problem of knife crime in the communities that I and others in this chamber represent.

18:00

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): I first visited Glasgow at the age of 32, for the 1978 Garscadden by-election at which Donald Dewar returned to parliamentary politics. I found the people of Glasgow warm and welcoming and I thank Glasgow MSPs for their courtesy in allowing me to join them in this debate, which reminds me of how Glasgow people welcomed me in 1978. Even political opponents were friendly in Glasgow. They were focused, but they were friendly.

I will take apart a couple of things that Frank McAveety usefully states in his motion and focus on them as the most important matters. The motion refers to

“ensuring appropriate programmes are in place to educate young people on the dangers and consequences of carrying and using knives”.

I must draw an important point to members' attention: we can talk about knives as both weapons and tools.

As a young lad in the country, I carried a 9in, double-edged knife, but I never realised that it was a weapon; it was a tool to be used for a variety of purposes. I was far from being alone in my attitude towards knives. A good pal, who is now dead—for reasons that had nothing to do with knives—used to go to the front of the class in secondary school to sharpen his pencil with his flick-knife. Nobody thought anything about it; it was just another knife being used as a tool in an appropriate context.

I will support, in principle, the Executive's planned measures on knives and the control of their sale, which will be a useful move, but we should not imagine that cutting off the supply of knives will cut off the desire in the people who currently use them as weapons to have a weapon of some kind. If we take knives away from them, there is a real danger that they will find another weapon to use instead. That is why the motion's point about educating young people about the consequences of carrying knives is the most important one. The issue is about people's attitudes to other people and their willingness to enforce their point of view on them through violence. Such people happen to use knives in far too many instances.

I am slightly surprised that members have so far not made the link between drugs and knives. The knife is the preferred weapon for a frightener in the drugs industry. A knife to the buttock is a standard warning in the drugs industry. I would have thought that Glasgow MSPs had met that practice in Glasgow, as I have done in the north-east—we got it from Glasgow. There was a grave misfortune in my constituency: one of my constituents died from being stabbed in the buttock. The knife went too far in and severed the femoral artery. My constituent was dead in 20 seconds.

It is important for us to educate our youngsters about the consequences of knife use. It is not simply bravado to carry a knife; consequences may follow from doing so. Of course, Glasgow has the unenviable reputation of being a city in which the proportion of knife crime per 100,000 of the population exceeds the total murder rate per 100,000 people in London, which is a city that we do not always think of as being one of the safest in the world.

Robert Brown was correct to say that there is no single solution. Just because I say that we should not get too wound up about knives, because the problem will move on, does not mean that I do not support Robert Brown's important point. I welcome Tommy Sheridan's view on sentencing up to a point, because I do not think that mandatory sentences are the right thing way to go. However, I certainly think that it is vital that fiscals, in considering charges and the courts to which they will take them, and sheriffs and district magistrates

in considering sentences, take the context into account. In particular, I would like the severest sentences to be given for the use of such weapons in the drugs business. That is a hidden crime that is rarely reported to the police. Members might be surprised at how prevalent it is.

I congratulate Frank McAveety on securing the debate and thank him for his hospitality in allowing me to speak in it.

18:05

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Frank McAveety on lodging what I think is an important motion that deals with an issue that affects many parts of Scotland. It is unfortunate that, because of the gravity of the situation in Glasgow, I can be parochial. Like Margaret Curran, I congratulate the *Evening Times* on its constructive campaign in raising awareness of the seriousness of knife crime and of a number of the challenges that we face.

The human element has been brought home to me when I have dealt with families who have been affected by knife crime and who have lost their loved ones. A family that comes to mind from my own experience is the Watson family, who tragically lost their daughter—and then their son—as a result of a playground murder in the Dennistoun area of my constituency. Margaret and Jim Watson have been devastated by the ruthless murder of Diane and the subsequent suicide of their son. When we reflect on such cases, we realise the need to think about how we tackle knife crime.

For the first time ever, I agree with everything Tommy Sheridan said—we are united in our views. His speech was valuable; I wonder whether he was speaking for the Scottish Socialist Party.

There are two issues I want to deal with. The first is regulation. In the Parliament, we have considered what some people regard as serious restrictions of liberty, such as the banning of smoking in public places. In my view, we must consider the sale of knives in a similar fashion. When I look at many of the weapons that are sold by retail outlets such as Victor Morris in Argyle Street in Glasgow, I wonder why anyone would have to purchase them. I argue that people should have to make a case for purchasing many of the knives and other weapons that are on sale. In common with Des McNulty, I think that we should consider more regulation, whereby someone would have to show why they needed to buy a particular weapon rather than simply have the right to buy it for whatever purpose they want.

Sandra White spoke about policing schools, which I think is the way forward. At Whitehill Secondary School in my constituency, pupils and

police officers have been most impressed by the response that they have received. Such initiatives are an opportunity for police officers to make contact with young people in a way that they have never been able to before. The times when young people would not communicate with community police officers are long gone. In my experience, young people are moving on; they want to establish a dialogue with police officers in more creative ways. I argue that that is the way forward.

We need to direct police resources to the areas that are under pressure as a result of the serious challenge of knife crime. From day one, I have said that the leafy suburbs of the Strathclyde police area have the same number of police officers as places such as Ruchazie, Shettleston and Easterhouse. We should direct our police resources at the areas that face the challenge of knife crime so that we can detect the people who are involved in it.

18:09

The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry): Frank McAveety has done a service to the Parliament by stimulating the debate. The almost total unanimity among members on the need to face up to a serious problem in society that has profound and tragic consequences reflects the seriousness with which knife crime is viewed throughout the country.

Although the *Evening Times* is a newspaper that has done me no favours over the years—I have had to live with some problems as a result of it—I echo what Margaret Curran and Paul Martin said about its work. I recognise that the *Evening Times* has consistently campaigned on many issues in a considered way. It presents problems in a way that is not hysterical or sensational, but which draws people together to seek solutions. Its portrayal of some of the knife crime problems has been commendable and has helped to progress the debate. I congratulate the *Evening Times* on that.

I will tackle the debate in two ways. First, I will talk about the bigger picture and pose questions. Why, in comparison with other countries, does Scotland have such a serious problem with young people carrying knives? Why, in comparison with other countries, do many people here die or become maimed or injured as a result of young people carrying knives? Why is the situation in the west of Scotland much worse than that in the rest of Scotland, which is not to say that no problems exist elsewhere? Why is Glasgow much worse than the rest of the west of Scotland?

We need to understand profound cultural and social issues, which many members touched on. We need to consider the culture in which young people are brought up; poverty; educational

issues; and the responsibilities of families, parents and communities. As Tommy Sheridan said, why do many young people think that carrying knives is acceptable?

On a visit to Inverclyde last year, I met fairly articulate and intelligent young people who were part of a youth project and who had been involved in crime. I was profoundly depressed when they tried to justify their carrying and use of knives and—bizarrely—blamed the police, who they said were not present to protect them, which was why they carried knives. That is completely illogical and unacceptable.

Why have we as a society failed to take action against some of the dire consequences of knife crime? The police recently showed me a video. It could be argued that it showed two gangs clashing, but it also showed a tragic murder by knife of a person who was walking by, minding their own business in Glasgow city centre, and who had nothing to do with those who were involved in the groups. Being in the wrong place at the wrong time cost that person their life. We cannot accept that. Something must be done.

Frank McAveety graphically explained the dire and tragic consequences of people carrying knives and others echoed him. We must understand the situation and have a more profound debate, separated from party politics and point scoring, about why we have the problem. The Minister for Justice is determined not only to debate the criminal justice plan, but to go beyond that into a debate about violence in Scotland and profound cultural issues. We are determined to do that and we hope to return to Parliament with ways of progressing the debate.

As well as having that wide-ranging and profound debate, we need to consider specifics. Frank McAveety and others asked for a response. The First Minister recently announced a five-point plan on knife crime, which made it clear that we regard the issue as a high priority. We will return to the Parliament with further details.

Several initiatives are already happening and they confirm what we have heard tonight. For example, the sixth safer Scotland campaign, which is run by Scottish police forces and the British transport police, targeted vandalism, drinking in public places and knife crime in an eight-week period that ended on 3 December. During the campaign, police officers seized more than 700 offensive weapons and charged just under 700 people with more than 1,000 reported knife crimes. The extent of such crimes is a tragedy and a disgrace.

I do not have time to describe specific examples, so I will move on to what we intend to do under the five-point plan. As Frank McAveety has requested

and as others have mentioned, we will look into introducing a licensing scheme for the sale of non-domestic knives and similar instruments. It is bizarre to see some of the weapons that are available and which people think are acceptable for sale. However, we should not kid ourselves on that that alone will solve the problem, as Sandra White and others said. If people are determined to carry a knife and commit crimes, they will find some other type of knife.

At the very least, however, we should demonstrate our determination to do something. It has been suggested that we should increase the age of purchase from 16 to 18. I know that some would even wish to extend it to 21. We at least have to consider an increase from 16. We also want a general ban on the sale of swords. Why in the name of humanity would anyone want to be able to carry a sword in public?

The climate is right for us to give the police the right to make more use of stop-and-search powers and powers of arrest for suspicion of carrying a knife or offensive weapon. We also have proposals to double the sentence for the possession of a knife or offensive weapon from two to four years.

I welcome the comments made by Tommy Sheridan, who said that he would back the rest of the Parliament in considering tougher sentences. However, I hope that he is prepared to face up to this issue: if he wishes to promote mandatory sentencing, which would have even more profound implications for the prison population than the severe sentences that many of the rest of us are talking about, I hope that we will hear less criticism of talk about the need for more prisons and more prison places. There is a consequence to saying that there should be mandatory sentences for carrying knives. I hope that we get a change in argument from Tommy Sheridan and his colleagues when it comes to knife crimes.

We have heard about the murders and the mayhem and we have heard that the problem could even be worse than we realise. That is absolutely right. However, the number of deaths could be greater but for the fact that many incidents take place in the centre of Glasgow within fairly close proximity to the Royal infirmary. Had it not been for the ability of our emergency services to get people to the infirmary, many more young people could have died. The Royal infirmary has available a range of skills that is probably unsurpassed by any other hospital in Britain, if not Europe. It is a tragedy that we have developed those skills on the back of knife crime, but that is how many of them have developed.

I know that some of the things that we have proposed will have implications. I know that there are issues around people who are involved in

certain cultural and sporting activities, for example, but we need to have the debate. What is certain is that we cannot do nothing. We cannot stay where we are and we cannot ignore the problem. Bill Aitken was right to say that we need speedier justice and I hope that we can make progress with some of the recommendations of the McInnes review. I will consider the point that Robert Brown made to the Lord Advocate on issues in Glasgow in particular. There might be reasons—I do not know.

Meeting closed at 18:19.

Tonight's debate has demonstrated that there is a mood and a determination to do something. There is a realisation that too many families are being destroyed as a result of knife crime. Tonight, Frank McAveety has given us an opportunity to put down markers for what I hope will be a more detailed and longer debate in the Parliament, through which we can demonstrate to the people of Scotland that we will do something to protect them from such crimes.

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