

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 2 March 2005

Session 2

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CONTENTS

Wednesday 2 March 2005

Debates

Col.

TIME FOR REFLECTION	14849
TRANSPORT (SCOTLAND) BILL: STAGE 1	14851
<i>Motion moved—[Nicol Stephen].</i>	
The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen)	14851
Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP).....	14854
David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con)	14855
Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab)	14857
Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD)	14859
Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP)	14860
Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)	14862
Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green)	14863
Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab)	14865
John Scott (Ayr) (Con)	14866
Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)	14867
Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP)	14869
Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab).....	14870
Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP).....	14871
Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD)	14873
Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)	14874
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con).....	14875
Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)	14877
Nicol Stephen	14880
TRANSPORT (SCOTLAND) BILL: FINANCIAL RESOLUTION	14883
<i>Motion moved—[Nicol Stephen].</i>	
EDINBURGH TRAM (LINE ONE) BILL: PRELIMINARY STAGE	14884
<i>Motion moved—[Jackie Baillie].</i>	
Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)	14884
The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen)	14887
Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP).....	14888
David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)	14889
Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)	14891
Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD).....	14893
Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green)	14894
Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD).....	14896
Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab)	14897
Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP)	14899
Nicol Stephen	14901
Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con)	14902
BUSINESS MOTION	14904
<i>Motion moved—[Ms Margaret Curran]—and agreed to.</i>	
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTIONS	14906
<i>Motions moved—[Ms Margaret Curran].</i>	
Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con).....	14906
The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Rhona Brankin)	14906
DECISION TIME	14908
FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT	14914
<i>Motion debated—[Christine May].</i>	
Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab)	14914
Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)	14916
Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)	14917
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con).....	14918
Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD).....	14919
Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP).....	14921

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab).....	14922
Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP).....	14923
Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD)	14924
Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green)	14925
Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)	14926
Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP)	14926
The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson)	14927

Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 2 March 2005

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

Time for Reflection

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

Good afternoon. Our first item of business this afternoon is time for reflection, which is led today by the Rev Fraser Aitken, minister of Ayr St Columba Church.

The Rev Fraser Aitken (Church of Scotland, Ayr): Whatever they are supposed to be, people in public positions are not supposed to be human. That observation has become increasingly more compelling the older I get. No one is perfect, but is not that the charm of one's wife, husband, partner or friend?

For me, perfection can be annoying. The vast expanse of my neighbour's superbly mown lawn makes one long for a single heroic dandelion. The hostess whose soufflés never fall, the spouse whose chequebook is always balanced and the conversationalist who is always right; those people do not encourage me to pursue perfection in my own chaos-filled life. Rather, they cause me secretly to wish public disaster to fall upon them.

Perhaps the ambiguity of perfection is that it is more fun wishing for it than having it. Mae West once said:

"I was pure as the driven snow, until I drifted."

Who would have it any other way? Any fool can live in paradise. It ought to be easy: no right or wrong, no sin, no error, no mixed motives, and no compromising opportunities. But this is not paradise and we are called to make our way here, making the most out of less than the best.

I was castigated recently by a parishioner who expects her local minister to be perfect in every way—no faults, no failings. She gave vent to her anger because I had failed to visit a neighbour who had been ill. I had simply forgotten. "I am going to give you a piece of my mind," she fumed. I am not sure that she could afford to be so generous, but I listened nevertheless and then as calmly and as graciously as I could, I replied in my defence, "But I make mistakes. I'm trying to go to heaven—I haven't come from there!"

Jesus reminds us that the perfection that we are encouraged to imitate will not reward our efforts with a perfect world. However, the virtue for the faithful, even if they achieve no other virtue, is that they seek and serve virtue because in so doing they fulfil, perfect and make complete the work

and the will of God. That work is never done, which is why you and I, in our different spheres of activity, must ever be about doing it as we try to make Scotland a heaven upon earth, where each lives for the other, warts and all.

Transport (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The first item of business is a debate on motion S2M-2351, in the name of Nicol Stephen, that the general principles of the Transport (Scotland) Bill be agreed to.

14:33

The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen):

First, I thank those who were involved in preparing the stage 1 report on the Transport (Scotland) Bill. I thank in particular Bristow Muldoon and the other members of the Local Government and Transport Committee and members of the Finance Committee, the Enterprise and Culture Committee and the Subordinate Legislation Committee. I would also like to express my thanks and appreciation to the many individuals who provided oral and written evidence. Finally—and not least—I thank my officials for all their hard work. I am sure that there is more to come. The report is considered and balanced. I am grateful to the committee members for the constructive tone of the report and for their endorsement of the principles of the bill.

Before I discuss in detail my response to the report, I will set out the context of the bill. There was an extensive consultation leading to the bill, including a full consultation paper in summer 2003 and a transport white paper last year. The many views that were expressed during the consultation process have been helpful in shaping the bill that lies before Parliament today and I am grateful to all who have taken part. As a result, we have a bill that reflects the issues and interests of a range of stakeholders. It has received broad support from a range of people who are interested in transport in Scotland and it will make a significant difference to transport in Scotland.

Members of the Local Government and Transport Committee and Parliament will be interested to know that our hard work can sometimes lead to successful changes in transport in Scotland. I have just received figures from First ScotRail, the rail passenger franchise holder, that indicate that from February 2004 to February 2005 we have seen an increase of 11.5 per cent in passenger numbers in Scotland, which is an extra 60 million passengers on Scotland's rail network. So—it is worth working hard to improve transport in Scotland and to encourage greater investment in public transport.

We will continue that drive. For the first time we will have a national transport strategy for Scotland. We will create a national transport agency—which we have agreed to locate in Glasgow—to focus on delivery of major transport projects. We will, over

the next 10 years, invest £3 billion in new transport projects including new rail links, new tramlines and new bus priority initiatives. However, changes at national level are not enough on their own. We need to unleash the potential that exists for transport improvements at regional level.

The bill has three main parts. The first deals with the new regional transport partnerships, the second with better road works, and the third with a range of important issues, including powers to introduce free national bus travel for all disabled and older people in Scotland.

Part 1 will create the new statutory regional transport partnerships to improve the planning and delivery of transport throughout Scotland. Those partnerships, which will build on the skills and hard work of local government and on the success and experience of Strathclyde Passenger Transport and the existing voluntary partnerships, will develop new regional transport strategies to tie in with the national transport strategy. Partnerships and councils will also be able to choose to deliver transport services on a regional basis where they believe that that would be more effective, which will allow for strong and powerful regional partnerships in areas that wish them. That will certainly be the case in the SPT area. Importantly, in the west as in other parts of Scotland, the bill will also provide the opportunity to bring together planning of roads and public transport.

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(SNP): I am interested to hear the minister refer to “strong and powerful” regional transport authorities, particularly given the consultation that has just been issued by the Executive, which refers to “Regional Strategy and Limited Transport Powers” and “Regional Strategy and Some Transport Powers Transferred”, with no option for “strong” transport powers.

Nicol Stephen: The consultation proposes three models. Bruce Crawford is right that, as a minimum, the new regional partnerships will be required to produce a regional transport strategy, which will not have to transfer powers across to the regional partnership. However, there is the option—which will be followed in the west of Scotland—for significant and strong powers to be given to the new partnership to match the powers that SPT holds in transport at the moment, with the exception of the changes in the rail powers that are proposed as a result of the significant shift of new responsibilities to Scottish ministers through UK legislation.

Those changes of approach can bring about significant improvement in co-ordination and delivery of transport throughout Scotland. I am currently considering the responses to the recent consultation exercise on the membership, voting rights, boundaries, functions and funding of

regional transport partnerships. Many detailed and constructive comments have been received, which I will consider along with the Local Government and Transport Committee's stage 1 report. The committee identified some specific issues, including that of ensuring that the voting system is fair to both large and small local authorities. Greater flexibility in partnership boundaries has also been called for and I am sympathetic to concerns on that. I emphasise that I have an open mind on the issues that the committee has raised, and I look forward to constructive discussions during stage 2.

The purpose of today's debate is not to provide a definitive response to all the points that have been made, but when I have fully considered the consultation responses and reflected on the committee's report and the points that are made in today's debate, I will, in advance of stage 2, make available draft orders to provide additional detail on the constitution of the regional transport partnerships.

Today's debate is about the general principles of the bill which have, in the main, received broad support. However, I am pleased to respond to another of the committee's requests by making it clear that although statutory powers in relation to rail issues will rest with the Scottish ministers, the west of Scotland regional transport partnership will have a key role in the rail franchise in its area. I am examining whether legislative measures will be required to ensure that transport partnerships can execute the Scottish ministers' powers on an agency or delegated basis.

As I am running out of time, I will truncate my remarks and omit my comments on road works. However, I will mention the national concessionary bus travel scheme, which is a key element of the bill. The committee's support for the new concessionary scheme is welcome. We are determined that the scheme should be up and running by April 2006, but that can happen only if the bill is supported today. Let us remind ourselves of the key advantages of the new scheme: it will sweep away not only the regional boundaries, but the current time restrictions—we will have free travel, anywhere in Scotland, all day.

The bill will deliver better transport through the creation of regional transport partnerships. It will also create the post of road works commissioner and a new statutory road works register and it will increase opportunity throughout Scotland through the creation of a national concessionary travel scheme. The bill will provide the framework for a dramatic increase in Scotland's commitment to transport. The resources are now in place to back that commitment, which must be good news for our economy and for every community in Scotland.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Transport (Scotland) Bill.

14:42

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): The Rev Fraser Aitken, in his amusing time for reflection speech today, pointed out that we may seek paradise, even if we do not necessarily arrive there. Certainly, our aim in Parliament is to increase the store of happiness in Scotland. In general, the Local Government and Transport Committee tried to find a way forward by consensus on the main proposals in the bill. I thank the clerks and the extensive list of witnesses who helped us in our work.

Undoubtedly, the main element of the bill is the proposed creation of regional transport partnerships. I was pleased that, at paragraph 9 of its report, the committee reached a clear conclusion that

"the ability of RTPs to deliver transport improvements will depend largely on the RTPs having strong powers and the required level of funding."

In evidence, Dr Iain Docherty pointed out that the Executive hinted in the early days that RTPs would have strong powers, but now that the bill has made its public appearance, there is nothing in it to show what those powers will be; there is only the duty to create a strategy within 12 months. Therefore, in that respect, the bill is little more than a blank page.

I hope that the minister will, in his concluding remarks, say clearly whether he accepts the committee's recommendation that the draft statutory instruments that contain the meat of the proposals be produced at least 14 days before the start of stage 2. Indeed, that procedure should happen with any bill that does not contain the meat of the matter for us to consider.

The Scottish National Party's position is clear. Yes, there is a trend in Scotland towards regional government. Yes, transport policy should be delivered as far as possible from the bottom up rather than by diktat from the top down. Yes, RTPs should have strong powers. However, if RTPs do not have strong powers or secure funding, the problem is that they may simply represent another layer of quangos in an already over-cluttered governmental terrain. It is for that reason that the SNP will abstain in today's vote. Sharp-eyed members who have read the committee's deliberations closely will know that we made that position clear at the end of those deliberations.

The SNP supports the concessionary travel scheme but, logically, our position is that we will abstain from voting until we know what is going to happen at stage 2 and what powers are going to

be introduced. For example, what exactly is the "key role" that SPT is to play? We have all—in the past 24 hours and previously—had lengthy deliberations with SPT, which is worried that its ability to deliver the Glasgow airport rail link will be constrained by various technical aspects of the bill. Perhaps the minister can say whether its fears are groundless. If all he can say is that SPT should play a key role, is that clear enough to allay the fears of committee members who argued clearly and unequivocally for strong powers?

On funding, the evidence from various councillors, not least those from the Highlands and Islands strategic transport partnership and the councillor from Shetland, indicated that the costs of running RTPs may be as much as twice the cost of the existing voluntary partnerships. Unless RTPs are secure in their funding, they will not be able to attract, recruit and retain the right people and they will not have the institutional stability to operate properly. That has not been explained, either.

On the road works commissioner, the SNP is not convinced that the proposals will improve on the performance of the roads authorities and utilities committee (Scotland) at present. On concessionary travel, I would be grateful if the minister would simply confirm that the scheme—which the SNP welcomed in principle—is still on course for implementation in April next year, that he is confident that the problems that he referred to during the ministerial statement have been addressed and that the smart cards are capable of fulfilling the task. For those reasons, and given that the SNP opposes RTPs unless they have strong powers and secure funding but supports a national concessionary scheme, we shall be unable to support the measures as they stand.

14:48

David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): Given the importance that the Executive states it gives to the bill and its importance to the Local Government and Transport Committee, judging by the amount of time and effort that it put into it and the number of witnesses that were brought before it, the fact that only an hour and a half has been allocated for the debate is disgraceful. It is contemptuous to the witnesses that such a short time has been allocated and it has resulted in the minister's being unable to get through his speech—even had his opening address contained any answers to the questions that the committee raised on the bill.

The bill is not a full bill that details what the Executive proposes; rather, it is a skeletal measure that relies on future regulations that are to be introduced, which constrained the committee in its activities. The various panels of witnesses

were unable to give their full views on a range of issues because there was no detail. Therefore, scrutiny to date has been inadequate and continues to be so today, particularly given the minister's lack of answers so far and—given the limited time there will no doubt be at the end of the debate—the lack of answers later.

Because of the shortness of time, therefore, I want to focus briefly on one strong constituency interest. How will the minister respond to questions that were asked by Dumfries and Galloway Council about whether it should be forced to be a member of the west of Scotland transport partnership, of which it is not currently a member, and about whether, for the clear and coherent reasons that have been set out by Mr Stephen's Liberal Democrat colleague Councillor Joan Mitchell, Dumfries and Galloway Council could have a partnership of its own? As the minister knows, that is not a boundaries issue. If that is to happen, changes will have to be made to the bill. I hope that in winding up, the minister will make it clear whether he will bring forward changes to allow that to happen.

The Conservative position on the bill has been clear from the start—we do not believe that there is a need for an additional layer of government. We believe that the role that will be ascribed to transport Scotland is the role that the minister should have. If he is not capable of making strategic decisions, drawing up strategic plans and banging heads together when required, how will a quango do it? Back in 2000 when the Executive previously considered the issue it stated:

"it would ... be counterproductive to impose a new layer of government between the local authorities and the Executive".

In my view, that remains the case.

The councils and various other bodies that gave evidence to the committee made it clear that voluntary arrangements had worked well, were working well and, with appropriate support from the Executive, could continue. The rest of the related issues, such as voting rights and the roles of third-party members, have not been thought through and we have not heard any more detail on them today.

On SPT, the amendment to the committee report that I suggested was rejected. I wanted us to take a much stronger line on SPT. We are not happy with the minister's assurances; they are not even as robust as those that Anne McGuire gave at Westminster. Let us have a bit more clarity.

We welcome the concessionary travel scheme and we will wait to see the detail on the traffic tsar. We have a most unsatisfactory basis on which to proceed with what should be a serious and important issue for Scotland. If the Executive took

transport seriously, it would not hold only an hour-and-a-half debate on the bill.

14:52

Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab): The bill is one of the most important that we will consider in this session. There are many issues that I want to cover, but which I will find it impossible to cram into the available time, so I will concentrate on a number of key points. I hope that my Labour colleagues will cover the gaps that I will unfortunately have to leave. I record my thanks to the clerks, the members of three committees and all the witnesses who gave evidence for their input into stage 1 consideration of the bill.

My position and the position of the Local Government and Transport Committee is that the bill should be supported at stage 1. It covers three distinct areas of transport policy: the establishment of the regional transport partnerships, new provisions to govern road works and the powers to establish nationwide concessionary travel schemes.

So that I do not miss it out at the end of my speech, I will start by talking about part 3 of the bill, which is on concessionary travel schemes. In my view, the move to establish a nationwide free bus travel scheme for Scotland's elderly and disabled people and a new concessionary scheme for young people is the most important aspect of the bill. Those enhanced travel initiatives were key Labour manifesto pledges in 2003 and will build on the success of the existing free local travel scheme for elderly and disabled people, which I believe is one of the major successes of the first four years of the Parliament, and is part of a package of measures that shows Parliament's commitment to Scotland's elderly people. The nationwide scheme includes other welcome developments, such as the removal of the peak-time restriction on free bus travel and the introduction of free ferry services. We must ensure that people who have disabilities not only have the right to free travel but have access to free travel through greater provision of accessible transport of all modes in the future.

The key point that I want to make at this stage is about the position of the two Opposition parties, the Conservatives and the SNP. The Conservatives intend to oppose the bill at stage 1 and the SNP proposes to sit on its hands and abstain. It is important for Parliament and the people of Scotland to understand that if the bill were to fall today, the powers that the minister seeks to acquire to introduce the new concessionary scheme for elderly people and the new scheme for young people would also fall. That means that anyone who abstains from voting or

who votes against the bill is refusing to support the concessionary travel scheme.

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

Bristow Muldoon: No, thank you; I have only four minutes. The two Opposition parties—the tartan Tory alliance—will find their position difficult to explain to the people of Scotland when they take their messages to them in the forthcoming general election.

Fergus Ewing: Since Mr Muldoon obviously did not hear what I said, I repeat that we support national concessionary schemes and that, if the bill goes ahead with just that element, we will support it. However, that is not what the bill is doing. It will introduce a variety of measures. Does Bristow Muldoon support the committee's position that, unless there are strong powers and secure funding for RTPs, the committee should not support the bill either?

Bristow Muldoon: In the House of Commons, when the Labour Government was introducing the minimum wage, Mr Ewing's party was absent. Today, when we are trying to introduce concessionary travel for Scotland's elderly people, his party is sitting on its hands. Far from being Scotland's party, the SNP is Scotland's disgrace.

Regional transport partnerships are essential because the gerrymandering of the Conservatives in the 1990s disrupted Scotland's ability to plan transport regionally. Although no one is, at this stage, proposing the re-establishment of regional councils, there is growing recognition that we need to plan our economy and transport systems regionally and nationally by building on the natural city regions that are Scotland's main economic drivers and ensuring that the areas that surround our cities are hooked into the transport systems of those cities. The recent experience of Edinburgh is a good example of why we need to plan our transport regionally.

I believe that it is important to have strong regional transport partnerships and I look to the minister to articulate at stage 2 and beyond a clear message about the powers that each partnership will have.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Muldoon, you must close now.

Bristow Muldoon: I have one final point to make. The minister has said that he will consider whether there is a legislative issue around the powers of SPT. I would ask him to give further consideration to that and to tell the committee whether he intends to give legislative effect to commitments that he has given previously and today.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I invite members who are taking part in the open debate to stick to the four-minute limit.

14:57

Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): I support the Transport (Scotland) Bill. It is unfortunate that we have been unable to get consensus on the bill today, which might be to do with the fact that a general election is on the way.

There has been extensive consultation on improving transport in Scotland. Two key points seem to have come through. First, we need a more strategic approach to planning and delivery of transport. I agree with Bristow Muldoon that an example of that need was seen in Edinburgh in the recent past. Secondly, we need to build organisational capacity to deliver the massive programme of transport investment that is planned by the Scottish Executive. Delivery is the key issue. The Transport (Scotland) Bill will lead to a national transport strategy and regional transport partnerships, it will improve management of road works and, crucially, it will deliver nationwide free travel for older and disabled people. All those elements are welcome steps towards improving transport in Scotland and towards improving the quality of life of our older and disabled people.

The national transport agency will deliver key Liberal Democrat policies and major national projects that are contained in the partnership agreement, improvements in transport infrastructure and better co-ordination of the national concessionary fares schemes. The historic bias towards roads spending that has been demonstrated by Governments in the United Kingdom will be ended because, crucially, we have the funding in place to deliver on public transport.

Phil Gallie: Will the member give way?

Margaret Smith: I am sorry, Mr Gallie, but I have only four minutes, so I will not.

The committee has supported regional transport partnerships, provided that they will have the necessary strong powers and the required level of funding—that is stated clearly in our report. However, the committee has a number of reservations. Some of those concerns arose because of the lack of detail about how the new structures will work in practice, which is why we have asked for draft guidance and regulations to be with us in good time before stage 2.

The committee wants to hold on to issues relating to accountability of councils in the new bodies by limiting voting powers to elected members. We also want recognition of the need for fairness for large and small councils. There is

also a need for flexibility in relation to boundaries. The committee agreed with the point that David Mundell made about the case that has been made by Dumfries and Galloway Council, for example. As we have heard, SPT also has concerns; we agree that greater clarity is needed about some of its responsibilities. Although we welcome the minister's assurance about the west and south-west of Scotland RTP's role in respect of rail policy—he strengthened that assurance in his comments today—some concerns remain. It seems that it would be sensible to give that RTP a strong role, given the current situation in that area and the expertise that has been built up there.

I strongly support part 2 of the bill, which will establish a Scottish road works commissioner. It is crucial that the commissioner will be independent and have the teeth and the resources to enforce decisions. A balance must be struck that acknowledges the need for utility companies to dig up our roads, but we need greater co-ordination and more enforcement powers. We need to ensure that people benefit from what utility companies and councils do instead of paying for it afterwards through their council tax or by replacing broken glasses after they have tripped because of a pothole in the pavement or the road.

I am delighted that the minister's announcement in December backed up the bill's provisions on extension of the concessionary fares scheme and removal of regional boundaries and time restrictions. I am keen to hear what he has to say about the possibility of extending that level playing field to cover rail. There was a certain amount of sympathy in the committee for such an extension. A related question arose at the meeting of the Waverley Railway (Scotland) Bill Committee in the Borders on Monday: if we give concessionary fares for bus travel, how can we ensure that we get the required number of passengers to make a new railway viable? We would like to see some meat on the bones in relation to those issues. I am also keen to hear details of the scheme's extension to young people, which will have a massive impact throughout Scotland.

Fergus Ewing asked whether the bill is on course for spring 2006. If people such as him vote for it today, it will be.

15:01

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I will focus on some of the more minor proposals in the bill and I hope that the minister will give some answers—if not today, then in writing.

My reading of the proposals on pedestrian crossings is that local authorities will make decisions without reference to ministers. I assume that ministers will not set the criteria for decisions

to install pedestrian crossings in proximity to schools and sheltered housing. Also, I ask the minister to clarify in his response whether decisions about pedestrian crossings on trunk roads in urban areas will come under the remit of local authorities.

I note that there is a definition of road, but in relation to road user charging schemes. In my constituency—and, I am sure, in the minister's—there are problems about the adoption of roads and the consequences of that for householders. This might be an opportune moment to legislate to govern the adoption of roads and to provide appropriate funding, particularly where the developer happens to be an offshoot of the Executive and has failed to live up to its responsibility to bring roads up to standard before it hands them over to the council. The bill represents a missed opportunity to do that and I ask the minister to address that matter, either today or in writing.

I move on to more substantive provisions. Concern has been expressed about representation on the regional transport partnerships, particularly in relation to the north-east Scotland transport partnership, which is the current voluntary body. The new RTP could well have a three-person board, but that would be not so much a board as a clique. There could be one councillor from Aberdeen, one from Aberdeenshire and one person representing other interests. That would not be satisfactory.

We should bear in mind other legislation that the Parliament has passed. We will move to the single transferable vote system for local elections in 2007 and as a consequence local government will perhaps no longer have such clear-cut administrations. One of the strengths of the voluntary arrangements has been the consensus that has existed for the most part—the consensus that Margaret Smith sought. Such consensus will be particularly important in relation to RTPs. In the likely situation after the introduction of STV for local elections, it will be important to take the maximum opportunity to reach consensus, because delivery is better when consensus is achieved. That will not necessarily result from having one representative of one political party from one council. The minister may wish to address that, especially in relation to the regional transport partnership that is proposed to involve only two councils. I know that the Strathclyde situation is different.

I share Fergus Ewing's concerns about the detail. In presenting the proposals, the minister has asked us to trust him. He will forgive us if we do not give that trust on the general principles today, because some of those principles are not spelled out as well as they might be. By and large,

we have no difficulty with the national concession scheme, but concerns have been expressed elsewhere about other general principles.

15:06

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): I have always believed that the minister who delivers a solution to Scotland's transport problems will have enduring popularity with the nation, because transport is one of the services of which just about everybody has experience. We have all heard complaints—and we, too, have complaints—about our experience of the transport system in trying to get to work and do our jobs. We all say that we want an integrated transport system and we all want it to work, but what do we think about how to achieve that? The answer to that is what makes today's debate crucial.

As Bristow Muldoon said, who would have thought that the Scottish Executive, with the Parliament's support, would deliberate the implementation of a free fares scheme for Scotland's elderly and disabled? As the minister said, that scheme will apply all over Scotland, all day. That is no mean achievement and we should take it seriously.

Phil Gallie: We all agree on that, but we disagree about the restructuring. The member's Labour colleagues in Strathclyde do not agree, either. Does the member acknowledge that part 1 of the bill is deeply flawed?

Pauline McNeill: I will describe my concerns later. If the Conservatives and the SNP oppose the motion, that will tell me that they have no faith that the committee system can deliver a better bill. I will talk about that, because I share some of SPT's concerns. I have faith in my colleagues from all parties to deliver a better bill, so I ask those members who plan to oppose the motion seriously to consider what they are doing.

I commend the Local Government and Transport Committee for its work on the bill and on its other work on transport—particularly buses. Commendation is due.

A central matter is the development of a single transport agency, with which I have some issues. There are always pros and cons to centralising any power, which ministers must address. The bill contains many important provisions. It is important that ministers show the value of the intended centralising of resources and powers in the single agency. As Phil Gallie said, SPT has expressed concerns about that. SPT has had successes and has delivered for Glasgow, although naturally we have criticisms of it. The removal of a successful body and the incorporation of its functions in a central body must be justified. I would like the minister to talk about that.

I have had a special interest in buses for some time. I strongly agree with the committee's recommendation that regional transport partnerships must have a statutory power to determine bus provision in their areas, because the bus industry has for too long been singularly unregulated. The provisions in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 have not been used and the Parliament cannot let that lie. The bill should have strong provisions, which is why it is important to consider amendments. We must ensure that Scotland has a bus industry that delivers for communities. There are too many communities, including in my constituency, that have lost bus services without consultation because the routes are not profitable. That is not acceptable. If the minister can stand on his feet today and tell me that a single transport agency can deliver a better and fairer bus service, I will put my name to that.

15:10

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green): The Green party whole-heartedly supports elements of the bill, such as the section on concessionary fares and travel. However, as a whole, the bill represents a missed opportunity. It is a depressing statement of failure by the minister. It does nothing to address the real issues that make MSP's mailbags as clogged as the M8 in rush hour.

Bruce Crawford: If the member and his Green colleagues feel so strongly about this, why did none of them turn up to the committee, hear the evidence and make their points?

Chris Ballance: I have certainly read the evidence and I will put my points.

The bill has nothing to say about road traffic reduction or about making public transport operate more effectively. It misses the point when it comes to public sector reorganisation.

Bruce Crawford: Why did no Green members turn up to the committee?

Chris Ballance: We do not have a seat on that committee, Mr Whatever-your-name-is.

The policy memorandum says that the overarching objective is

"to promote economic growth, social inclusion, health and protection of our environment".

That is precisely where the bill fails.

The issue for transport planning is the fact that our road system is choked by the inexorable annual rise in road traffic. The Executive predicts that traffic levels are set to rise by 27 per cent by 2021. City journeys will be slower than they were in 1891. It is already quicker to cross a city on a bicycle than in a car. Two thousand deaths per

year are attributed to the effects of traffic fumes; 525 children were killed or seriously injured in Scotland in 2002, part of a total of 19,248 casualties, including 305 deaths. Congestion in Edinburgh alone is estimated to cost the economy £47 million per annum. Poor public transport combined with centralisation of services means that those people without access to a car—at least 2 million Scots—are excluded from society.

If the SNP members will not listen to me, I will quote the results for the Scots public of a YouGov survey. The survey asked whether people agreed that

"There is too much traffic on Britain's roads"

and 85 per cent said yes. It asked whether people agreed that

"The Government should take measures to reduce traffic";

73 per cent said yes. It asked whether people agreed that

"The Government should increase spending on public transport"

and 67 per cent said yes. Those are the issues that the bill should address. They are the issues that Scots face every day.

The Executive has made a solemn promise to reduce road traffic to 2001 levels by 2021. That is the minister's pledge. I know that the minister is an optimist, but even he will agree that the chances are remote that he will still be in office in 2021 to carry the can for his failure.

Fergus Ewing: Will the member take an intervention?

Chris Ballance: I do not have time.

The pledge is meaningless waffle without short-term targets against which to measure progress. That is a matter of simple Government accountability. In committee this morning, the minister agreed that it would be appropriate for him to set short-term interim targets. Will he agree in principle to put that requirement on his successors by including it in the bill? If not, how will he ensure that it happens?

The bill is almost bereft of detail. It wrests power for railway development from the most successful transport planner in Scotland—SPT—while the Westminster Railways Bill could prevent those powers being given to ministers.

The bill gives communities no extra powers over their buses. It enshrines the current situation where it is much easier for a local authority to promote road building and improvements than rail or bus improvements. As it stands at the moment, the bill will not deliver.

15:14

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): Good transport provision in its broadest sense is good for the economy, health, social inclusion and tourism. I congratulate the Scottish Executive on its £3 billion investment in transport—the largest commitment to the sector for as long as I can remember.

The bill must be seen in the context of the need for an integrated transport policy. For many of those for whom good regional transport links are important, such a policy means enabling the movement of goods and people over longer distances. We need to see the bill in the context of the wider national interest.

As time is short, I will not go over the reasons why I broadly support the formation of regional transport partnerships and the proposals for the better management of road works, but I will speak to the bill's provisions on a national travel concession scheme. I am proud that the bill will meet a key Labour manifesto commitment by providing for concessionary fares, which older residents in Fife have enjoyed for a long time not only for travel within Fife but for journeys by rail to Edinburgh and other cities. The bill will extend existing concession schemes by providing for concessions across the country to older and disabled people and—crucially—to young people. The concessionary fares element is an important measure for those whose economic circumstances require them to undertake long journeys to work for relatively low pay, as many of my constituents must do in travelling at considerable expense from Glenrothes to Edinburgh.

However, as Bristow Muldoon and Pauline McNeill pointed out, public transport must be available if people are to be able to take advantage of the concessions. I must tell the minister that I have serious concerns that quality contracts simply will not happen without firm and decisive ministerial direction. Access to jobs, social stimulation, health care and retail is provided by bus rather than by rail in many isolated communities in our constituencies, whether or not those are in rural areas. I ask the minister to give serious consideration to introducing such measures at stage 2.

I share my colleagues' disappointment at the stance that has been taken by the Conservatives, the nationalists and the Greens. Not only did the Greens not turn up to the Local Government and Transport Committee—the meetings of which every member can attend even if they cannot vote at them—but they declined a place on one of the tram bill committees. If the Greens are serious about creating a better Scotland through a range of policies, they must be prepared to put in the necessary work. There is no point in sitting on the

sidelines and shouting in the hope that someone else will do the work.

I urge Scottish National Party members to reconsider their intention to abstain in the vote on stage 1 of the bill. Given all the opportunities for changing the details of the bill at later stages, it makes no sense for them not to agree to the principles of the bill just because they do not like one part of it. I hope that, having heard today's debate, they will listen to the pleas of those of us who are serious about getting transport in this country right and reconsider their position.

The Conservatives are perhaps a lost cause, so I will not pursue the issue with them any further.

I support the bill in principle, even though I have outlined some concerns. I hope to make representations to ensure that those concerns are dealt with and I hope that others will do the same.

15:18

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): In this stage 1 debate on the Transport (Scotland) Bill, one feels almost a sense of *déjà vu*, even weariness, at the Government's proposals. As oftentimes before, the proposals in the bill, especially in part 1, are driven not by a need for change but by a need to be seen to be doing something. Change for change's sake is the tried and tested way of describing that tendency. When that is coupled with a centralising approach, we have a combination that is likely to produce unnecessary and poor legislation.

Such a sweeping statement is not lightly made. It springs from a genuine constituency concern for the future of SPT. As has already been said, the greater Glasgow and west of Scotland area has been served well by SPT. Its 800 staff run an efficient organisation that delivers for the west of Scotland and for my constituents. We should not lose sight of that.

The Local Government and Transport Committee's stage 1 report calls on the Executive to show more, rather than less, flexibility on the areas that the regional transport partnerships will cover. The bill ignores the need for such flexibility. Perhaps rather than destroying SPT, the Government should consider rolling out the SPT model to other parts of Scotland.

Bristow Muldoon: Will the member give way?

John Scott: I do not have time to give way to Bristow Muldoon, but I thank him nonetheless.

In addition, the bill will throw out the existing democratically accountable system, which is easily understood and has worked well for years, and replace it with a system that is different but is certainly no better. Again, we are seeing change for change's sake. Rather than throwing out the

baby with the bathwater, a continuing pragmatic approach needs to be provided by SPT, which needs to concentrate on delivering projects rather than on fighting Government proposals to diminish or destroy its sphere of influence.

From a constituency perspective, the Government needs to upgrade services into and from Ayrshire. First, the Paisley Gilmour Street to Glasgow Central track needs to be upgraded to increase capacity. A 20-minute rail service to and from Ayr would further increase the usage of that already busy line and take more cars off the roads. Longer trains and longer platforms are needed in Ayrshire—we need to stop talking about those and to get on with providing them. The minister's energies should be devoted to securing adequate capital and revenue funding for his rail system rather than to tinkering around the edges and rearranging structures, which will certainly cost more and will probably deliver less.

Christine May: Does the member accept that there is a case to be made for increasing track capacity, and that simply putting on longer trains and making longer platforms will not necessarily solve the problems?

John Scott: Indeed, I made that point in respect of the need to increase track capacity between Paisley Gilmour Street and Glasgow Central station. New administrative structures will not increase capacity by one train or one truck and the existing 2001 legislation is perfectly fit for purpose—indeed, it is only just beginning to bed in.

The health service has demonstrably not benefited from more ministerial direction and the Conservative party believes that the rail network will not benefit from more ministerial and civil service input and more quangos. Those who have a track record should be left to get on with the job. They should be allowed to deliver a link to Glasgow airport and the Glasgow crossrail project, and the proposed legislation should be adapted and amended to give our railways and those who run them a helping hand, rather than imposing the uncertainty and the dead hand of further ministerial interference and control.

The Local Government and Transport Committee and most members from Glasgow and the West of Scotland are unhappy with the bill—I cite Pauline McNeill among other members. I urge the minister to reconsider part 1 of the bill and to act on the advice that SPT and my colleague David Mundell have given him.

15:22

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): I want to concentrate on the process that has preceded this point and on some financial

concerns that were identified by the Finance Committee and in the Local Government and Transport Committee's report. Legislation has regularly been prepared and proposed when major elements are still out to consultation, which makes it virtually impossible for the lead committee, the Finance Committee and contributing organisations properly to discuss the associated costs of the legislation. The failure of that process is the source of considerable dissatisfaction with the financial memorandum and uncertainty about aspects of the bill.

The Executive's guidance on the preparation of financial memoranda states:

"Where a Bill proposes powers, or implementation is dependent on the detail in secondary legislation (or further primary legislation), it may not be possible to be precise. In these cases, the Memorandum should say so. But this should be supported by an outline of what the current intentions of the Executive are, what the financial implications of these intentions will be, and what the effect of varying the major assumptions will be."

That has not been achieved in this instance.

There are one or two more structured issues. It is difficult to reconcile the statement in paragraph 143 of the financial memorandum that

"No increased costs for local authorities are anticipated as a consequence of the establishment of Transport Partnerships"

with the fact that the Executive—as the minister has said—is committed to a very ambitious new transport programme that will impact on local government beyond the transition year. We can improve the process and ensure that the information is available for the committees to deal with and that the mechanisms are in place to ensure delivery.

A number of issues have been identified in that context, particularly by the SPTE, although not only by it. There are issues to do with the deliverability of the new concessionary travel scheme. I am absolutely in favour of that scheme and I am sure that everybody in the chamber agrees that rolling out a nationwide process is important. However, the timescale that has been put in place could lead to disproportionate expenditure if it is not effectively managed. We need further information from the minister and, during stage 2, we need to ensure that mechanisms are identified and put in place to ensure that effective management is delivered.

It is proposed to establish the new regional transport partnerships over 12 months. At the same time, however, those partnerships are required to develop regional strategies and to involve themselves in developing the new concession schemes. I am not sure that the financial costs that have been identified or the expertise that is required have been taken into

account. I support the intentions behind the scheme, but many detailed process aspects have not been got right. I hope that as we progress the bill through stage 2 and into implementation, those problems will be dealt with satisfactorily. It will be the Parliament's role to scrutinise the bill and ensure that its intentions are properly realised.

15:26

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): The bill has been roundly yellow-carded today, as it deserves. It is not complete and there are far too many gaps, ifs and buts.

The minister made a commitment in his statement on 16 June 2004 when he gave categorical assurances that SPT or its successor would continue to have a direct role in the

"development, management and monitoring of rail services in its area."

However, more than nine months later, we have absolutely no detail about how that will be delivered. The minister said today that he is looking at that matter and discussing whether he needs to introduce legislative changes to give effect to that commitment, but we are discussing the bill at stage 1. The minister's discussion should have taken place before we got to this stage.

The bill's general principles are the reason why it should get only a yellow and not a red card. We welcome the national travel concession scheme. I do not want to rain on the minister's parade too much, but I remind those Liberal and Labour members who are so pleased about the bill because it was among their manifesto commitments that it was in their 1999 manifesto. We are now in 2005 and only just getting to the delivery of that commitment. Yes, let us be glad that the bill is here, but like far too many buses in Scotland just now, the bill is late and we must recognise that.

It is a general principle of the bill to tackle one of the banes of many Scots' lives—unnecessary and complicated road works and road works on top of road works. Investigation found that the system of monitoring road works—essential or otherwise—throughout Scotland needs to be improved and the bill sets out to do that.

Section 5(2)(b) of the bill places an important duty on the proposed regional transport partnerships when formulating their plans to take account of how transport provision might affect social and economic well-being in their respective regions. The "Scottish Transport Statistics" report from 2004 indicates that 34 per cent of households have no access to a car, so when the proposed regional transport partnerships are formulating their plans and taking account of the social and

economic well-being of the citizens in their area, they have a duty to actively promote public transport and access to buses and trains at local and regional levels. I say to the minister that the difficulty is that we do not yet know what powers the new regional transport partnerships will have.

I hope that, in summing up, the minister will reply to the committee's serious concern that there is far too little detail on the partnerships' powers and to its view that the partnerships' make-up should refuse voting powers to any member of a partnership who is not an elected member. I am not prepared to support the idea that someone who is unelected should be spending taxpayers' money, and I hope that the minister will address that point.

The bill deserves a yellow card today, not a red one, but it is a warning. If the bill does not come back at stage 2 with the necessary amendments, it will be red-carded.

15:30

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): Sometimes politicians can be a bit shy when we introduce measures that are universally popular, but I am delighted to overcome my shyness by saying that the Parliament and the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition should be commended today for delivering universal free concessionary fares throughout Scotland. I echo Bristow Muldoon in saying that the people of Scotland should understand that if members do not vote for the bill today, the universal concessionary fares scheme will be rejected.

I would like to deal with two aspects of the bill on which I think the minister should reflect. Members have referred to the regional transport partnerships and to the minister's proposal that we should consider business representatives or other non-elected members being involved and having voting rights in regional transport partnerships. I totally oppose such a proposal, in similar terms to those that Tommy Sheridan used in his speech. We should seriously consider the precious resource of our elected members, who represent their constituents, not shareholders. We should ensure that the status of elected members is retained and that we give them absolute priority. We should, of course, ensure that businesses are given the opportunity to form partnerships with the regional transport partnerships, but I think that it would be wrong to introduce a measure that would give them voting rights.

If we wanted to extend such a principle, why does the Parliament not give businesses voting rights in the Parliament? That would be equally wrong and I believe that we should oppose such a measure for the regional transport partnerships.

However, we should build on the existing principles of working with businesses throughout Scotland. Councils throughout Scotland have a proud record in that respect.

It was good to hear Phil Gallie and David Mundell supporting the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive. It is a pity that we did not hear from them in the 1990s, or people such as Des McNulty might still have been regional councillors. It would have been more fitting if Phil Gallie had been so vocal during that period, although he appears to be suffering a loss of memory in that respect today.

The most important aspect of the bill, and something that we must consider in introducing free concessionary fares, is accessibility. I raised that issue continually with the minister and other witnesses at stage 1. Organisations such as the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland advised us that there is no purpose in delivering free concessionary fares if disabled people are not able to get access to the mode of transport in question—that is unacceptable. The Parliament has been successful in raising the profile of antisocial behaviour, homelessness and other issues that affect certain groups in Scotland, but it is time that it stood up to the transport providers, who are open about the massive amounts of money that they accrue from public subsidies, to demand that they give us something back. In particular, we should demand that they give something back to disabled people by delivering accessible transport and ensuring that people are able to use public transport in comfort.

We have delivered stage 1 of the bill. There is an issue concerning the detail of stage 1, which the minister will have to work on, and he must come back with more details in respect of some of the issues that we have raised. I look forward to stage 2, but I will support the bill on the basis that we await those further details at stage 2.

15:34

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP): I echo the minister's comments about the substantial increase in the number of rail passengers—on a couple of mornings last week I thought that they were all on the same train as me.

I will deal first with the shabby debating point that was made by Bristow Muldoon and others—it was clearly in the script that was given out to Labour back benchers today. They said that if we in the SNP abstain because of the partnerships, we are voting against concessionary travel. If members accept the logic of that argument, it is open to the Executive to gerrymander every bill that has anything controversial in it by including a motherhood-and-apple-pie section.

Bristow Muldoon rose—

Alasdair Morgan: I will not give way.

Let us be clear about this. That is a deeply undemocratic argument, but it is in no way surprising to hear it coming from the Labour Party, which is becoming more authoritarian in government by the day.

I will move on to a substantive point about the bill, which David Mundell discussed in some detail: the position of Dumfries and Galloway. The committee concluded that Dumfries and Galloway's case not to be included in another RTP

"is a reasonable one. There appears to be very little justification, other than administrative convenience, for Dumfries and Galloway to be included within the Glasgow city-region."

I agree with what Iain Docherty said in his evidence to the committee, when he pointed out some of the anomalies that are bound to arise in such a scheme. He referred to the central and Tay regional partnership, which starts 10 miles north of Glasgow and stretches to well north of Montrose. That may not be totally logical in respect of transport planning, but we must accept that unless we do things on an all-Scotland basis, there will always be some anomalies. However, our argument in Dumfries and Galloway is that the position is so distinct and so sui generis that it requires special consideration. I think that the committee recognises that and it made the point well—the point has also been made by Dumfries and Galloway Council—that according to the Executive's own criteria for regional partnerships, Dumfries and Galloway does not fit in.

The criteria include the need for the partnership to reflect the travel-to-work area, but 93.5 per cent of people who travel to work in Dumfries and Galloway go somewhere else in Dumfries and Galloway. The next biggest group—coming in at only 3 per cent—goes to Carlisle, so we are down to a tiny percentage before we come to people who go to another area in Scotland. Another of the criteria is

"Capturing a regional boundary that would make sense to its inhabitants."

I have not found any inhabitant of Dumfries and Galloway who thinks that it would be logical to be taken in with a city region centred around Glasgow.

Another of the criteria is

"Bringing together local authorities with common interests".

I do not see that Dumfries and Galloway has the necessary interests in common with the local authorities with which it would be included if it was in the west of Scotland partnership.

The fourth of the criteria is to ensure that partnerships have sufficient critical mass to deliver services, without becoming unwieldy. No one could argue that the west of Scotland authority does not already have critical mass; in fact, it may be on the way to becoming unwieldy. It certainly does not need to have Dumfries and Galloway added into it.

I will finish, as I have almost run out of time, by echoing the point that David Mundell and others have made. Why, especially when so many people have said that the bill is such an important one, do we have only an hour and a half to discuss it? Every member has to rush their speech and the minister could not even get past the first part of the bill in his speech.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, but I can give Mr Smith only a couple of minutes.

15:38

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I also thank you for the very polite way in which you gave me advance warning of the fact that I would have only two minutes.

This is a valedictory speech for me as I now speak as a former member of the Local Government and Transport Committee. I thank the members and clerks of the Local Government Committee and the Local Government and Transport Committee committees over the past two sessions for their support over the four years during which I was a member of those committees.

I support the bill in principle. It is important in that it delivers on important partnership commitments on public transport and on manifesto commitments from both the partnership parties on concessionary fares. The bill addresses the long-held problems that are caused by badly planned and badly executed road works by utilities and others. It is also key in that it sets up a statutory footing for regional transport partnerships.

Unlike Chris Ballance, I will not stick my head in the sand or try to wave a magic wand and suddenly create a great new passenger transport network that will solve all congestion problems in a flash. That cannot be done without the structures being in place. We acknowledge that there is a need for structures that can deliver the record investment of £3 billion in transport in Scotland over the next 10 years. Some 70 per cent of that investment will be spent on public transport projects such as the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine railway, the airport rail links, the Fife circle platform extensions, additional trains, the Borders rail link and the Edinburgh tramlines. Such huge investment will require an effective means of delivery.

We need a strategic transport authority to deliver national schemes, but we also need regional transport authorities to deliver regional transport strategies that are on a statutory footing, so that they have the backing that allows them to deliver on programmes. If the bill is not passed, the regional transport authorities that can deliver those programmes will not be put in place.

Congestion in Edinburgh will not be solved by the City of Edinburgh Council alone. Work is needed throughout the east Scotland region to deliver a solution. Regional transport partnerships can deliver that necessary solution in the east of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We come to closing speeches.

15:41

Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): John Stuart Mill, the founder of utilitarianism, is not someone whom I would often quote in a debate, but it is worth noting that the father of minimalist government argued that even if government does nothing else, it must control education and transport. As a member of the Labour Party, I think that government must do an awful lot more than that. However, if John Stuart Mill was correct in identifying the importance at least of transport in the role of government, he served a purpose.

Members of the Scottish Parliament acknowledge the priority that transport should be given. There must therefore be good transport legislation and the bill has the potential to become a good piece of transport legislation. I stress the word "potential", because of the concerns that members have expressed.

Most members and the minister identified that the creation of regional transport partnerships is a key element of the bill. It is unfortunate that the welcome for the establishment of RTPs was counterbalanced, if not negated, by the Opposition's negativity about the measure. There are three main elements in the bill and RTPs represent only one element. It is good that RTPs are linked to an overall national strategy, which has not been properly addressed in the debate. Members have forgotten that RTPs will have a bigger role than can be ascertained by considering the minutiae of what the partnerships can do. The second element in the bill is road works management, but we did not widen the debate to consider those provisions. However, we spent a lot of time on concessionary travel.

I was heartened by the minister's sympathetic response to the Local Government and Transport Committee's concerns about the voting arrangements for RTPs and boundary flexibility

and I am happy that he gave a clear indication that draft orders will be in place before we consider the bill at stage 2. I agree with David Mundell that the lack of detail caused the committee concern and prevented us from properly scrutinising the bill. Des McNulty's contribution exemplified the problem in relation to the lack of detail about finance, which meant that there was a question about how we could assure everyone that the RTPs would be properly resourced to deliver everything that we want them to deliver. It is right that the committee took the opportunity to raise such concerns in its stage 1 report.

Early in the debate reference was made to a "store of happiness", which should have set us off on the right track. However, it was Fergus Ewing who introduced the idea. He then forgot to identify any of the good aspects of the bill, at which point the debate started to go wrong. If we regard Fergus Ewing as an example of a hibernating Job's comforter, we might find out where his store of happiness is.

Many members expressed concern about the amount of power that RTPs will have. I will not go into that, because I want to focus on the powers of the Scottish road works commissioner, which Tommy Sheridan mentioned. I started my speech by talking about utilitarianism, but Tommy Sheridan took the opposite approach and gave us utopianism.

If we can do anything in this bill, we can deliver a strong piece of transport legislation. Very few bills coming to the Parliament at stage 1 are already complete. Tommy was right to say that the bill deserved a yellow card, but I do not think that it will get a red card. I think that we can deliver.

If the minister responds positively to the points that have been made, we will achieve a very good bill—and I will be more than happy to go round the doorsteps during the forthcoming election campaign to tell people that neither the Tories nor the SNP could bring themselves today to endorse concessionary travel.

15:45

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

For the avoidance of doubt, I should point out at the outset that I am standing at this particular desk not because I want to put any distance between me and my colleague Mr Mundell but because the console at the desk between us is not working. I say that, Presiding Officer, because I know that you would be deeply concerned at the prospect of Tory splits. I assure you that that is not what is happening this afternoon.

The Scottish Conservatives have mixed feelings about the Transport (Scotland) Bill. As David Mundell and John Scott have pointed out, we

oppose part 1 because we do not believe that creating another set of quangos and more bureaucracy will lead to better public transport.

Bristow Muldoon: Will the member take an intervention?

Murdo Fraser: Not at the moment. I want to make some progress.

I want to consider part 2 of the bill and then come back to part 1. Part 2 contains some important provisions that we have not had time to address this afternoon. Some important points have to be made.

In principle, we support any reasonable measures to reduce the number of road works. We all know the frustration that is caused by utility companies and others digging up the road—especially as it seems that they can never agree among themselves when the road is to be dug up. No sooner has one company completed its work than somebody else comes along and starts digging up the same stretch. Of course, such road works cause congestion problems.

The bill proposes the creation of a Scottish road works commissioner to monitor national performance. We give that proposal a cautious welcome, although it may be that the commissioner's powers will not differ significantly from those that are already held by the roads authority and utilities committee.

The key point about the new provisions—a point that was made forcibly in the part of the stage 1 report that was produced by the Enterprise and Culture Committee—is that the new powers are of little use if they do not apply equally to the private and public sectors. When there are road works, it is often public bodies such as local authorities or Scottish Water that are digging up the road. If there were a body with additional powers to co-ordinate road works, its powers would have to apply as much to the public sector as to the private sector. Road users do not care whether it is British Telecom or the local authority digging up the road. The effect is the same. It is therefore essential that we have a level playing field.

The powers of the new commissioner have to be proportionate. The Enterprise and Culture Committee heard from the UK Competitive Telecommunications Association that provisions that were introduced in England and Wales—to give roads authorities the power to require utility companies to resurface the road in certain circumstances—have caused widespread concern. Any additional cost to utility companies will simply be passed on to the customer.

Concerns have also been raised about a moratorium being put on a road on which road works have taken place, because such a

moratorium might restrict competition. We have to be careful that powers do not go too far and end up being anticompetitive.

The major concerns lie with part 1 of the bill. Tommy Sheridan and others have pointed out that one of the principal effects of the bill will be the abolition by the back door of Strathclyde Passenger Transport's regional rail powers. SPT is a tried and tested model that works. In its written submission to the Local Government and Transport Committee, SPT said:

"it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this part of the Bill is more about administrative change than about making a real contribution to improving transport policy delivery, in the west of Scotland or more generally."

SPT has now gone further than that. Its latest briefing says:

"the case for the Bill is at best 'not proven'."

It goes on to say:

"Its implementation would seriously jeopardise existing transport delivery in the west of Scotland, and SPT therefore urges MSPs to oppose the Bill in the Stage 1 debate."

It is a pity that the Executive has not listened to an effective deliverer of public transport such as SPT. The sad fact is that RTPs will be yet another tier of bureaucracy, drawing funds away from service delivery.

Another issue arises to do with the grouping of RTPs. For constituents living in an area such as Perth and Kinross, which I represent, the usual routes of access are on a north-south axis—up and down the A9, or the parallel rail routes, to Inverness or Stirling and Glasgow, or across Fife to Edinburgh and beyond. However, Tayside falls within the central and Tay RTP, which is orientated east-west and not north-south. It therefore does not reflect the journeys that people make. That situation has been repeated elsewhere, as we have heard from David Mundell and Alasdair Morgan. Dumfries and Galloway Council has made strong representations that its area should not be lumped in with the Glasgow city region.

The Scottish Conservatives want to see greater investment in transport in Scotland—in both public transport and our roads. However, instead of addressing the concerns of Scottish businesses and travellers, the bill misses the mark. It is for that reason that we must oppose it.

15:50

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Like other members, I commend the committee for its work and for the detailed and forensic way in which it took evidence on the bill.

I make clear at the beginning of my speech that the SNP supports concessionary fares. The Labour Party might be preparing its leaflets already and be ready to play a dishonest game, but what Labour members have said is neither a mature way in which to approach the bill nor the proper way in which to address people's concerns. I am referring in particular to the central purpose of the bill, which is to develop regional transport partnerships. The SNP supports that proposal but thinks that if we are to make significant and extensive improvements to Scotland's transport infrastructure, the RTPs need to have strong and meaningful powers.

In his response to my intervention, the minister was right in saying that there is a third option for the model, which is the transfer of significant public transport powers. Unfortunately, for the moment, that option is going only to the SPT area in the west and, in any case, the SPT will get no additional powers. Not a lot of new things will be happening in that part of the world in terms of the RTPs.

Bristow Muldoon: Earlier in the debate, Christine May put forward the idea that the SNP should support the bill at this stage because the minister should be allowed to address the committee's concerns at stage 2. If Bruce Crawford remains dissatisfied, he has the option of opposing the bill later. Does he not accept that, by indicating that they will abstain at decision time, SNP members are leaving it to others to ensure that the bill can progress at all?

Bruce Crawford: Some members such as Tommy Sheridan choose to show the yellow card and some on the Labour benches choose to support that line. The SNP chooses to take a slightly different tack. Ultimately, all of us want to get to the same place and to have strong regional transport partnerships. If we can do that, that is all good and well. However, the SNP has a different strategy from that of other parties. We happen to believe that it is the correct one.

Phil Gallie: That is democracy.

Bruce Crawford: As the member said, that is democracy. Bristow Muldoon might not like it, but that is the reality.

The SNP is concerned that we are unable at this time to give the proposed RTPs the strong powers that we think they will need to have if they are to improve significantly Scotland's transport infrastructure, which some commentators have likened to that of a third-world country. They will need to have strong powers if we are to ensure economic development and address Scotland's footprint in the world. If the Greens had only turned up to the committee's debates on the bill, perhaps they could have made some of their

points on that subject then. [*Interruption.*] Instead, Chris Ballance is making comments from a sedentary position—

Chris Ballance rose—

Bruce Crawford: As the member is now standing, I will give way.

Chris Ballance: First, is the member suggesting that I should give up my vote on the Enterprise and Culture Committee in order to attend the Local Government and Transport Committee, which meets at the same time? Secondly, is he suggesting that reading the evidence has no purpose?

Bruce Crawford: We hear from Mark week in, week out about—[*Interruption.*] I am sorry, I should have said Chris—all the Greens look alike to me.

Green MSPs come to the chamber week in, week out and tell the rest of us how important transport is to them. There are seven of them; one of them could have come along to one of our evidence-taking sessions, but not one of them did. They made not one single point. All that we are getting from them in the debate is empty rhetoric and gestures.

If we could give RTPs the meaningful powers that they need, we could have a strategic, systematic and truly integrated focus that would allow us to bring about the changes that the people of Scotland and its businesses need. The minister is doing all that he can do to lever in the additional resources. He is also about to get powers over the railways. Frankly, unless we have the appropriate delivery mechanisms, no extra powers vested in the minister or additional resources thrown at the problems will be enough. It will take a lot longer to get what the SNP thinks is necessary or desirable.

From what I have heard of the RTPs, I feel that they will be a bit of a hybrid: they will grow organically and be different from one another—in other words, we will have a bit of a hotch-potch. How on earth will we get integration when that sort of approach is being taken to our public transport network?

I wish that the minister had learned from the “Transferability of Best Practice in Transport Policy Delivery” research, which was carried out by his own department. It leaned on the experience of small independent countries such as Finland, Sweden and Switzerland and showed that, because strong powers were given to regional transport authorities in those countries, they were able to make the difference. The minister should go back and read his own evidence, which is in front of him.

Iain Docherty said it all in his evidence to the committee when he said:

“there is general disappointment that the bill does not propose the strong regional authorities that many of us had hoped to see.”—[*Official Report, Local Government and Transport Committee*, 21 December 2004; c 1699.]

That is the position that we are in. I know that the minister tries to find the middle road a lot of the time but, although on most occasions that is the right way to go, sometimes we have to bite the bullet and do what is right. On this occasion, that is what the minister should do with RTPs.

15:55

Nicol Stephen: First, on the SNP’s abstention on the motion, I find it hard to believe that its objections this afternoon amount to fundamental objections to the principles of the bill. I agree with the comments of Bristow Muldoon and Margaret Smith on that issue.

Far be it for me to deplete Fergus Ewing’s store of happiness—which he hides so well—but on this issue it was he who introduced the negative element and it was he who challenged us by asking whether the national concessionary fare scheme will be ready by April 2006. Clearly, he doubts that it will be ready. It is surely fair to point out that it will not be ready if the Parliament does not support the bill. We notice that on concessionary fares, but also on the creation of regional transport partnerships, the SNP has taken a tactical decision to sit on its hands, while it will be up to the Executive to get on and deliver a better transport system for Scotland.

Fergus Ewing: Will the minister give way?

Nicol Stephen: No, I will not give way, because I want to address the point that was made by David Mundell, who complained about the shortness of the debate. We would all like to see greater time in the chamber for our own subject portfolios, but it took him a whole one and a half minutes of his four-minute allocation to tell us how disgraceful it was that there was not enough time for the debate. I would take him more seriously if Mr Bill Aitken, the Tory business manager, had made the point in the Parliamentary Bureau that additional time should be allocated.

Fergus Ewing rose—

Nicol Stephen: As far as I am aware, he did not make that point. If he had done, I would have been willing to give way at this moment.

I am sympathetic to David Mundell’s substantive point about Dumfries and Galloway, as it is serious. I am looking seriously at the position of Dumfries and Galloway and I believe that a sensible and agreed way forward can be found. However, David Mundell took up his time telling us how the current system was working well. It would be viewed as working well if one was a member of

a Government that failed to invest in transport, as the Conservatives did. It would also be viewed as working well if one wanted to run down our rail system, as the Conservatives did, or if one wanted to oversee the decline of our bus system, as the Conservatives did.

We now have an increase in bus passenger numbers and, as I announced today, rail passenger numbers and we are investing record levels in transport—£3 billion over 10 years. If we want better investment, we need a better system, which is what the bill is about. We want better transport. We want new trams in Edinburgh, new rail lines and new airport rail links. We want investment in new road projects as well. To deliver all those on time and on budget, we will need a better system.

Fergus Ewing: The minister should bear in mind that the hundreds of people who have contributed to the process so far may be unimpressed by the number of people in the debate who have chosen to play the man, not the ball. Can he give an unequivocal assurance that there are no technical problems or barriers that might lead to a delay in the implementation of the proposed national concessionary scheme for older and disabled people by the planned date of April 2006? Can he give an unequivocal assurance that the scheme will be implemented on time?

Nicol Stephen: The member makes my point. The scheme will be introduced by 1 April 2006. The only impediment that I can see would be if the bill, which will become the necessary legislation to allow the scheme to happen, is stopped in its parliamentary progress. To prevent that, members should vote for it this afternoon.

Bristow Muldoon and other members raised the continuing concerns about SPT. I understand those concerns and I will certainly work hard with MSPs and SPT during the next few weeks to reach a sensible way forward on that important issue. I am also sympathetic to the issue that Brian Adam raised about the size of the regional partnerships. I do not want any regional board to be too small but, equally, I do not want boards that are too big. The issue is difficult and we must find the right balance, but I am prepared to make concessions on it.

Pauline McNeill asked about the new transport agency, which is to be based in Glasgow. The aim of creating the new agency is to decentralise power, which at the moment is centralised in the hands of the Minister for Transport and the Scottish Executive Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department. Our whole approach is to decentralise power away from the minister and Edinburgh to the new agency and, wherever possible and appropriate, to the new regional transport partnerships.

I echo the points that other members made about Chris Ballance. I accept that the Green party does not have a seat on the committee, but if he cared enough, he could still attend. He chose not to attend, which undermines what he said today, though I am sure that he intended it to be sincere.

I strongly agree with Paul Martin on accessibility. More needs to be done on that and we are expanding our investment in it. However, as I have said, I have made certain that from now on no disabled person in Scotland will be forced to choose between a taxi-card scheme and free bus travel. Disabled people are entitled to both and should have access to both.

There is much to be done, but good work has been done by members of the committee, other MSPs and those who are involved in transport to get the bill right. If members support regional transport partnerships, concessionary fares and road works improvements in Scotland, I cannot understand why they would do anything other than support the bill. The bill is about improvement—if members want improvement, they should vote for the bill.

Transport (Scotland) Bill: Financial Resolution

16:02

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is consideration of a financial resolution. I ask Nicol Stephen to move motion S2M-2338, in respect of the Transport (Scotland) Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament, for the purposes of any Act of the Scottish Parliament resulting from the Transport (Scotland) Bill, agrees to—

(a) any expenditure of a kind referred to in paragraph 3(b)(ii) of Rule 9.12 of the Parliament's Standing Orders;

(b) any increase in expenditure of a kind referred to in paragraph 3(b)(iii) of that Rule; and

(c) any payments in relation to which paragraph 4 of that Rule applies, arising in consequence of the Act.—[*Nicol Stephen.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill: Preliminary Stage

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-2459, in the name of Jackie Baillie, that the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill and that the bill should proceed as a private bill.

16:03

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I will be pleased to move the motion in my name on behalf of the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill Committee. Last week, the Parliament agreed to proceed with the Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill; now, in a situation slightly reminiscent of "Groundhog Day", we debate whether to proceed with the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill, a private bill that is promoted by the City of Edinburgh Council. The bill, I might add, has the unenviable record of having the highest number of objections that have been lodged against a private bill so far. The last time we looked, there were 206 objections.

With the bill, the promoter seeks to construct and operate a tramline, running in a loop from St Andrew Square, along Leith Walk to Leith, west to Granton, south to Haymarket and then back to St Andrew Square along Princes Street. From the start of the preliminary stage, we recognised the valuable contribution that objectors could make to our consideration and, as a result, we endeavoured to seek the views of objectors wherever possible. I put on record my and the committee's thanks to the objectors who provided written and oral evidence.

For the uninitiated, the private bill process can seem daunting and highly technical. Over the past few months, we have had to grapple with technical issues such as the role of prior approvals and the finer points of mode-choice modelling. I now know more about highway and public transport modelling than I would ever have thought would be possible or, indeed, desirable. That would not have been achievable without the support of the committee's advisers from Bond Pearce, Casella Stanger and Arup, who are all experts in their respective fields. They provided us with robust and independent analysis of the proposals that we were considering. I would also like to thank the promoter for its professional responses to the committee's requests for additional evidence, of which there were many. Finally, I thank the clerks to the committee and my fellow committee members for their hard work and diligence.

We began our consideration of the bill in June 2004 and completed our deliberations only on 17 February with the publication of our preliminary

stage report. The committee had three key roles to play in the preliminary stage: to report on the bill's general principles; to report on whether the bill should proceed as a private bill; and to give preliminary consideration to all 206 objections. I will try to provide the Parliament with a whistle-stop tour of the committee's performance of those three key functions. I will stop at key junctions to provide further insight into the committee's recommendations, before arriving safely and—I hope—on time at the committee's main conclusion.

The committee gave preliminary consideration to 206 objections. In doing that, we had to decide whether the objector had demonstrated that it was clear that their interests would be adversely affected by the bill. Of the total number of objections, 203 passed that first hurdle and will be the subject of detailed scrutiny at the consideration stage, when we will consider issues such as the environmental impact of the tramline on the Roseburn corridor; suggested alternative routes, such as that which would allow trams to stop at the Western general hospital; and the particular sensitivity of a route that will run through a world heritage site.

The 100 objections to the whole of the bill raised a number of valid concerns about matters such as project cost, viability of bus services, traffic congestion and visual impact, as well as a number of broad European convention on human rights issues. Although we rejected those objections, we considered many of them at length during our scrutiny of the bill's general principles. Objectors were invited to give evidence directly to the committee. That was very valuable.

Following its examination of the evidence, the committee is satisfied that the promoter has demonstrated why a private bill is necessary. We are also content that the accompanying documents satisfy the technical criteria of standing orders and will allow for proper scrutiny of the bill at the consideration stage.

That said, there were two areas of concern that merit further comment. First, we continue to have concerns about the enforceability of the environmental statement and the draft design manual in the event that the bill is passed by the Parliament, so we have agreed to return to the issue at the consideration stage. Secondly, the promoter's approach to consultation was a matter of substantial concern to the committee. We received evidence from numerous objectors who felt that their opportunity to contribute to the debate in a meaningful way was limited because the promoter sought their views when it had already decided on the majority of the proposed route alignment. Although we acknowledge that the promoter employed many methods to engage

with the public, we feel that the chance to get buy-in to the project from local communities has been missed. In short, for some people the process was more of an exercise in being given information than a consultation, which involves being listened to, with a view to changes being made.

That said, we recognise that standing orders do not provide guidance to potential private bill promoters on the spirit of the consultation in which they should engage. As that point has featured in previous private bill committee reports, we agreed to refer the matter to the Procedures Committee, to establish whether further guidance can be provided through changes to standing orders.

During our consideration of the bill's general principles, we were mindful of the National Audit Office's recent report, which was extremely helpful in providing an analysis of light rail projects in England and—more important—assessing whether they had delivered the benefits that had been predicted.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have one minute to arrive on time.

Jackie Baillie: From our consideration of all the evidence, on balance we agreed with the NAO that trams could provide a fast, frequent and reliable service—I am speeding up, Presiding Officer—and that they enjoy a better public image.

However, like the NAO report, trams do not operate on steam and we have less confidence in their ability to deliver a number of other significant benefits. We therefore examined the general principles of line 1 in the light of those areas of concern and focused on four key areas—economic development and regeneration, congestion, social policy and environmental issues—with which I know that my colleagues will deal further.

We continue to have reservations about the scale of the benefits that might result from the proposed project. Central to those reservations are our concerns about patronage—in essence, whether the trams will be used to the level that the promoter predicts and deliver the level of benefit that will make the project good value for money.

On the subject of money, I assure members that the committee will return to the financial case. At this stage, the financial information is as robust as could reasonably be expected, but more questions need to be answered before the committee will be content that it stacks up.

It is clear that there will be substantial work for the committee to do at consideration stage, when it will also take evidence from objectors on how the detail of the bill affects them. That said, we recommend that the Edinburgh Tram (Line One)

Bill proceed as a private bill and that the general principles be agreed to.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill and that the Bill should proceed as a Private Bill.

16:11

The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen):

We are asked to debate the general principles of the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill, which sets out the strategically important proposal to reintroduce trams to the streets of Edinburgh. The proposals in the bill parallel those of the Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill, which we agreed last week should proceed to the next stage.

Although we are asked to address only line 1, we cannot easily consider each line in isolation. The tramlines form part of a proposed tram network that is fundamental to tackling Edinburgh's transport problems and to sustaining and expanding growth and prosperity in the city and the wider area around it. The obvious relationship between lines 1 and 2 is highlighted by the common concerns that both the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill Committee and the Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill Committee have identified, to which I will come shortly.

Last week, much was said about the burden that falls on the committee members, who are required to steer and report on these important private bills. I know that transport bills such as these contain major proposals and are often, by their nature, complex and time consuming. I want to express how grateful MSPs are to Jackie Baillie, as convener of the committee, Phil Gallie, Helen Eadie, Rob Gibson and Jamie Stone for their sterling endeavours on the bill thus far.

We have long understood that our cities are the key drivers of the Scottish economy, a factor that was highlighted most recently in the Executive's review, "Building Better Cities: Delivering Growth and Opportunities". One of the most pressing constraints on Edinburgh is traffic congestion and the lack of a high-quality transport system. Much of what I am saying has already been said in respect of line 2 and west Edinburgh, but it is equally relevant to north Edinburgh.

We are addressing the principles of the proposed tramline that will circle around Leith, St Andrew Square, Haymarket and Granton. During the past two weeks we have heard more about Edinburgh's plans for the waterfront redevelopment around Granton and Leith—the biggest regeneration programme since the development of the new town more than 200 years ago.

The challenge that we face is how to support and sustain the necessary infrastructure that the growth in Edinburgh's economic activity and population will require. In the case of tramline 1, we must factor in a good proportion of the predicted 43,000 additional new jobs and almost 70,000 new homes that are planned for Edinburgh by 2015.

Tramline 1 is a key factor in Edinburgh's waterfront master plan, but the benefits of the line are not all about new developments, new housing and new jobs. It is also important that tramline 1 create new opportunities for the established communities along the route, opening up access and creating new connections and better employment prospects. In some areas, those benefits are very much needed.

Better transport is vital to Edinburgh's continuing success. The proposed tram network will create a fast, reliable service that will help to transform the city's transport image. As Jackie Baillie said, much detailed work needs to be done before the tramline becomes a reality. However, I believe that we have got off to a strong start and that the case for the principle of the tramway is a positive one that is widely supported by local businesses, people and communities.

The Executive supports the Edinburgh tramline 1 project and the committee's recommendation that the general principles of the bill be agreed to. I am sure that MSPs across the chamber will support the bill at decision time.

16:15

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I am the member of the committee who has been involved with the bill for the least amount of time. However, for my sins, I was on the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine Railway and Linked Improvements Bill Committee, so I feel that railways and light railways are becoming part of my curriculum vitae.

From the point of view of the economic arguments and the congestion issues, it is interesting that, as Jackie Baillie said, the National Audit Office indicated that tram systems in England have contributed to economic development and regeneration, although it acknowledged that that contribution is difficult to quantify. Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothian and the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, which represent the local business community, support the bill on economic grounds.

The waterfront development that will be served by the tram is acknowledged to be one of the largest urban renewal projects that has been undertaken in Scotland. SEEL felt that that development could accommodate some of the pressures of the expanding Edinburgh economy

and the promoter considers that it could bring up to 17,000 jobs to the area. However, I hope that the part that the Forth Ports Authority is playing in the process will emerge in the later stages of the bill.

Objectors have questioned whether there would be any linkage between trams and future economic development, given that the tramline is circular and goes no more than 2 miles from the centre of Edinburgh. The committee is persuaded that, on balance, an economic benefit will arise from the project and that the project will be a positive factor in attracting economic development. However, the figures for working out the ways in which congestion will be reduced are far more complicated. The promoter predicts that severe congestion in Edinburgh will increase as car use increases by 50 per cent between 2011 and 2021. Trams will constrain that congestion to current levels by encouraging drivers to use the tram. The promoter acknowledges that tramline 1 is forecast to bring about a reduction in car and van trips of only 1.5 million by 2026—a mere 1 per cent reduction—but it argues that that reduction will result in a disproportionate improvement in travel conditions for the remaining cars, which will experience quicker trips. The promoter has calculated that that improvement contributes 50 per cent of the overall benefit of the tram proposal.

The committee acknowledges that the potential impact of the tram in limiting road congestion to current levels would represent a considerable success and that, therefore, there is a benefit in introducing the tram. However, the committee remains concerned that much of the benefit is based on a projected 50 per cent increase in car traffic between 2011 and 2021. Some 50 per cent of the benefits of tramline 1 are attributed to the trams constraining that car traffic to current levels. The committee has agreed to revisit that issue if the bill progresses to the consideration stage. I believe that it is incumbent on the Scottish Parliament to ensure that we have clear and unequivocal answers to the questions about the issue. That will enable us to be sure that the tramline 1 proposal will work for the north of Edinburgh.

If one thinks that trams can solve specific problems, the tramline 1 proposal is great. However, trams must be viewed as part of an integrated strategy. The consideration stage will tease out some of the issues in detail and I hope that we will have clear answers for the Parliament at the end of that period.

16:19

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): It is helpful that we can now discuss the merits of the tram proposals and other proposed

public transport improvements in Edinburgh without making constant reference to the hugely contentious issue of congestion charges—or road tolls, as I prefer to call them. I will not pretend that I am anything other than delighted about the demise of the City of Edinburgh Council's plan for tolls, although frankly I would prefer the Parliament to repeal the legislation that authorises councils to introduce such tolls in case the Liberal Democrats happen to stumble on a particular scheme of which they approve. However, for the moment, we must look ahead to a toll-free Edinburgh.

One of the many council canards that were flown during the recent referendum campaign was the idea that those who oppose tolls have no alternative plan to improve public transport in Edinburgh. That was always a smokescreen. The council deliberately played down the substantial measures that have already been proposed to improve Edinburgh's public transport system and it did so as a ploy to encourage a yes vote. Proposals that are in place and in the pipeline were presented as a mere base investment, as if they were of no consequence at all, with the meaty stuff to follow only when we had all signed up to the tolls plan. Nothing could be further from the truth. Fortunately, the public saw through the strategy.

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): We have just heard from Rob Gibson that the impact on traffic levels of tramline 1 alone will be fairly minimal and that it will not do enough to reduce congestion and traffic growth in Edinburgh. Surely that goes against what the member has just argued.

David McLetchie: It does not, because that supposition is highly debatable, as the evidence that has been presented demonstrates. Indeed, all the forecasts for the growth of traffic volumes are highly speculative. I do not accept them as fact and neither did the public, who saw through the council strategy and were simply not prepared to pay tolls today for projects that are way down the line. In effect, people said to the council, "Show us what you can do with the taxpayers' money that has already been pledged to you by the Scottish Executive." That is a sensible response.

Throughout the campaign, we and others who campaigned for a no vote made it clear that we support moves to improve public transport in Edinburgh. It is just that we do not think that such improvements should be conditional on, or linked to, the introduction of trams. Trams have a part to play in those improvements, and the two bills that are being considered by the Parliament will provide the legal framework for the construction and operation of a tram system in Edinburgh.

The final decision on the tramlines will be taken only when the full financial and economic case has been examined and appraised, not least by the

Scottish Executive, which has made a funding commitment conditional on a robust business case being presented. There are serious financial questions that still need to be answered, such as whether the passenger numbers on the proposed routes stack up and whether revenues will match running costs. It is right that the taxpayer should finance a significant part of the capital investment, but it is definitely not right for there to be an annual revenue cost to the local council tax payer. It will not be possible to determine whether there will be such a cost until the business case has been fully devised and critically examined.

I make a plea for a measure of flexibility in the consideration of transport improvements in the city, which should not be only about trams. We might also care to consider the use of the funding allocation for more modest but perhaps more cost-effective projects, such as the south suburban railway, the cost of which is estimated at only £17 million to £18 million. With the right commitment, that railway could be up and running before the tramlines. In addition, it may be that only parts of the proposed tram routes make financial sense.

Although we can rightly approve the general principles of the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill at stage 1 today, we must keep our options open and consider whether alternative measures might deliver more cost-effective and beneficial results than the totality of tramlines 1 and 2. With that, and with the plea that other options be given serious consideration by the City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Executive, I support the principles of the bill.

16:24

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): I was going to open by saying how constructive all the previous speeches had been, but Mr McLetchie has sorely tried that comment. If I had half an hour to spend, I would enjoy dissecting his speech.

Jackie Baillie commented on the approach and the procedures by which we have to abide. I do not think that any of us thinks that the current process is the best way in which to consider such proposals, but we are stuck with it. Having said that, I believe that the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill Committee has done an outstanding job in addressing the detailed, complex and lengthy submissions that it received. In particular, I thank the committee for its efforts to engage with and listen to people who were unhappy or who wanted to object formally to the proposal in principle or in detail.

Everybody in the chamber accepts that Edinburgh has a major congestion problem and that we have real challenges in expanding our

public transport networks. No easy solutions sit in anybody's bottom drawer. The proposals for tramlines 1 and 2 must be considered in the context of every other European city that has light rail, a suburban railway network or an underground system, which Edinburgh singularly lacks. I suspect that if one issue has been raised with every member who represents the Lothians in the past five years, it is our inability to transform Edinburgh's transport opportunities. Today, we have a chance to help to get part of that system right.

The consensus is that we need alternatives for people who travel into and out of the city in cars, but the choices must be of high quality. The distinctive feature of trams is their capacity to move many people efficiently and with few environmental problems of emissions or noise. Crucially, trams can contribute to modal shift, so they must be part of the system in Edinburgh.

The proposal must be part of wider public transport investment. Investment by Edinburgh, with the Executive, in rail and buses has generated big improvements in passenger use when high-quality services are put in place. I would not argue that constructing tramline 1 or 2 will be like waving a magic wand to tackle congestion or economic problems in Edinburgh, but the lines are part of a wider longer-term strategy and it is important that they are part of the mix. The proposed development for Granton and the waterfront is, in effect, a proposal for a new town in the north of the city. Without a light rapid transit system, the city will experience a huge economic downside.

I will focus on three key issues that the committee raised, on which we will need much more debate at the consideration stage. The integration of buses, cycling and concessionary fares needs to be addressed. I would like a guarantee on the design manual issue; Edinburgh is one of Europe's most high-quality and historic cities, so we must have a tram that is not only modern, but appropriate to Edinburgh's design quality. Route issues must also be considered in depth.

Matters that relate to the Roseburn corridor and the wildlife impact must be examined in depth. Access to the Western general hospital must also be considered. Neither matter has an easy solution, but I ask the committee to explore in depth those matters, on which I have received more letters than anything else that relates to the trams.

The practicalities must be examined in detail—that is what the consideration stage is for. We should proceed with the project to get things moving and the committee should consider all the issues in depth at the consideration stage. In

detailed discussions, some objections will be negotiated away, but others will remain until the last day of consideration of the bill. Anything that the committee can do at the consideration stage to examine objections and see what can be taken on board will be welcome. A balancing act will need to be performed between financial resources and the routes but, on the basis of the preliminary stage report, I am confident that the committee will achieve that.

By considering the objections, I hope that we will develop a scheme with which people in Edinburgh will be happy. I am asking not for every citizen of the city to be happy, but for most of us to be happy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am not very happy. Please sum up.

Sarah Boyack: In the business case, maximising the routes is important for the tram project's long-term financial viability. I hope that members will support the motion and allow the detail to be examined at the consideration stage.

16:29

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): The Executive has confirmed that it will fund lines 1 and 2 to the tune of £375 million and has made it clear that the promoter will need to find any additional funding. The committee heard objections about a possible funding shortfall because of artificially high projected patronage levels and the low level of optimism bias that the promoter set. My committee colleagues are also concerned about a potential shortfall, so we have asked the promoter for a list of sources from which it expects to accrue additional funds should they be needed.

The committee is content that the financial information that the promoter has made available is as robust as can reasonably be expected at this stage of the process, as Jackie Baillie said. We have had advice from Arup and we have also asked Transport Initiatives Edinburgh to provide us with regular updates as costs evolve, especially given the result of the congestion charging vote.

On the environmental and pollution front, we looked long and hard at the environmental effects of the tram scheme. There will be several environmental benefits, which I will outline. It is clear to us that trams produce virtually zero pollution, although the committee acknowledges that they will use fossil-fuel energy, which means that there can be pollution where the energy is generated. It is worth remembering that a tram can carry double the number of people that a bus can. Trams should also help to limit congestion and thereby constrain the pollution levels that arise. Finally, by operating on busy corridors, and with

regeneration and redevelopment areas such as Granton on the route, pressure on the green belt could be reduced because of the ability to accommodate more people in the city.

That said, the committee acknowledged the NAO report, which said that existing schemes have had only limited success in achieving improvements in pollution levels, because there has been only a partial reduction in congestion. The committee also remains to be convinced about the levels of patronage that the promoter says tramline 1 will achieve. We will definitely return to that issue at the consideration stage.

Objectors to the bill informed us of concerns about the visual impact of the tram infrastructure on the streetscape of Edinburgh, which is, we concede, mostly a world heritage site. We acknowledge the promoter's acceptance of the need to minimise the visual impact of the infrastructure and note that TIE has created the draft tram urban design manual, which it aims to follow. We recognise that the manual has no formal status, so we remain cautious about it. We have asked the promoter and Historic Scotland to liaise closely on the visual impact of the scheme, given its importance to Edinburgh and Scotland and all over the world.

I know that the subject of wildlife is close to Margaret Smith's heart. There are several concerns about the impact of the tram on wildlife, particularly along the Roseburn corridor and the Firth of Forth. Individual concerns will be picked up by the committee during the next stage of the process and will be examined closely. We have also asked the promoter to liaise closely with Scottish Natural Heritage to address those concerns.

I endorse Jackie Baillie's remarks and pay tribute to the committee clerks who have worked very hard. The process has been interesting as far as it has gone. Much work remains to be done. I welcome Jackie Baillie's endorsement of the motion and I thank George Lyon for his kindness in putting me on the committee.

16:33

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): As Jackie Baillie has said today, we are talking about the principles of the scheme, not the details of the proposal. I take this opportunity to reiterate my support and that of my party for new tramlines for Edinburgh. I also emphasise to the Minister for Transport the need for funding for those sections of the network that are not funded, such as tramline 3, especially after the congestion charging vote. It is vital that we end up with an integrated system of public transport. The two tramlines cannot stand alone; they need to be

integrated into a wider tram system and into what is and will remain the predominant mode of public transport in Edinburgh, the bus. We need an integrated system with the through-ticketing that other members have mentioned.

I reiterate a point that I have made and on which Sarah Boyack touched. Better public transport will not be enough to deal with the ever-increasing traffic growth in Edinburgh. We need a system of traffic restraint. I am disappointed by the failure of the congestion charging proposal, but it does not take away the need for traffic restraint to go alongside better public transport to deal with Edinburgh's transport problems.

Mr Stone: Does the member agree that taking the public with us in future, not least in relation to this bill, will be crucial, as the decision made last week indicates?

Mark Ballard: I agree strongly with that point. We must also bear in mind the fact that many people felt that the consultation on tramline 1 that TIE initiated was inadequate, as Jackie Baillie said. She was right to say that consultation must be not simply information sharing but an open process in which it is possible for decisions to be changed. That is how to make the public feel involved and take on board the project's proposals.

Nicol Stephen talked about the need for the tram to serve local communities. Given the concern about the predicted levels of patronage, which committee members have raised, it seems odd that the scheme will not initially serve some of north Edinburgh's most deprived communities, such as Pilton and Muirhouse, which are just to the west of the proposed tramline. As people in those areas use public transport the most, arguably they would benefit the most from the scheme.

I share the concerns that have been expressed about the proposed tramline's failure to serve adequately the Western general hospital and other locations on Crewe Road South, such as the police headquarters at Fettes. I look to the committee to investigate thoroughly the suggested route.

As a user of the Roseburn corridor, I know how narrow that route is and the value of that amenity to walkers and cyclists and for wildlife. I urge the committee to look into whether the Roseburn corridor is an appropriate route for a tramline. The tram will need to serve the whole of north Edinburgh, including communities beyond the beacon developments at Granton and at the waterfront. I hope that the committee will investigate thoroughly the issues surrounding the proposed route and the predicted levels of patronage.

After the National Audit Office report, we need to ensure that we get a tramline that meets people's needs and achieves the benefits that a tramline could bring to the people of north Edinburgh.

16:37

Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): Like many members, I am sorry that we do not have more time in which to debate the bill, if only because I would like to give Sarah Boyack the half-hour that she wanted to dissect David McLetchie. However, I welcome the opportunity to put on record my support for tramline 1.

I echo Jackie Baillie's comments about the lack of enforceability of the design manual and about the inadequacies of TIE's consultation with my constituents. Along with others, my constituents have expressed concern about the patronage figures, which I still think are quite high despite all the explanations that I have been given time and again by TIE modellers.

I am grateful for all the hard work that has been put in by committee members, especially Jackie Baillie, who has always been ready to listen to my constituents' concerns about the substance and the process. I also thank members of the public, including many of my constituents from Groathill and Craighleith, who have given evidence to the committee. That is an onerous task for ordinary members of the public, who do not have access to the professional resources that are available to the bill's promoter. Many questions have gone unanswered, so people will look to the committee to get the answers that they have been unable to obtain.

I welcome tramline 1 and, indeed, tramline 2. For Edinburgh's economy, which is performing well, and for the quality of life of the city's growing population, it is essential that we have a world-class integrated public transport system that delivers the transport choices that our citizens are looking for. That is one message that has come through from the congestion charging debate. The tramlines and, I hope, the south suburban line will play an important part in encouraging a modal shift away from cars.

I welcome certain aspects of the proposed tram route. The stop that will serve the new waterfront development presents the city with a fabulous opportunity to regenerate that area and to put public transport options in place first, for a change. However, I am seriously opposed to other aspects of the proposed route. A crucial issue is the concerns that Jamie Stone and Mark Ballard highlighted about the impact of the tramline on the Roseburn wildlife corridor. That issue is linked to the most contentious and worrying aspect of the tramline for me and my constituents, which is the

fact that it will not serve the Western general hospital. If the route was changed to provide a stop in the hospital grounds, that would divert the route away from the wildlife corridor.

The National Audit Office report highlights the fact that patronage levels are a key determinant of success. I know that there is a balance to be struck, in that extra time might be required to take the tram into the hospital rather than have it stopping two streets behind the hospital, at a back entrance that is not intended for safe patient access. However, for patronage, revenue and health and safety, it makes sense for the tram stop to be in the hospital grounds. If it is delivered in the wrong place but close enough to lead to a potential reduction in local bus services, it will have a negative impact instead of a positive impact on patient care and transport.

Re-routing the tram via the Western general will take it past Crewe Toll, businesses such as BAE Systems, the housing that replaces Telford College, the Western general, Lothian and Borders police headquarters at Fettes, Fettes College, Broughton High School, Flora Stevenson's Primary School and—I hope—residual health care facilities, including a day hospital, on the Royal Victoria hospital site. Alternatively, we could stick with the existing route and take it down a wildlife corridor. Is it me or, if the issue is all about patronage, has the wrong route been picked? TIE considered the option late in the day, but there was not enough detail, so I urge committee members to consider it.

Private bill procedures are not perfect, but there is the power to consider alternative routes and we must get things right. A lot of public money is involved, which I support. There will be an impact, but the line will have a crucial part to play in public transport provision in Edinburgh and throughout the region, so we must get the route right.

That strong concern should be noted, but I support the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill and committee members' efforts to date.

16:41

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): I joined the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill Committee quite late to replace my colleague Sylvia Jackson. The committee's work was well under way and I had missed a significant amount of work and visits to see new tram systems in situ.

Jackie Baillie's comments about knowing more now than she ever thought necessary or desirable chime with what I thought when I saw two committee clerks heavily laden with files and books—I sank back in my chair, unsure about what to think or expect.

I echo the convener's thanks to everybody who is helping to progress this important bill. Their expertise and professionalism is much valued by the promoter and members of the public, who impressed us all in presenting their evidence.

The learning curve has been steep. The committee has heard evidence from North Edinburgh Area Renewal, which heads up the social inclusion partnership. It supports the bill and thinks that the line will provide better connectivity between areas of social deprivation in north Edinburgh, such as Pilton—which has been mentioned—Muirhouse and Granton, and the city centre and new waterfront developments. Better connectivity should help to create new employment opportunities for deprived groups, including the unemployed and people on low incomes. Such opportunities will be further enhanced by direct links to tramline 2 to the west of Edinburgh.

Concerns have been expressed about the need to ensure that tram fares are comparable to bus fares and to extend the concessionary fares scheme to trams. Extending that scheme is a matter for the Executive and the City of Edinburgh Council, but the committee strongly expects that the same level of concessionary fares for trams will be delivered. Of course, that expectation creates financial implications for the Scottish Executive and the Parliament.

Objectors raised issues with us to do with the lines of the routes and whether social inclusion benefits could be enhanced by changes to them. In particular, members—including Sarah Boyack and Margaret Smith—have mentioned the Western general hospital and the Roseburn corridor. When we visited those sites, we understood exactly the message that was given to us. The committee must consider that matter at the bill's next stage, and I know that it is concerned that the bill's promoter should address such issues at that stage.

The committee was pleased to learn about the efforts that are being made in Edinburgh to have an integrated transport system, which include the creation of Transport Initiatives Edinburgh to bring together bus and tram operators. From the evidence that the committee has received, it believes that a competitive response from private bus operators is unlikely.

Of course, integration is not only about physical infrastructure; it involves having in place a fare structure and a ticketing system that allow passengers to transfer between modes of transport. Such integration would encourage increased patronage.

The committee believes that park-and-ride facilities are necessary to help to increase

patronage and to encourage people out of their cars. That such facilities are also crucial to integration came out strongly in the evidence. However, the committee is aware of the limitations in that regard, given the city-centre nature of the loop. We expect the promoter fully to integrate line 1 with such schemes at appropriate entry points to the city.

I look forward to the next stage of the bill.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call David McLetchie, who has four minutes.

David McLetchie: You have already had some good stuff from me. Have you not had enough?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Well, if you do not wish to speak, that is a matter for you, but I certainly—

David McLetchie: But I have spoken.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Yes, and I am calling you again in the winding-up speeches. You have four minutes, but you can negate that, if you wish.

David McLetchie: I think that Mr Gallie is meant to be winding up, not me.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Your name is down here as well, Mr McLetchie.

David McLetchie: I beg your pardon. I think that I have already contributed substantially to the debate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I think that that might be the case.

16:45

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): Many of the speeches have made a great contribution to the debate and I fully echo the comments that Sarah Boyack and Margaret Smith made.

The difficulty is that, at this juncture, we are debating principles, not practicalities, and it is the practicalities that are causing significant concern. First of all, I repeat the comment that I made in the previous debate, which is that the method of dealing with these issues has to change. In saying that, I am not criticising anyone in the chamber; after all, every party has signed up to changing these matters. However, change they must.

Margaret Smith remarked on the route, and we should take cognisance of the fact that there has been much opposition to it, as Jackie Baillie pointed out. The people in question believe that their quality of life will be greatly affected and that there will be much disruption to their homes and adjacent areas. Their views must be considered appropriately at the next stage.

The difficulty is that the concept of trams raises two issues, the first of which involves nostalgia. Almost everyone who resides in Edinburgh has either travelled on a tram in the past or heard from fathers, mothers, grandfathers or grandmothers about the benefits of a tram system. Secondly, people who have visited modern European cities acknowledge the benefits of such systems there. If we look back at the past and look forward to where we want to take the city, it is clear that trams have been and are important. They have delivered for our city in the past and now deliver for other cities. The problem is that the devil is in the detail.

My main question is whether this is the right time for trams and whether the money that is available could be used to meet other priorities, if that is what is ultimately decided. In the previous debate, the minister had a spat with my colleagues Mr Ewing and Mr Crawford over regional transport partnerships, and we have clearly set out why such partnerships should be empowered with proper resources.

However, even the Executive's preferred method meets the difficulty that we raised in the earlier debate. We still need to address the question of who should make the decision. For example, even if we decide to build line 2 now and the various problems are resolved at the next stage, a regional transport partnership might decide that the line is not a key priority. In that event, will the money for the tramline be made available to meet the RTP's own key priorities?

Everyone in Edinburgh accepts that trams would be a good thing; however, are they the best thing at this point in time? As I said in the previous debate, people might think it more appropriate to fill in all the potholes; ensure that the infrastructure is maintained; and expand the bus network and improve bus services. As Mark Ballard pointed out, buses are and will remain the principal method of public transport in the city and we should take the opportunity if not to expand the Waverley link in full then certainly to take that service out to Gorebridge.

If, as the minister accepts, we live in a world of finite resources, we should allow the proposed regional transport partnership to decide the city's key priorities. If it decides that other priorities are higher than the construction of tramline 2, will it have the money to spend on them? For example, many people in the city believe that it makes more sense to construct tramline 3 than to construct tramline 2. Will they have the opportunity to spend the money on tramline 3 instead? Surely we should be able to decide on the vision that we want to achieve, the structures with which to achieve it and the strategy with which to implement it. That means creating regional

transport partnerships with power, delivering the strategy for what we want to do and allowing those who are empowered to make the decisions to decide where they should spend the money.

With that caveat, we support the principle of trams. As I said, the devil will be in the detail.

16:50

Nicol Stephen: Margaret Smith and Sarah Boyack made some important points in their comments, which I am sure will be considered seriously at consideration stage. It is right for members to be concerned that the scheme will be delivered in the right way, on time and on budget and about the financial viability and patronage. Those are fundamental issues for the Edinburgh tram network as a whole.

As we have heard, other concerns focus on the impact of the tramway on the environment and on the historical and natural heritage of Edinburgh's city centre and on the steps that must be taken to meet the reasonable objections that have been made. Much progress has been achieved on those issues, thanks to the work of the committee. As I have made clear, the Executive can agree further major expenditure for the development of the project only if the promoter is able to clear up those issues for the final business case.

That said, I believe that the principles of the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill will be unanimously supported by the Parliament this evening.

David McLetchie: Will the minister accept an intervention?

Nicol Stephen: I was about to stop, but perhaps there is time for one intervention.

David McLetchie: Will the minister perhaps indicate whether the robust business case that the Executive will be considering in the context of assessing the final allocation of funding for the tram project will be based on the tram operating on a revenue basis without further public subsidy?

Nicol Stephen: The subsidy is a separate issue for TIE, the promoter, to look at. When we consider the business case, we will consider all the issues in the round, but our responsibility will be for the capital element.

Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): Will the minister accept a further intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, but we are running short of time.

Nicol Stephen: I am sure that the bill will be unanimously supported by the Parliament. Most important of all, it will be strongly supported by

local businesses, local communities and by the people of Edinburgh.

16:52

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): It is my lot to wind up on behalf of the committee. I start by thanking Jackie Baillie not only for the way in which she has convened the committee but for her comments at the beginning of this debate, when she outlined the limitations that the committee was faced with in addressing the bill. We were confined to looking at the tramline 1 circuit only. Nicol Stephen referred to the fact that perhaps we should not look at the lines in isolation. That is right, and the minister has the luxury of making such a statement. However, that was not a luxury that was conferred on the committee when we were considering the bill. I would like members to keep that in mind throughout my closing speech.

I would like to pick up on points made by Kenny MacAskill and David McLetchie about the routes and about alternative routes. I remind members that the notes attached to the committee's report contain some suggestion by the promoter that it may well, at some stage, like an extension to tramline 2. If that were to happen, it would open up questions that also affect tramline 1.

I commend Margaret Smith for her comments on circular routing. The committee was aware of the situation, particularly with respect to Roseburn, and we were certainly made well aware of it by her constituents, who presented their case most capably. If that loop were indeed to be seen as all important, perhaps one of the issues that the committee should consider when we move on—presuming that the Parliament agrees that the bill should proceed—is the detailed provision of that routing. I had every sympathy, as I am sure all committee members had, with the comments that were made about the Western general. That seems to have been a gross omission in the original thinking on the route.

Sarah Boyack referred to the impact that the tram would have on the image of a city such as Edinburgh. I think that there is some foundation to that, particularly given what we saw during our visit to Nottingham. The Nottingham service offered a good, attractive service that gave added appeal to the city itself. However, we must bear it in mind that the National Audit Office report demonstrated that all was not glossy or quite as it would seem with the provision of tramlines. There are inherent difficulties, which have been experienced in other schemes. If the bill goes forward, I would like to think that those matters will be addressed not only by the committee but by the promoter.

I say a word of thanks to the promoter for the way in which its representatives provided information to us—sometimes at the drop of a hat under intense questioning.

I go back to Margaret Smith's comments and congratulate even more those objectors who probably started with very little legal expertise and knowledge of the issues behind them but who presented their cases tremendously. The committee will have an onerous task in taking the bill forward and in assessing the 203 objections that were referred to by Jackie Bird—[*Laughter.*] I mean Jackie Baillie—I recognise that Jackie Bird is the red-headed one.

I will pick up on a couple of the comments made by my colleagues Rob Gibson and Jamie Stone. Rob Gibson referred to congestion. I believe that the basis for some of the arguments that the promoter advanced on congestion was less than accurate. Some of the assumptions that were made were far from accurate and we will have to consider those issues in the future. Some of the claims that were made by the promoter were, to my mind, exaggerated, such as those on the environment. Without a doubt, air pollution in the city of Edinburgh will be reduced as a consequence of the introduction of trams, as there will be a reduction in the number of buses in particular. However, I cannot see—and a number of committee members agree with me—that with this particular circular route there will be a similar reduction in the number of cars. That argument will advance in the future. On the environmental issues, Jamie Stone said that the problem will be transferred from the city to external areas where the energy will be generated using fossil fuels.

There is much to be expanded on in the financial case; the economic benefits and the patronage figures that have been referred to by a number of members certainly merit further consideration.

Mark Ballard referred to consideration of wider aspects. When he did so, I think that he referred in particular to what he considers to be problems along the Roseburn corridor. We all have concerns about the wildlife issues and about the use made of that corridor in recent years by citizens of Edinburgh. I feel that I can give an assurance, on behalf of the committee, that we will consider those matters in greater detail if Parliament agrees to the general principles of the bill today.

In my final comments I refer again to Jackie Baillie's words. Overall, the committee's conclusion was that the promoter had provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the benefits claimed are attainable. We therefore recommend that the Parliament should agree to the general principles of the bill and that the bill should proceed as a private bill.

Business Motion

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S2M-2503, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 9 March 2005

2.30 pm	Time for Reflection
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Stage 1 Debate: Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Bill
<i>followed by</i>	Financial Resolution: Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Bill
<i>followed by</i>	Business Motion
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business – Debate on the subject of S2M-1900 Margaret Mitchell: Deafblindness

Thursday 10 March 2005

9.30 am	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Scottish National Party Business
12 noon	First Minister's Question Time
2.00 pm	Question Time— Enterprise, Lifelong Learning and Transport; Justice and Law Officers; General Questions
3.00 pm	Executive Debate: Infrastructure Investment Plan

<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business

Wednesday 16 March 2005

2.30 pm	Time for Reflection
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Committee Business
<i>followed by</i>	Business Motion
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business

Thursday 17 March 2005

9.30 am	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Conservative Party Business

12 noon First Minister's Question Time

2.00 pm Question Time—
Education and Young People,
Tourism, Culture and Sport;
Finance and Public Services and
Communities;
General Questions

3.00 pm Executive Business

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business—[Ms Margaret
Curran.]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of five Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Margaret Curran to move motion S2M-2490, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Scotland Act 1998 (Modifications of Schedule 5) (No.2) Order 2005 be approved.—[Ms Margaret Curran.]

The Presiding Officer: I ask Margaret Curran to move motion S2M-2491, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (West Coast) (No.2) (Scotland) Order 2005 (SSI 2005/69) be approved.—[Ms Margaret Curran.]

17:00

Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): Members will not be surprised to see me on my feet. My party has not changed its opinion that the sensible way of protecting the public against amnesic shellfish poisoning is end-product testing. We will oppose the motion.

17:01

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Rhona Brankin): I am saddened to see that Nanette Milne has taken over from Mr Davidson as Tory spokesperson for empty gestures. I reiterate that the vast majority of responsible members of the Parliament support orders such as this one to protect public health. We are very conscious that a major incident of shellfish poisoning would have a drastic effect on the industry. I urge responsible members to support the order.

The Presiding Officer: I ask Margaret Curran to move motion S2M-2492, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, motion S2M-2494, on the designation of a lead committee, and motion S2M-2495, on a referral at stage 1.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Budget (Scotland) Act 2004 Amendment Order 2005 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 2 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Police (Retention and Disposal of Motor Vehicles) (Scotland) Regulations 2005 (SSI 2005/80).

That the Parliament agrees that the Local Government and Transport Committee be designated as lead committee, and that the Justice 2 Committee be designated as secondary committee, in consideration of the Licensing (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.—[Ms Margaret Curran.]

The Presiding Officer: The questions on the motions will be put at decision time.

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): There are eight questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that motion S2M-2351, in the name of Nicol Stephen, on the general principles of the Transport (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 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, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (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)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)

Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (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)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

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

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 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)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 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)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 73, Against 18, Abstentions 31.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Transport (Scotland) Bill.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that motion S2M-2338, in the name of Tom McCabe, on the financial resolution in respect of the Transport (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament, for the purposes of any Act of the Scottish Parliament resulting from the Transport (Scotland) Bill, agrees to—

(a) any expenditure of a kind referred to in paragraph 3(b)(ii) of Rule 9.12 of the Parliament's Standing Orders;

(b) any increase in expenditure of a kind referred to in paragraph 3(b)(iii) of that Rule; and

(c) any payments in relation to which paragraph 4 of that Rule applies, arising in consequence of the Act.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that motion S2M-2459, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on the general principles of the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill, and whether the bill should proceed as a private bill, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill and that the Bill should proceed as a Private Bill.

The Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that motion S2M-2490, in the name of Margaret Curran, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Scotland Act 1998 (Modifications of Schedule 5) (No.2) Order 2005 be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The fifth question is, that motion S2M-2491, in the name of Margaret Curran, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 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)
 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)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (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, 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)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 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)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 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)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 McGregor, 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

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)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 75, Against 24, Abstentions 24.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (West Coast) (No.2) (Scotland) Order 2005 (SSI 2005/69) be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The sixth question is, that motion S2M-2492, in the name of Margaret Curran, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Budget (Scotland) Act 2004 Amendment Order 2005 be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The seventh question is, that motion S2M-2494, in the name of Margaret Curran, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 2 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Police (Retention and Disposal of Motor Vehicles) (Scotland) Regulations 2005 (SSI 2005/80).

The Presiding Officer: The eighth question is, that motion S2M-2495, in the name of Margaret Curran, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Local Government and Transport Committee be designated as lead committee, and that the Justice 2 Committee be designated as secondary committee, in consideration of the Licensing (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.

Fairtrade Fortnight

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The final item of business this evening is a members' business debate on motion S2M-2387, in the name of Christine May, on Fairtrade fortnight. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I warn members that the debate will not be able to be extended because of the minister's and my commitments later on.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises that Fairtrade Fortnight will take place between 1 and 13 March 2005; supports this important series of events in raising awareness of the need to provide workers and producers in Third World countries with a better deal in return for their produce; congratulates the growing number of towns and organisations which have succeeded in achieving the Fairtrade mark; notes that more Fairtrade products are being bought by individuals and used within businesses, and encourages all MSPs and consumers to participate in these events which will help protect the livelihood of small farmers and producers who too often face exploitation.

17:06

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): I begin by thanking all the members—those who are here this evening and others in the Parliament—who have supported this motion. I remind the chamber of my declared interest as a member of the Co-operative Party and, less relevantly, as a member of East Fife Football Club's supporters trust, which is also a member of the Co-operative movement.

I remind members that it was the Co-operative movement, both retail and political, that pioneered the fair trade principle and went ahead with the policy when all the received food retailing economic wisdom counselled against it. Everybody said that the policy was mad. The fact that the movement was right to choose such a policy has been demonstrated not just by the fact that Co-op customers have shown in their droves that they care about the conditions of those faraway workers who produce their coffee and chocolate but, more important, by the fact that others in the same line of business—the other major supermarket chains and major multiples—have for some years now increasingly stocked fairly traded products because they know that their customers care about the ethics of food production and retailing.

I want to pay a special tribute to Oxfam. Among charities, Oxfam in particular has pioneered support for the producers of goods.

The make poverty history campaign—led by Hilary Benn and Gordon Brown, by Des McNulty in this Parliament and by others—is helping to accelerate the momentum behind fair trade as a means of giving genuine economic choice to

producers in their own towns and villages: jobs, not aid, in practice.

No doubt, members have seen the figures this week showing that sales of Fairtrade-approved products in the United Kingdom rose by a staggering 52 per cent last year to £140 million. Coffee at £49 million was the biggest seller, followed by bananas, chocolate and tea. The list of products includes spices, oils and wine—which I know about. It also contains footballs—and colleagues on the Green party benches have had their pictures in the papers with some very strange people.

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): The finest sports commentator Scotland has to offer.

Christine May: The finest sports commentator? That will be Mark Ballard himself, will it?

The booklet I have in my hand was produced by the Fairtrade Foundation. It explains succinctly what fair trade is about and what it does. I will quote from it.

"I am a member of the joint body which decides how to use the Fairtrade premium. We have used it to help get electricity for all workers' houses—my children can now study at night. Loans allow workers to start small businesses such as rearing cattle for their milk and growing vegetables to sell to local traders."

That is real economic sustainability. The quotation was from a tea plucker in Sri Lanka, and there are similar quotations from pineapple growers and others.

From the Oxfam website, I understand that "kuapa kokoo" is Ghanian for good cocoa farmer. Indeed, a cocoa plantation that has been given that name has started up a business that controls production of its chocolate in this country.

However, fair trade is not just about coffee and chocolate or about bananas or mangoes. The benefits of the huge increase in international trade flows over the past 20 years are very unequally shared. The 48 least-developed countries, which are home to about 10 per cent of the world's population, have only around 0.4 per cent of the world's exports. When commodity prices fall, millions of small-scale producers are forced into debt. It is then that poverty, disease and starvation are the norm.

It is important to have this debate in Fairtrade fortnight to highlight the real difference that we can make as consumers in the everyday choices that we make. We can buy fairly traded products. The Co-op obviously has the lead, but we should look at what has been done in small villages and towns around Scotland. I am thinking of Burntisland in Fife, which is in Marilyn Livingstone's constituency, and of the students whom I met yesterday with Linda Fabiani from the Scottish

National Party. Those students come from towns that have made a conscious decision that a significant proportion of the goods that are sold in their area will be fair trade goods.

We can do a number of things: we can purchase fair trade products and educate our children about the importance of fair trade. Co-operative education policy plays a significant role in that respect. We can also encourage companies and organisations. Indeed, I hope that all members will encourage the Parliament and its catering contractors to increase the number of fair trade products that they purchase by demanding those products. We have the economic power. It is not for the Executive to demand fair trade products; it is for us—the individual consumer—to take that responsibility. We can organise events to publicise fair trade—I believe that a coffee morning is coming up about which members will be informed—and we can help our own communities to become fair trade towns.

Fair trade sales are increasing and recognition is increasingly being given to the value of fair trade to third-world and other economies. By organising and publicising events, all of us can help to play our part to eliminate world poverty, help to reduce debt and, most of all, give a decent and increasing quality of life to those whom we say every day of the week we want to help.

I am grateful to all members in the chamber tonight. I urge them to remember their individual responsibilities and buy fair trade.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The only fair way for me to work the debate is to restrict speeches to three minutes.

17:13

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): I thank Christine May for bringing the debate to Parliament. It is important that every year in Fairtrade fortnight we should have a debate about fair trade. A long time ago—I think it was three years ago—I sponsored a debate on fair trade when Strathaven, where I live, and Aberfeldy in my colleague John Swinney's constituency were declared Scotland's first fair trade towns. Both of us considered it an honour to speak in that debate.

Strathaven has gone from strength to strength since then. The small market town in Lanarkshire has become a model for other places in South Lanarkshire to follow. In fact, next week at the council offices, Hamilton—the biggest town in South Lanarkshire—will formally declare its fair trade status and receive its certificate. South Lanarkshire Council has not only done a lot in its council premises for fair trade, but has been a tower of strength to all groups in the area that want to promote fair trade.

Christine May mentioned that yesterday she met youngsters from primary schools in Strathaven and Avondale. One of the big strengths in Strathaven is the schools programme that we have instituted. We have seven primary schools and one academy in Strathaven and the surrounding area. I am very proud to announce that next week the Fairtrade Foundation will present Sandford Primary School with a special initiative certificate as Scotland's first fair trade school. *[Applause.]* I agree—that deserves a clap. Chapelton Primary School and Kirklandpark Primary School are close to achieving that status as well, and the other four primary schools are on the way. Some of the sixth year pupils at Strathaven Academy are determined that by the time they finish their exams and leave this year, it will have been declared the first fair trade secondary school in Scotland. A special initiative certificate was awarded because the Fairtrade Foundation had no criteria for fair trade schools. It had not got round to putting the criteria together, because the movement had grown so quickly that it had focused on keeping on top of towns, villages, councils and universities. It is a first for Strathaven that we have set the criteria for fair trade schools in the UK.

Fair trade is a priority. Raising awareness of fair trade is included in the national five-to-14 curriculum as a topic within environmental studies and citizenship. It is great that the schools in Strathaven have taken that on board. They have set up fair trade groups within all the schools, which include representation from pupils, staff and parents, and they run a fair trade tuck shop. Also, the schools will actively promote fair trade products in the provision of school meals, which ties in with what Christine May said about promoting fair trade in all public places.

Well done Strathaven, for blazing the trail yet again for Scotland and the UK.

17:16

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): I want to say a few words—which is probably all I will get to say—in support of Christine May's motion, which is timely and excellently written. It is important that we have this opportunity to follow on from our excellent debate on making poverty history. We may have to consider other forums in which to continue this important discussion.

Fair trade is part of the longer-term efforts that are needed to sustain the support that we should give to developing countries. We know that the matter is about choices that are made by Governments, councils and commercial companies, be they coffee shops or other businesses. It is about ethical choices that should be supported whether in business or in public

service. Of course, we can all make individual choices about the produce that we buy, which is as important as collective action. We have all in the past made choices to boycott a product or to select a product. That is tonight's message.

We can capitalise on the popular demand for politicians and Government to do more. I have supported one of my local councillors, Irene Graham, and Ann McKeichin MP in bringing about fair trade city status for Glasgow. The council has already passed a motion and the city is being assessed for fair trade status. Hopefully, we are well on the way to getting it. It encourages me as the MSP for part of the west end of Glasgow that in Hillhead library on a wet, cold night we brought out 50 people to sign up to the idea.

Many people will know Byres Road in my constituency as a hotbed of charity shops, coffee shops and, it must be said, estate agents. I believe that all of Byres Road should be fair trade; we are not too far away from that, although I am not saying that I have been in all the coffee shops on Byres Road to test them out.

For me, fair trade is about a wee bit more than just the Fairtrade mark. I am the proud owner of a bottle of Palestinian olive oil from the occupied territories, although I am not saying that my cooking will do it any justice. It must be recognised that in the occupied territories it is hard to get good produce out. In fairness to producers there, it is important to make people aware that they can buy their produce. It is important to buy it, because it will help Palestinian growers in the occupied territories. Collective and individual action are important. I say well done to Christine May for bringing the topic to the chamber.

17:19

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I join others in congratulating Christine May on securing this debate. It is well timed, with this being the beginning of Fairtrade fortnight. I hope that it will bring further coverage to this important issue.

Fairtrade has existed for 10 years, and many fair trade products are available. In Mid Scotland and Fife, the town of Aberfeldy was, as Linda Fabiani said, the first fair trade town in Scotland—it gained that honour in 2002. I congratulate traders in Aberfeldy on their forward-thinking outlook. As one drives into Aberfeldy, one can see a new road sign that carries the international logo of the Fairtrade Foundation and the message "Scotland's First Fairtrade Town", which is excellent for marketing an area that is very much dependent on tourism.

Fairtrade fortnight is the one time of year when we are encouraged to buy fair trade coffee and other fairly priced products if we do not do so

already. The movement, which was started to help producers in poorer countries get a fair deal, is an example of people leading Governments in trying to help human beings in other parts of the world. We saw that happen most recently in the response of individuals and charities throughout the world in giving help and aid to the victims of the Asian tsunami disaster. Governments, including ours, lagged behind the caring contributions of their citizens and then tried to play catch-up by offering large amounts of international aid. I hope, now that the tsunami disaster does not make the news every day, that Governments will stand by their pledges, just as the people have done.

The fair trade movement aims to give a higher standard of living to producers in poorer countries and a better deal for their hard work. Those are worthy intentions and I believe that people who buy fair trade products also do so with the best intentions. Consumers have a choice about what products we buy and at what price we buy them—that is called the marketplace. As Christine May said, consumers exercise choice and buy fair trade products because they know that more of their money will go directly to the producers. As a result, the market delivers success for fair trade producers.

I commend the Fairtrade mark for striving for fairer and more open trading conditions for all producers in the developing world. Fairer and open trading conditions are far better than protectionism, which we have in some cases. For example, the European Union is often guilty of creating barriers to trade with the developing world, which is extremely harmful to markets there. In choosing to protect our markets with huge subsidies through the common agricultural policy, the EU restricts market access for developing countries. Not only does that create an unfair non-level playing field, it forces developing countries to produce certain types of products that are not protected, such as coffee. Therefore, developing countries become overdependent on one or two products, which is extremely dangerous for them economically. It also means that production of the product outweighs demand, so that coffee and other items that are produced in developing countries are priced low and—because prices are dragged down—poverty is spread in other countries, such as Vietnam.

If we are serious about the issue, we must not simply buy fairly traded products, but campaign for fairer trade across the board. I am grateful to Christine May for giving us the opportunity to raise the issues.

17:22

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I, too, congratulate Christine

May on bringing the debate to Parliament. The unusually high number of members who are in the chamber for the debate is a tribute to her. I have been seized by fair trade ever since Mrs Watt, the wife of the Church of Scotland minister in Edderton, near my home, seized me at a church fête and asked me what I knew and was doing about fair trade. Like Christine May, I like a glass of wine, as members will know, and I can point out that fair trade cabernet sauvignon is of the highest quality.

Reference has been made to the multiples and supermarkets and to the lead that the Co-op has taken. Let us be honest: some companies do better than others in terms of the number of fair trade products that they offer. There are also issues about where fair trade products are positioned on the shelves in supermarkets. I would not go as far as to say that there should be a code of practice, but we should encourage the companies that are not doing as well to learn what can be done from the Co-op and others.

Fair trade footballs, as endorsed by the Green party, have been referred to. We should widen the definition of fair trade. I remember when Mike Pringle was talking about his plastic bag tax, he produced examples of hessian bags that were made in third world countries. We can broaden the definition to footballs and beyond.

Murdo Fraser rightly referred to protectionism. If we can, we must also balance in our minds the issues of globalisation. We must ask whether the spring onions and runner beans that are flown in from Kenya are fair trade. People in Kenya get jobs, but we must ask whether the profit goes to other industries in Kenya. We do not know about that and we must examine it. If my friend Richard Fraser, the minister of Greyfriars church, was with us today, he would instantly say, "That is great, I support it, but what are you doing about fair trade for British farmers?" In a way, globalisation offers an equally big threat to smaller producers in this country. Perhaps we can learn lessons from fair trade for our country.

I pay tribute to the church, which, with others, has played an important role in developing fair trade. I take great comfort from and have hope for young people. Just as the young today are great on environmental matters in a way that Murdo Fraser and I—or the older generation—probably were not, so they instinctively react well to the idea of fair trade. As has been said, the more our young people and our students talk about the concept, the more hopeful we can be that it will be developed in the future.

I must apologise for having to leave the debate early. I will not hear the minister's speech because I have to be the quizmaster for the Shelter quiz in about two minutes' time.

17:25

Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP): I, too, congratulate Christine May on providing the vehicle for tonight's debate.

There seems to be a big move towards towns and villages across Scotland declaring themselves to be fair trade towns and villages—Perthshire is no exception. Reference has already been made to Aberfeldy and I expect that my colleague John Swinney will want to say something about that. Not to be outdone, Perth and Kinross Council wants to make Perth itself a fair trade city. I say “city” rather than “town” because that is how we in Perth think of where we live. I welcome that move and have challenged the council to say that the whole of its area should become the first fair trade local authority in Scotland. Although the city councils have already made such a declaration, I will not count them because their areas do not include all the surrounding towns and villages. I want Perth and Kinross Council to do that—to extend fair trade status right across its huge area.

The debate in Perthshire has been prompted by the holding of the G8 summit there, about which we will hear more tomorrow. That is an example of how people are beginning to react to the issues that the summit raises. I listened with interest to what Murdo Fraser said, but I want to say how disappointed I was at the article in this morning's edition of *The Scotsman* that was written by a Conservative councillor. I very much hope that his views are not widely held in the Conservative party. He talks about fair trade producers having practices that are restrictive in comparison with those of their efficient, low-cost competitors. In his view, fair trade products are high cost because they are artificially protected. Of course, in his world “low cost” is a euphemism for paying people buttons and not getting too hung up on boring issues such as environmental regulations and workplace conditions.

When people opt for fair trade goods, they are making it clear that they believe that people should be paid a decent wage for the work that they do and that they should be able to expect to work in reasonable conditions that are not a threat to their health or that of the environment.

Fair trade tea and coffee are already widely available in the Parliament, but I do not think that we go nearly far enough. Some of the products that were on sale when we first moved into the new building seem to have disappeared. I wonder why that is. We need to ensure that both the cafeterias, the coffee bar and the members' restaurant all sell, display and draw attention to fair trade products. That is not happening at the moment. As MSPs we should take a lead, but the Executive should do so as well. Let us make Scotland the first fair trade country in the world.

17:28

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): I declare my interest as a member of the Co-operative Party and congratulate my Co-operative Party colleague Christine May on securing what is an important members' business debate.

In a world of unfair and unjust trade practices, it is vital that we all do what we can to promote a more equitable system of global trade. As a Co-op MSP, I am proud to be able to say that, over many years, my party and the Co-operative movement in general have been among the strongest and most effective supporters of fair trade initiatives and policies. The Co-op Party is adding its voice to this year's campaign. In the year of the holding of the G8 summit in Scotland and the make poverty history campaign, Fairtrade fortnight highlights the work that is being carried out by the fair trade movement as it plays its part in helping to build a world in which there is trade justice, unfair debt is dropped and more and better aid is targeted at countries in the developing world that are in desperate need.

I echo Roseanna Cunningham's words about the rather odd article that appeared in *The Scotsman* this morning, which seemed to be an admixture of the condescending and the economically illiterate. I was glad that Murdo Fraser did not go down the path of airing such views tonight. Fair trade is not impracticable or politically correct and it is not charity. It is a simple but effective means of trading that ensures that farmers get a fair deal and can begin to work their way out of poverty.

Last year, sales of fair trade products rose by more than half to reach a value of £140 million. As Christine May mentioned, Britain is the world's biggest market for fair trade products. The Fairtrade Foundation is rightly delighted with that growth rate. Fair trade products are high quality, sustainable and offer genuine value for money but, more important, the Fairtrade Foundation's standards include a fair and stable price being paid to farmers in developing countries.

I am certain that the view that was expressed by Hilary Benn recently that fair trade was making a real contribution to helping poor people help themselves out of poverty is correct. Fair trade is a guarantee of many of the standards that we all take for granted. Small-scale farmers receive a fair and guaranteed price, minimum health and safety standards are met, no child or forced labour can be used, all producers are free to join a trade union and there is a social premium. Those standards are well worth meeting.

I believe that we as MSPs should do all that we can to spread the fair trade message. On that basis, as Christine May said, the Co-op group in

Parliament will be holding a fair trade coffee morning on Thursday 10 March, to which members and Parliament staff can come along and sample tea and coffee and talk about fair trade and its benefits.

Whatever we can do to publicise fair trade in our constituencies is vital; on 12 March I will co-host a coffee morning with Anne McKechnie MP in Kelvindale Primary School in my Anniesland constituency to do just that. Fair trade should be part of the developed world's practical support for our brothers and sisters in the developing world. Let us spread the word.

17:31

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I too congratulate Christine May. In the global economy, fair trade is a David against the multinational Goliaths. Despite the unevenness of that contest, however, we know who eventually won.

Let us sound a sombre note about supermarkets, which display a narrow range of fair trade products. It would be interesting to ask the major supermarkets to do an audit of their fair trade products and present it to the Scottish Parliament, to let us know whether they really buy into fair trade—if I may use that expression—or just indulge in gesture politics.

There is a degree of hypocrisy within the Parliament. My colleague Roseanna Cunningham referred to fair trade products that have disappeared from the Parliament. In an answer to Des McNulty in November last year, the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body revealed that the only fair trade products on offer at the Parliament were tea, coffee and orange juice. The answer stated:

"The SPCB is committed to increasing the availability of fair trade products ... and a Responsible Purchasing Initiative ... will ensure fair trade issues are embedded in the way we procure goods and manage contracts."—*[Official Report, Written Answers, 19 November 2004; S2W-12124.]*

I feel a supplementary coming on. I wonder how far we have moved on, because fair trade products are certainly not on display in the canteen or other areas.

That degree of hypocrisy extends to the public. We are in a climate in which price is all and the supermarkets vie with each other to say, "You can get your products more cheaply here." We want people to consider how and why they are getting products more cheaply and what the cost of that is to third-world countries and to the people who are producing goods in sweatshops. How is it that chicken that comes to Scotland is so cheap, and in what conditions are the people who process it

working? The labels on some of the cheap clothes that are sold in our supermarkets show that they are being produced in third-world countries. It is important for the public to check labels, not just for the Fairtrade logo, but to see where clothes are being made. Is somebody in some far-flung sweatshop earning buttons, as Roseanna Cunningham said, to produce something that, if it cost another two or three pounds, would allow them a decent wage?

Although I am delighted that we are having the debate, I sound a note of caution. I welcome the progress that is being made, but a great deal needs to be done so that David overcomes the Goliaths.

17:34

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): It is good that we are having the debate. Members have covered well many aspects of the fair trade movement, but I want to extend the debate into two other areas, which have been touched on a bit.

First, I turn to the many organisations that promote the sale in Britain of articles that have been made in a fair manner, often by co-operatives or other worthy organisations in developing countries. I am thinking of organisations such as Traidcraft, the Triodos Bank, which lends money to such organisations, Christian Aid and other religious charities and Oxfam and so on. Those organisations sell fair trade goods, which we should encourage people to buy. We should also see whether there is any way in which the organisations can co-operate more fully. We do not want a great bureaucratic system dominating the organisations but, if any joint effort would help to sell any of the goods that are made in a civilised manner at a reasonable cost and with a reasonable return to the communities, we should make that effort.

Secondly, we should all—individually and in our parties—put serious pressure on those who can influence the European Union. I am a Euro-enthusiast, but I think that the EU has fallen down badly in relation to its restrictive trade practices. To begin with, it was fair enough for the EU to have a system that supported its farmers so that, in countries such as France, Germany and Italy, small farmers would sign up to the enterprise. However, we have gone beyond that. We now have a restrictive system that penalises developing countries that want to export to Europe and subsidises EU exports in a way that demolishes certain local economies because we can undercut their prices. We have to apply serious political pressure to ensure that the EU gets its act together so that it behaves in a

civilised way and represents the good side of Europe, not the bad.

17:36

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): I congratulate Christine May on securing a debate on this important subject and I congratulate everyone who is involved in promoting fair trade in Scotland during Fairtrade fortnight.

I started my Fairtrade fortnight at a birthday party celebrating the University of Edinburgh's first year as a fair trade university. I would like to congratulate the university and its students association, of which I am a life member, on all that they have done over the past year to promote fair trade to students in Edinburgh.

Christine May highlighted the two key reasons why we should all support fair trade. First, it makes a huge improvement to ordinary people's lives in the global south. Secondly, fair trade contains an implicit challenge. When we buy a fairly traded product, we recognise that there are unfairly traded products in the shops. As other members have outlined, people are moving to fair trade products because they want to know where the products that they buy come from, how they are made and what impact their manufacture has. That is why I have been supporting the campaign for fairly traded footballs. FIFA has minimum standards for footballs that guarantee that they are not produced by child labour, but a Fairtrade mark is a guarantee of much higher standards of the sort that Bill Butler alluded to in terms of working conditions, education and social benefit.

We have to recognise that the current world trade rules militate against those kinds of decent standards for workers in the global south. I was pleased to hear Murdo Fraser's version of the Conservative response to fair trade. It was a much more helpful one than the Edinburgh Conservative councillor's view that we read in *The Scotsman* today. We have to recognise that the world's trade rules are unfair. We need to ensure that there is trade justice.

Adam Smith warned of the danger of a market that is run in the interests of the merchants, rather than those of the producers and consumers. However, the situation that he warned of is what we have arrived at through our current set of world trade rules, which are managed by the World Trade Organisation overwhelmingly in the interests of multinational companies, not producers and consumers.

We have to reject the notion that comparative advantage can be generated by producing to lower labour and environmental standards. That is not a fair basis on which to operate a trade system. We need fair trade as part of the

movement for trade justice, which is one of the key messages of the make poverty history campaign and is something that we should all support as the logical next step after supporting fair trade by buying fairly traded products in our towns, cities, Parliaments and universities.

17:40

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): I add my thanks to Christine May for bringing the debate to the chamber. I welcome Fairtrade fortnight and look forward to a fair trade future.

We must support and encourage the further development of fair trade. We need to understand what it means to choose a different brand of tea, coffee or banana. When one buys a fair trade banana, one knows that the people who harvested it are not going to give birth to babies without eyes or with green skin because they have been contaminated with dibromochloropropane, or DBCP, a pesticide that has been banned in the United States since 1977 but is used by US companies in Costa Rica. I am not sorry to bring that detailed note of hard realism to tonight's debate, to add to the previous words of caution. It is all too easy to overlook the reasons why it is essential to have fair trade. We need to encourage and to congratulate, but we must also underline the shocking consequences of unfair trade, which are all too easy for us and the media to forget.

Fair trade tea pickers in Sri Lanka no longer have to fear hunger and destitution as world prices fluctuate. Electricity is now supplied to their houses and their children are going to school. On the Stockholm tea estate they have bought an ambulance and computers. We, the consumers, do not have to fear the guilt of knowing that our basic commodities are bought at the cost of human misery.

Many people in Scotland have long realised the justice behind fair trade and those people deserve our congratulations and thanks. In the United Kingdom we have laws in place to protect us from contaminated food and short measures. Producers in other countries deserve the same protection and fair trade is one of the few methods of making sure that they are not short-changed. I commend the motion.

17:41

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): It is a pleasure to take part in the debate and I congratulate Christine May on securing this opportunity to raise an important issue that affects all of us in the communities that we represent.

At the heart of the debate about fair trade is a question that all of us have to answer—what can we contribute in our own lives and communities to

assist with changing the inequalities that exist in our world? As a number of colleagues have mentioned, Aberfeldy in my constituency and Strathaven in my colleague Linda Fabiani's constituency have been designated Scotland's first fair trade towns. The community in Aberfeldy has worked together to make its contribution.

Beyond the work that individual communities can do, we must seek opportunities to add our political voice to stress how much more can be done to assist those efforts. Tonight's debate is a welcome opportunity to do that. During the remainder of 2005, we in Scotland have the unique opportunity of a number of events at which we can influence the political agenda to ensure that much greater progress is made on issues of international trade. The presidency of the G8 is held by the United Kingdom this year and the G8 summit will be held at Gleneagles in July. That, together with the UK presidency of the EU, provides an ideal opportunity for the Parliament to influence the UK Government's agenda and in turn the global agenda to try to make genuine progress on the issues.

If there was ever an example of how to take to a larger scale the straightforward, worthwhile and much-appreciated activities of communities to support fair trade development, it is for us as a Parliament to use our political influence to ensure that the agendas of the international activities in which the UK Government is involved address the concerns that we all share. I want to be fair to the UK Government; we all appreciate the effort that is going in to ensure that both the G8 summit and the UK presidency of the EU will be effective in addressing the issues. I hope that we will use our voice to ensure that the trade talks that will take place later this year, which the European and External Relations Committee discussed during its trip to Brussels in the past couple of days, are resolved in a way that makes a strategic difference to trade patterns and contributes to adjusting the inequalities in our world. Only by resolving those inequalities can we chart a course to achieve greater stability, greater co-operation and greater partnership and to make the world a much safer place than it is today.

From the sale of products in Aberfeldy, with stalls arranged by the fair trade movement, to the agenda of the G8 summit, we must use all our political influence to secure an outcome that makes the world a fairer and more equal place.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I thank all members for their co-operation.

17:45

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson): I am happy to say that the Executive joins all the members who

have spoken in supporting Christine May's motion, which calls on us to back the activities that are being undertaken as part of Fairtrade fortnight. With every other member, I congratulate the many towns—from Fairlie in my constituency to those in Fife—and all the cities, communities and organisations that will hold events in support of the campaign throughout Scotland in the coming fortnight.

I add the Executive's support for the campaign's main theme, which encourages everyone to check out fair trade—to consider the values and principles, of which members have spoken, that guide the Fairtrade Foundation and other ethical trading organisations and to look out for the rapidly increasing number of products that have been granted the Fairtrade mark. That development has been rapid in the extreme. In 2003, the Fairtrade Foundation granted its Fairtrade mark to about 150 products, as Christine May said. In 2005, more than 800 products are accredited. The range has grown from the coffee, tea, chocolate and bananas with which most people are familiar to an ever-widening variety of foods, as well as the other products that members have mentioned, including the fair trade footballs that Mark Ballard has championed.

Sales of fair trade products continue to grow. Their value was more than £140 million in 2004, which represents an increase of 51 per cent on the previous year and is no mean achievement by any standard. That is complemented by the sales from other fair trade and ethical trading initiatives. The situation leads the Fairtrade Foundation to calculate that Britain is the biggest fair trade market in the world. The Fairtrade Foundation has been a leading light throughout that development and I am sure that everyone joins me in congratulating it and acknowledging its contribution, which was recognised when it won the charity of the year award in 2004.

Members made a couple of points of substance about the EU. The UK Government contributes to the direction that the EU takes, which offers developing countries more generous preferential access to its markets. The 49 least-developed countries receive full duty-free and quota-free access to the European market under the everything-but-arms initiative and the tariffs that other developing countries pay to access the European market are heavily discounted. That has helped to develop sustainable industries in the developing world and to promote greater integration.

Jamie Stone is not present to hear my response to an important point that he made. The same free trade policy supports the idea of reaching the same destination at different speeds, which shows the sensitivity and flexibility that are necessary to

let developing countries progress at a rate that allows simultaneous development of their social and economic infrastructures, so that they are not out of balance.

I subscribe entirely to John Swinney's words—2005 is shaping up to be a crucial period in the progress of the international development and world trade agenda, not least in his and Roseanna Cunningham's constituencies. The UK Government has been at the forefront of activity to encourage progress in World Trade Organisation negotiations and the drive to secure the Doha principles, with the ambition of making solid improvements at the WTO ministerial meeting in Hong Kong at the end of the year. As John Swinney said, the UK presidencies of the EU and the G8 will provide gold-plated opportunities for the UK to put trade, international development, debt relief and aid provision at the centre of the international agenda. As the First Minister has emphasised, we in the Parliament must do all that we can to support the UK Government to host a successful G8 summit that has the potential to provide sustainable, long-term benefit for the developing world.

Fair trade is a good example of how every individual, organisation and community can take action in their own way to encourage a change for the better in the patterns of global support. In that spirit, I restate the Executive's support for Christine May's motion. In response to Roseanna Cunningham's point, I can say that Patricia Ferguson, who takes a leading role in this matter in the Executive, tells me that the Executive is keen to explore the possibility of Scotland becoming a fair trade country. As simple parliamentarians, perhaps we should be making the same demands of this institution.

Meeting closed at 17:51.

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