

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Thursday 10 March 2005

Session 2

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## CONTENTS

Thursday 10 March 2005

### Debates

Col.

<b>DENTISTRY</b> .....	15169
<i>Motion moved—[Shona Robison].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Rhona Brankin].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Mrs Nanette Milne].</i>	
Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP) .....	15169
The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Rhona Brankin) .....	15172
Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con) .....	15175
Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD) .....	15177
Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP) .....	15179
Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab) .....	15181
Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands) (Green) .....	15183
Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP) .....	15185
Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab) .....	15186
Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP) .....	15188
Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD) .....	15190
Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con) .....	15191
Rhona Brankin .....	15193
Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP) .....	15196
<b>EARLY YEARS EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE</b> .....	15199
<i>Motion moved—[Fiona Hyslop].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Euan Robson].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Bill Aitken].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Ms Rosemary Byrne].</i>	
Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP) .....	15199
The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Euan Robson) .....	15201
Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con) .....	15203
Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP) .....	15205
Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab) .....	15207
Mr Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP) .....	15209
Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab) .....	15211
Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD) .....	15213
Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP) .....	15215
Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab) .....	15216
Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con) .....	15218
Euan Robson .....	15220
Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP) .....	15222
<b>FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME</b> .....	15224
<b>QUESTION TIME</b> .....	15236
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN</b> .....	15260
<i>Motion moved—[Mr Tom McCabe].Amendment moved—[Jim Mather].Amendment moved—[Mr Brian Monteith].</i>	
The Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform (Mr Tom McCabe) .....	15260
Jim Mather (Highlands and Islands) (SNP) .....	15263
Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) .....	15267
Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD) .....	15270
Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab) .....	15272
Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP) .....	15274
Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) .....	15276
Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab) .....	15278
Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD) .....	15280
Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green) .....	15283
Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab) .....	15285
Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP) .....	15287

Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP) .....	15289
Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab) .....	15291
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) .....	15294
Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP) .....	15296
The Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform (Tavish Scott) .....	15299
<b>BUSINESS MOTIONS</b> .....	15304
<i>Motions moved—[Ms Margaret Curran]—and agreed to.</i>	
<b>DECISION TIME</b> .....	15305
<b>POINT OF ORDER</b> .....	15324
<b>SCOTTISH MINI-OLYMPICS</b> .....	15325
<i>Motion debated—[Robert Brown].</i>	
Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD) .....	15325
Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green) .....	15328
Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind) .....	15329
Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP) .....	15331
Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con) .....	15332
Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD) .....	15334
Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP) .....	15335
The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson) .....	15337

## Oral Answers

	<b>Col.</b>
<b>FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME</b> .....	15224
Air-guns .....	15230
Cabinet (Meetings) .....	15226
Prevention of Terrorism Bill .....	15232
Prime Minister (Meetings) .....	15224
Private Health Cover .....	15233
Public Sector Workers (Pensions) .....	15229
<b>QUESTION TIME</b>	
<b>SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE</b> .....	15236
<b>ENTERPRISE, LIFELONG LEARNING AND TRANSPORT</b> .....	15236
Economy (Performance Indicators) .....	15236
Economy .....	15240
Energy Efficiency (Business Support) .....	15239
European Regional Development Fund (Highlands and Islands) .....	15238
Graduate Endowment .....	15237
Wave and Tidal Power .....	15241
<b>JUSTICE AND LAW OFFICERS</b> .....	15243
Alcohol (Under-18s) .....	15248
Antisocial Behaviour .....	15250
Arrest Warrants (Delays in Processing) .....	15246
Courts (Facilities for Deaf People) .....	15249
Crimestoppers .....	15245
G8 Summit (Security) .....	15244
Life Sentences (Female Prisoners) .....	15247
Release of Offenders (Notification) .....	15243
<b>GENERAL QUESTIONS</b> .....	15251
Agriculture (Casual Labour) .....	15252
Asthma .....	15253
Dementia (Short-life Working Group) .....	15257
European Constitution .....	15256
European Environmental Law (Breaches) .....	15251
Race Equality and Racism (Media Campaign) .....	15258

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# Scottish Parliament

Thursday 10 March 2005

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

## Dentistry

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Good morning. The first item of business is a debate on motion S2M-2549, in the name of Shona Robison, on dentistry.

09:30

**Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP):** The state of our nation's teeth is one of the biggest public health challenges facing Scotland, with 55 per cent of children having dental disease by the age of five. For many people in Scotland, getting access to a national health service dentist has become an impossible quest. Hardly a day goes by when there is not a story in the press about another dental practice closing its doors to NHS patients. We know that 40,000 dental patients have been taken off NHS lists in the past two years and that dozens of dental practices have closed. This is an opportunity for the Parliament to have its say on what the Minister for Health and Community Care must include in his statement next week if we are to rectify the situation and ensure that NHS dentistry has a future in Scotland.

The power of Scottish National Party debates is clear for everyone to see this morning, with the minister's announcement in the press that

"Every child in Scotland is to be guaranteed access to an NHS dentist".

That is an excellent result for a morning's work, as I am sure all members will agree. The question for the Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care, however, is where the Executive is going to find the dentists to carry out that work.

A report recently commissioned by the Scottish Parliament's Health Committee found that, among primary care dentists, 42 per cent of those

"currently treating children were *not* accepting new children for *NHSScotland* dental care or were using a waiting list."

With respect to adults, it was reported that

"only 37% of Scottish dentists are prepared to accept all categories of adults as new NHS patients.

One-quarter admit to scaling down their NHS commitment and only 3.5% of primary care dentists say they intend to increase the amount of time spent treating NHS patients over the next two years.

The study ... concludes that the Executive's flagship pledge to give"

free oral health assessments

"to everyone by 2007 will be difficult to meet without a significant increase in NHS dentists."

The report made it clear that

"ministers' plans to lure retired dentists back to work in the NHS with incentives were unlikely to be successful."

The report also stated:

"A significant increase in NHS Scotland provision required to meet pledges to improve access to dental services is unlikely to be achieved with the type of incentives currently available".

That all comes at a time when our chief dental officer is allowed to go part-time. That is just not good enough.

The key problem has been the chronic underinvestment in NHS dental services over the years, which has led to NHS work becoming less and less attractive to dentists, both financially and in terms of the quality of service that they can offer their patients. The pledge to introduce free dental checks—or oral health assessments, as they should be known—by 2007 must involve more than a cursory look in the mouth. Dentists must have time to spend with patients to carry out a proper assessment of their needs.

The British Dental Association has made it clear that, without major changes to remuneration, there will not be enough dentists prepared to carry out oral health assessments for the current princely sum of £7.05, which does not even cover their cost. If we are serious about shifting the focus of NHS dentistry to preventive work, there must be financial incentives for carrying out that work. The Health Committee's report states that nearly 56 per cent of dentists said that an increase in the fee level for such work was required to get them to treat more NHS patients. That is the reality that we are faced with, whether members like it or not.

Consideration must be given to linking oral health assessments with a screening programme to ensure that those who are less likely to access oral health assessments for themselves or for their children are targeted. Many of those who live in our most deprived communities are already entitled to free dental checks, but they do not take them up. We must address that problem if we are to deal with the horrendous dental health record in those communities. A screening programme can help to achieve that.

Another mechanism to encourage dentists to remain and to do more within the NHS is the provision of assistance with infrastructure costs. Many premises urgently require to be improved. For many of them, the overhead costs do not make doing more NHS work financially viable. That must be addressed. Such support would help to improve the quality of service provided; it would

also improve the level of commitment that a practice gives to the NHS. We need to reduce bureaucracy and simplify the fee scale, which currently contains more than 400 items of service.

We must also increase the dental workforce if such an approach is to work. The dental workforce has never recovered since the Tories closed the Edinburgh dental school in 1996. Other small European countries, including Denmark and Norway, have double the dentist-to-population ratio of Scotland and, of course, a much better dental health record to go with it.

The British Dental Association has estimated that at least 215 additional dentists will be required if the Executive is to keep its free oral health assessment pledge. We need to increase the number of salaried dentists from the 90 posts that are currently filled. Such posts must be targeted at places where lack of access to NHS dentists is most acute. We also need to expand the workforce further by increasing the number of undergraduates on training places and, crucially, by expanding the number and role of professionals complementary to dentistry. A lot more work could be carried out by dental nurses, hygienists and technicians to free up dentists to carry out more of the complex work. That would require a bigger investment in training and education.

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** The member is aware that the BDA wants three times as much investment. What is the SNP arguing for? What can the SNP come up with by way of an investment package?

**Shona Robison:** As a minimum, we require £40 million to £50 million of funding in addition to the money that is already going into dental services. The oral health assessment will not be carried out for £7.05; it requires at least £20, plus investment in infrastructure and more money towards salaried dentists. A minimum of £40 million is required.

I hope that the minister will listen to the views of members across the Parliament on the best way to address the dental crisis in Scotland. As many dentists have told me, next week's statement provides a one-off opportunity to get it right for NHS dentistry. The challenge for the minister is to get it right, for the sake of Scotland's oral health.

I move,

That the Parliament is concerned about Scotland's poor dental health record; notes that only 3.5% of dentists anticipate increasing their NHS provision in the foreseeable future; recognises that if access to NHS dentistry is not improved, then the commitment to provide universal free oral health assessments by 2007 may not be met, and therefore believes that, in order to meet this pledge and safeguard the future of NHS dentistry, the Scottish Executive must provide incentives for dentists to undertake more preventive work including a significant increase in the fee level for oral health assessments, assist dentists more

with infrastructure costs in return for greater NHS commitment, reduce bureaucracy and simplify the current fee scale and expand the number of NHS salaried dentists and address dental workforce shortages by increasing the number of dental undergraduates and expanding the role and number of professionals complementary to dentistry.

09:38

**The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Rhona Brankin):** I am rather surprised by Ms Robison's choice of subject for this morning's debate, given that the Scottish Executive is making a major statement in the Parliament next week. That rather smacks of political opportunism. If the SNP's concerns are so great, why has Nicola Sturgeon never once raised the issue of NHS dentistry at First Minister's question time since being elected as Salmond's Scottish helper? Why do we have Conservative complacency on the subject, given that the Conservatives were responsible for closing the Edinburgh dental school in 1996? I look forward to hearing what the Tories have to say about that.

As ministers have previously stated in the Parliament, we are committed to an effective and accessible NHS dental service for all who wish to use it. For some population groups in Scotland, oral health has improved steadily. There have been significant improvements in adult oral health: 82 per cent of Scottish adults have some natural teeth, compared with only 56 per cent three decades ago, which was appalling.

We absolutely cannot afford to be complacent, however. For our children, progress has been relatively static, with very little improvement in dental decay levels since the 1990s. Improving oral health, particularly that of our children, must be our priority. We recognise that that will require a co-ordinated approach, with genuine commitment from the dental profession and from individuals and organisations with responsibility for the care of children.

**Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):** I am interested in the commitment to improve children's oral health that the minister is giving. Will she give an answer to the many constituents who write to me who want to take their children to an NHS dentist somewhere in my constituency but cannot get access to a single NHS dental service for their children's benefit? What is the Government doing to tackle the crisis in rural Scotland?

**Rhona Brankin:** I could give the member a much fuller response if this discussion followed the announcement that we will make next week. That is one frustration that has resulted from the SNP's opportunism. It is clear that health boards have a responsibility to ensure access to NHS dentists for everybody and there will be further announcements about that next week.

**Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP):** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Rhona Brankin:** No. I must continue, as I have a lot to say.

In the primary care sector—in which 90 per cent of dental patients are treated—most general dental practitioners are independent contractors to the NHS who are free to choose whether to accept patients on the NHS. That there has been a reducing commitment to the NHS by some general dental practitioners in parts of Scotland is regrettable. To achieve improvements in dental provision, there must be the people to deliver such improvements—there must be the right number of people with the right skills in the right place. That means that we must combine effective workforce planning with measures to recruit and retain dental workers.

We recognise the value and potential contribution of the whole dental team in improving oral health and providing the services that are needed in a modernised NHS. Therefore, we are currently investing more than £800,000 to increase the number of professionals complementary to dentistry who are trained in Scotland. On planning the dental workforce, we have agreed a target output of 135 graduates per year for the dental schools and we have put in place funding to meet that target. We have also introduced a number of other measures to encourage recruitment and retention.

**Shona Robison:** The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care rightly outlines some good things that have been done, which we accept. However, the fundamental problem is that not enough dentists will do NHS work because they are not remunerated for it. What will the Executive do to ensure that dentists will carry out oral health assessments? Will the remuneration for oral health assessments be increased?

**Rhona Brankin:** Again, I am not in a position to make announcements before next week. However, I can say that we are confident that our ambitious targets for free dental checks will be met and that we are putting in place the workforce to deliver them.

As I said, we have also introduced a number of other measures to encourage recruitment and retention. This year, 119 dental graduates who are undertaking their training in Scotland are in receipt of our vocational training grant, and an ever-increasing number of qualified dentists are joining our dental lists in Scotland as a result of our golden hello allowance. Through the partnership agreement, we are establishing a dental outreach training centre in Aberdeen that will further boost training opportunities. A number of measures are in place to encourage dentists to further their

contribution to the NHS and to locate in areas in which NHS services are underprovided. Those measures include grants that are available under the Scottish dental access initiative and the provision of salaried dentists. There are more than 100 salaried dentists in Scotland, and I expect that number to rise.

Members will recall that in November 2003 we launched the “Modernising NHS Dental Services in Scotland” consultation on future arrangements for primary care dental services. In discussions with the dental profession and the general public, the consultation considered proposals for changes to the system for rewarding primary care dentistry in order to promote prevention, improve access to services and improve recruitment and retention. The consultation recognised the need to ensure that dental services are underpinned by a robust quality framework that is suitably rewarded. The consultation responses have been analysed and we will provide our response to it on 17 March. That response will include further measures to support NHS dental services. I am pleased to confirm that one additional support measure that we will make available to NHS dentists is a substantial increase in the general dental practice allowance, which will roughly double the practice allowance and incentivise NHS work. I am sure that that measure will be welcomed.

There has been a lot of media interest recently in the challenges that NHS dentistry faces. I accept that we need more NHS dentists and that there are particular local access difficulties. However, there is a forthcoming announcement on dental services, and it is fair to say that we have recognised the problems and introduced a number of measures to support NHS dentistry. In addition to the recruitment and retention allowances that have been mentioned, we have made available more than £12 million in the past four years for practice improvements. We have also introduced a general dental practice allowance to assist with practice costs. In the current year, the money for that will amount to around £4 million. In total, in the past year we have provided more than £10 million in additional funding to support NHS dentistry in Scotland. Many of the measures are unique to Scotland and provide Scottish solutions to Scottish problems.

I hope that the measures that I have outlined demonstrate to members our serious commitment to NHS dentistry in Scotland. However, we recognise that we need to intensify our efforts to ensure access to services, and we will continue to work to develop further measures to achieve that aim.

I move amendment S2M-2549.1, to leave out from “is concerned” to end and insert:

"recognises the need to tackle Scotland's poor oral health and improve access to NHS dental services; acknowledges the actions already taken by the Scottish Executive to improve oral health and to recruit and retain dental professionals in the NHS; recognises that further work needs to be undertaken to respond to the outcome of the consultations, Towards Better Oral Health in Children and Modernising NHS Dental Services in Scotland; notes that the Executive's response to the consultations, to be published very shortly, will include measures to address the Partnership Agreement commitments on workforce numbers, training and prevention including free dental checks and will identify the resources needed, and calls on NHS boards, higher education institutions, local authorities, the British Dental Association and the wider professions to engage positively with the Executive after publication to bring early and sustained benefits to the oral health of people in Scotland."

09:46

**Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):** In May 2003, I made my first speech in the Parliament in a members' business debate on dentistry and the difficulty of gaining access to an NHS dentist in the north-east of Scotland. Nearly two years on, the only change has been for the worse, with still more dentists opting out of NHS work and more patients having difficulties accessing dental services, even privately.

**Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** Should not the member's first statement on dentistry have included an apology for what the Tories did in 1996 in closing the Edinburgh dental school?

**Mrs Milne:** I wonder when a party that has never been in power and is never likely to be in power will stop dwelling on the past and start looking to the future.

The problem of access to dentists is particularly acute in Grampian, Highland and Argyll. Only this week, yet another practice in Grampian—in Oldmeldrum in Aberdeenshire—closed its doors to NHS patients. I am sure that I am not the only MSP from the north-east who has received angry phone calls from patients in that area who have suddenly found themselves without a dentist.

The move towards private dental care has been prompted by a lack of investment in NHS dentistry and frustrations with the current system—particularly with the lack of time that dentists have to give their patients preventive advice. Instead, dentists see up to 40 patients a day on a treadmill of inadequately funded piecework.

Most dentists who move to private practice do so not to increase their income, but to be able to sustain their income on a reduced list size, to give their patients a better service and to gain a better quality of life without the stress of having to push patients rapidly through the system day after day and week after week.

Early retirement is common in dentistry and stress has been identified as a principal reason for early retirement. As in other professions, an increasing proportion of women in dentistry want to have career breaks and to work part-time. Too many dental graduates are moving away from Scotland after they have completed their training, and there are concerns about the current system of charging, which is

"complex and difficult ... to comprehend. Any new system must be transparent and easy to understand, with the main drivers being clarity about patient charges; clarity about NHS availability; distinction between NHS and private treatment; and clarity about trust and accountability. Any replacement system must be easy to operate and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy."

Those are not my words, but the words of the BDA.

The short-term measures that the Scottish Executive has introduced in recent years to try to alleviate the current crisis have not solved the problem, and there is no doubt that a new contract is urgently needed if NHS dentistry is to survive in Scotland. The Executive's pledge to provide free dental checks for everyone by 2007 sounds attractive, but it is unlikely to be fulfilled when there is a 10 per cent shortfall of dentists north of the border.

**Carolyn Leckie:** The member has again mentioned the shortage of dentists. Does she agree that not closing the dental school would have meant that we would have had 400-plus more dentists now and that she would not have been talking about a 10 per cent shortfall? There might even have been a surplus of dentists.

**Mrs Milne:** Multiple factors are involved. I agree that we might have had more dentists, but I cannot answer for my party's previous actions way back in history. Nonetheless, the system has changed. Many more women are now in dentistry and the whole demography of dentistry has changed in recent years.

The Executive's pledge to provide free dental check-ups sounds attractive; however, in the words of the BDA, a quick look round the mouth to identify holes in teeth is not what is required in modern dentistry. Nowadays, patients' needs have to be assessed, and the implications of medical health and medication for dental health must be considered. Patients need to be given lifestyle and preventive advice. Those things are all time consuming, and that time is not funded by the NHS at the moment.

Children, young people, pregnant women, new mothers and people on low incomes are already entitled to free dental check-ups in the NHS—assuming that they can find a dentist—and we feel that the extension of that provision to people who can afford to pay is not the best use of scarce



resources. We would look to introduce a capitation fee for adults that would be similar to that which exists for children, as we feel that that would get us away from the treadmill effect of the current system and would encourage preventive care.

**Shona Robison:** Will Nanette Milne give way?

**Mrs Milne:** No, I am sorry. I have quite a lot to say.

**The Presiding Officer:** You are in your last minute, I am afraid.

**Mrs Milne:** Under our plans, children, people on low incomes and the over-75s would be entitled to free dental care. For those who wanted it, we would introduce a voluntary low-cost monthly payment scheme for non-exempt adults, to cover them against large, unplanned bills as an alternative to the present pay-as-you-go arrangements. We would also seek an expansion in the role and number of professionals complementary to dentistry, such as hygienists and therapists, to take over some of the more routine work that is done by dentists, thereby freeing them up to perform more complex procedures and to undertake more preventive work with their patients. In addition, we support the further development of outreach training facilities in Scotland in the expectation that senior students in the later stages of their training in more peripheral parts of the country will remain in the area that they have come to know as students.

Labour promised us great things in 1999, when Tony Blair said that within two years everyone would have access to an NHS dentist. I look forward to hearing, next week, just how the Scottish Executive plans to make good that broken promise.

I move amendment S2M-2549.2, to leave out from "recognises" to end and insert:

"and believes that in order to safeguard the future of NHS dentistry the Scottish Executive should move from fee-based remuneration to capitation-based funding in order to remove incentives for over-treatment and promote preventive measures, expand the role and number of professionals complementary to dentistry in order to free up time for dentists to focus on continuing care, reduce bureaucracy and continue with the development of outreach centres to encourage students to remain in Scotland after graduation."

09:52

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** There is no doubt that there is a crisis in NHS dentistry. That crisis is not recent and it certainly has not come out of the blue. Ever since the Conservatives closed the Edinburgh dental school some 10 years ago, we have been heading for trouble. We have simply been training too few dentists to meet the demands of a modern

and effective health service. I agree with Bruce Crawford that the Conservatives should have started their contribution to the debate by recognising the mistake that they made in closing one of Scotland's three dental schools.

The Liberal Democrats have recognised the depth of this crisis. Two years ago, in our manifesto for the Scottish Parliament elections, we stated:

"Everyone in Scotland should enjoy access to NHS dentistry regardless of where they live."

We said that we would reintroduce free dental checks for all and that we would reform the remuneration arrangements for dentistry to reward dentists for preventing dental disease among their patients as well as for treating disease and decay. We also said that we would increase the number of dental training places and establish a new school of dentistry in Aberdeen.

As a result of our taking those pledges into the partnership negotiations with the Labour Party, the coalition Government of Scotland has agreed to encourage preventive dentistry and design appropriate reward measures to support that objective.

The partnership agreement says:

"We recognise the need for an increase in the number of dentists and dental graduates in Scotland. ... We will expand the capacity of dental training facilities in Scotland by establishing an outreach training centre in Aberdeen."

That centre is well on the way. It continues:

"We will consult further on the need for its development to a full dental school."

The partnership agreement also commits the Executive to assessing the reasons for the shortfall in dentists and the options for addressing that shortage.

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):**

Where is the Executive going to get all the specialist lecturers from to lecture at the school of dentistry in Aberdeen when there is a shortage across the whole of Scotland?

**Mike Rumbles:** I thank Mary Scanlon for that right and proper intervention. The issue is serious. Because of that shortage, we decided to establish the outreach centre in Aberdeen first, as a practical measure, before consulting on the formation of the dental school.

Tom McCabe, the previous Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care, launched the consultation on the reform of NHS dentistry—the first opportunity to reform NHS dentistry in Scotland for more than half a century. My constituency has the lowest number of NHS dentists per head of population in Scotland, and there is a real crisis in the north-east. Last year,

more than a thousand people queued outside Kenny Jones's practice in Stonehaven simply to register as patients. Last Monday, there were similar scenes in Nora Radcliffe's constituency. There is no doubt that a wholesale reform of the system is needed to ensure that such scenes are a thing of the past and that the Executive's promise that everyone will have access to an NHS dentist is fulfilled.

**Mr Swinney:** Will Mike Rumbles give way?

**Mike Rumbles:** I am in my last minute, unfortunately.

In the long term, we need to train more dentists, and I am sure that the promised consultation will show the need for a new dental school in Aberdeen. In the short term, we need to attract dentists back into the system. That can be done in two ways: first, by removing the bureaucracy that is involved in NHS dentistry, thereby simplifying the system; and, secondly, by remunerating dentists properly to allow them more time with their patients. The SNP is arguing for an increase of only £40 million to £50 million in the Executive's dentistry budget. I believe that that is a rather low target. We need and should get a much larger investment than that from the Executive.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** What is your figure?

**Mike Rumbles:** Members will find that out when the minister makes his announcement to Parliament. I am afraid that SNP members' horizons are far too low and they should be ashamed of themselves. Only by investing properly in the future of the dental service in Scotland and by getting rid of the bureaucracy will we solve the dental crisis. I have every confidence that, when Andy Kerr outlines his plans to Parliament, he will have the package that is needed to solve the dental crisis once and for all. I am sure that he will deliver the goods.

09:56

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** I thank Mike Rumbles for that interesting insight into the Executive's announcement of next week. Obviously, Magnus Gardham has dropped below the standards that I expect of him in reporting the Executive's plans. However, let us give the Executive credit for its ambition. If what Magnus Gardham says in today's *Daily Record* is correct, the Executive

"intends that the service will be open to everyone."

If that is not a recognition of the fact that that is not the current situation, I have never heard one. Of course, Magnus prefaces that statement with the word "eventually". In the same article, Rhona Brankin is quoted as saying:

"In Glasgow, more than 60 per cent of children have dental disease before they reach the age of three. So there is a huge job to be done."

Furthermore, Andy Kerr is quoted by Douglas Fraser, in *The Herald*, as saying that the problems with children's oral health and dental services throughout Scotland are "quite appalling". We cannot disagree with any of those statements: on the contrary, we agree whole-heartedly with them.

The Executive's record on the issue is quite interesting, and I will go through some of the statements that it has published on the subject. On 28 October 2004, in response to parliamentary question S20-3755, asking how many dentists we would have in 10 years' time, Rhona Brankin replied that the Executive did not know. Two years ago, in March 2003, in response to parliamentary question S1W-34277, asking how many dentists there would be, Mary Mulligan replied that the Executive did not know. In response to parliamentary question S20-4341, asking about the average waiting time for NHS dentistry, Rhona Brankin replied that the Executive did not know. So it continues.

**Rhona Brankin:** Does Mr Stevenson recognise that it is expected that, by 2006, more than 130 dentists will qualify each year?

**Stewart Stevenson:** If that is true—and I accept the minister's word for it—it is very welcome. However, let me point the minister at some other documents, such as the draft budget for 2005-06. It has nine objectives and targets for the health service, but not one on dentistry. It is not a one-off, though. If we go back a year and look at the budget for 2004-05, we find 14 objectives but not one on dentistry. It is not even confined to two years. If we go back another year, again we find not one objective on dentistry.

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

**Stewart Stevenson:** Just one moment.

If we look further, we will find in the current draft budget that one of the statements of priority is to

"improve dental services through incentives".

Nevertheless, the spending plans in the draft budget show that the money allocated to general dental services for 2004-05 and the following three years flat-lines at £225,176,000.

Does the minister still wish to intervene?

**Rhona Brankin:** Absolutely. I presume that the member welcomes our commitment to provide free dental checks for everyone by 2007.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Of course I do. However, how will the minister pay for those checks and who will carry them out? Given the record to date, there is not the slightest evidence that we will see any measure that will meaningfully address the matter.

The scope of the problem becomes apparent in a parliamentary answer that the minister gave me yesterday. It appears that Nora Radcliffe, Mike Rumbles and I share the unenviable record of having the lowest number of dentists in any parliamentary constituency. In fact, when I work out the numbers, it becomes clear that we have one dentist for more than 4,000 people. Ken Macintosh is a great deal more fortunate in his constituency—he has one dentist for every 1,700 people. If the extra money—which some suggested before the debate would amount to £10 million—were to be spent in our three north-east constituencies alone, we would still not reach the level of dental care that is available in Eastwood. I hope that, given what Mr Rumbles has—perhaps—announced about the north-east receiving more than that, things will move forward.

Indeed, the number of dentists in the north-east and the Highlands is so low that the resulting high work rate is making it extremely difficult to attract any more dentists. I believe that Mr Rumbles said that everyone should be able to enjoy access to NHS dentistry

“regardless of where they live”.

However, we must do something about people in the north-east.

A golden hello scheme has been introduced to attract more people into NHS dentistry. However, in its first year, it was singularly ineffective and brought only six new dentists into the health service. Moreover, those dentists went to NHS Forth Valley, NHS Lothian, NHS Greater Glasgow and NHS Dumfries and Galloway; not a single one went to the areas of greatest need.

Yes, it will help to double the dental practice allowance, but we will wait with interest to see whether that makes a difference for local dentistry. As for the £10 million that has been given over the past year, the previous figures that I received on dentists in the three constituencies to which I referred were obviously optimistic, because there have been closures since they were released. In fact, in my constituency, some people cannot even get a private dentist, never mind an NHS dentist. It is clear that the minister will have to spend money and energy on this substantial problem. Furthermore, some real objectives must be set down in tablets of stone that the Executive can be held to account for in future.

Some of my constituents have had to travel to the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and even Hungary to receive dental treatment. Well, we are hungry for dentists, and we need them now.

10:03

**Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):**  
The challenge of ensuring access to dental

treatment for all has been a growing concern in the north-east, and particularly in Grampian, for many years. Indeed, my first members' business debate and my maiden speech—like Nanette Milne's—centred on the problems of accessing dental treatment, particularly NHS dentistry.

There is no doubt that concerns can only have been heightened by the picture of the lengthy queues that formed at the dental practice in Oldmeldrum when two of the dentists at the practice decided not to continue NHS dentistry. As the motion and amendments point out, that is a problem not only for Grampian. However, there are particular difficulties in our part of Scotland.

Of course I want the Executive to take further action to resolve the situation and I look forward to seeing what happens in that respect. That said, the suggestions that have been made by some in the north-east that the Executive has not sufficiently acknowledged the issue are unfair and misleading, because serious action has been taken and substantial investment made. This debate would have been better informed not only if it had taken place after next week's ministerial statement but if more time had been spent on discussing the further measures that could be introduced instead of on bemoaning the situation.

**Shona Robison:** Does the member think that it would have been best to give the *Daily Record* its exclusive after next week's ministerial statement?

**Richard Baker:** It was quite right to bring forward constructive proposals for this debate, but we would have had a better debate in the full context of next week's ministerial statement. After all, in a half-morning debate each member has only four minutes to discuss this serious issue. As I have said, I simply believe that the right thing would have been to have the debate after the ministerial statement.

We can debate this matter in a truly informed way only if we properly acknowledge the great efforts that have already been made to meet this challenge. Many of the measures that have been introduced, including the doubling of the remote areas allowance, the doubling of the allowance for trainees in designated areas and the doubling of grants for new and existing practices, have been aimed particularly at the situation in Grampian and show that substantial investment has been made.

There have also been appointments of new NHS salaried dentists in NHS Grampian. Great efforts have also been made to recruit dentists from overseas to the area and Wendy McCombes and her team at the dental postgraduate school in Aberdeen deserve much credit for their success in attracting postgraduate students to train in the city. Such an important initiative encourages recruitment to the region.

I should also mention that not only short-term but long-term strategies have been introduced in Grampian. For example, as Mike Rumbles has pointed out, the partnership agreement to establish a dental outreach training centre in Aberdeen is an important commitment to help recruitment in future. We need such an approach. I must say to our Conservative colleagues that we cannot underestimate how much their rush to encourage the use of private treatment has led to many of the current problems. Only now will more dentists be trained in Scotland since the closure of the Edinburgh dental school in 1996.

It is tempting to consider extreme solutions to force a resolution to this problem, but the SNP's golden handcuffs policy for those trained in medicine in Scotland is noticeable by its absence from the motion. It is clear that the Executive and others must make further efforts to tackle the problem, and I welcome the wide partnership working that the Executive has highlighted as necessary in its amendment. I hope that there can be a constructive liaison with the BDA on how it can encourage more dentists to take on NHS work and on introducing incentives for dentists who carry out preventive treatment as well as remedial dentistry. I think that there is a broad agreement throughout the chamber on that matter and I am aware that the BDA has also said that it wishes to see such action.

Dentists are highly trained and deserve to be remunerated highly—indeed, that is a pertinent issue—but we need to have a dialogue with professional bodies that has a more meaningful focus than fee levels. The profession must be able to play the full role that I know that it wants to in encouraging better access to treatment and promoting dental and oral health in the country.

I agree that more needs to be done, but we can have an informed debate on what should happen next only if we acknowledge what has been done so far. It is only through taking an approach that fully includes everyone who is able to increase access to dentistry, including NHS provision, that we will be able to take full advantage of the Executive's measures to achieve the kind of access to dental services that we all want.

10:08

**Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands) (Green):** I welcome the chance to debate this important issue, because I am very aware of dental and oral health problems in Scotland. I began my career in 1980 as a school doctor and, in those days, we carried out medical inspection on all primary 1 children. Although we were not dentists, we also had a cursory look at the state of the children's oral health and put the results of the medical inspection on the medical form as a four-

digit code. Although we stopped universal health inspections in 1982, I can still remember code 521.0, which was the code for dental caries. Indeed, it is the only code that I can remember. That shows just how much dental decay there was at the time and I am sure that that will still be the case today. As a result, I very much welcome the commitment to provide all children with NHS dental services, although I share other members' concerns about how that will be met.

Poor oral health in children is due not only to a lack of dentists but to other important factors such as diet. Any joined-up policy for improving oral health in Scotland must include robust moves to improve diet, to reduce the sugar content of the food that we are eating and are feeding our children, and to remove sugary fizzy drinks from schools.

However, I do not include fluoridation in any form of preventive dentistry. Indeed, I am very glad that the Scottish Executive has made a commitment not to carry out fluoridation, at least in the meantime, because it is unlikely to work as a way forward. I include in preventive dentistry free toothbrushes, toothbrushing schemes in nurseries and schools and dental health promotion visits by dental hygienists to schools.

One reason why I welcome the debate is that it has given me the occasion to read the Scottish Parliament information centre briefing "General Dental Services: Key Facts", which points out that the BDA has said that a 25 per cent increase in dentists in the UK as a whole is required. The BDA has also said that 215 additional dentists are needed to deliver the free dental check-ups that are promised from 2007. It is a medical truism that screening should be carried out only if treatment can be offered. There is no point in screening people's oral health in 2007 if we cannot go on and treat the problems that are found. The proposals have huge resource implications.

I have no doubt that there is a crisis in dental health care provision. It is tempting to go on about my region, the Highlands and Islands, but other members will do so. I simply point out that rural areas are almost always the barometer of problems, because they show up first there. We are almost certainly not training enough dentists and we are certainly not retaining enough of them. The SPICe briefing contains an interesting graph that shows the numbers of people who have joined and left the ranks of general dental practitioners, with the number of leavers consistently exceeding the number of joiners.

The figures on which the graph is based reveal that the biggest group of dentists who join the ranks of general dental practitioners is made up of those who have completed vocational training. I welcome the moves to carry out vocational training

in more remote and rural areas in the hope that people who enjoy the experience will come back to work in those areas. The second biggest group is made up of those who have returned to Scotland. It would be interesting to know why they left in the first place. Allied to those figures is the interesting increase in the proportion of dentists in the 35-to-54 age group who leave general dental practice. They may be taking a career break or choosing to leave Scotland—the issue must be examined.

The largest proportion of those who leave general dental practice is made up not of those of retirement age, who make up a mere 20 per cent of leavers, but of those who are under 35, who make up about 40 per cent. The reasons why people in that age group leave might be well known and researched but, if not, the minister should consider carrying out an in-depth study of why dental practitioners in the different age groups leave and what we can do to keep them. It is projected that the number of dental graduates in Scotland will increase from the 115 who are expected this year to 143 in 2008. That is good, but it would be even better if we kept them.

10:12

**Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):** Mike Rumbles began his speech by saying that the crisis in the dental profession—I am glad that he accepts that there is a crisis—was not exactly a surprise and that it could have been predicted because it was on the horizon for some time. He properly reflected the priorities of the 2003 Liberal Democrat manifesto in setting out the priority that is attached to the issue. However, that begs the question why we have had to wait six years under devolution, including two years under the present partnership agreement, for the Government to slumber its way into action just to give a ministerial statement on the issue. If the Government's standards and ability to deliver public service improvements are anything to go by, the statement will put progress and achievements way into the distance, rather than in the here and now, where we need them.

It is all very well for us to be lectured by ministers, Labour members and Mr Rumbles about how much more appropriate it would have been to have held the debate after the ministerial statement, but we could wait no longer—we have waited far too long for the Government to extract the digit and get on with improving Scotland's health services.

**Mike Rumbles:** Mr Swinney will note that I did not criticise the SNP for holding the debate at this time; other members did that. However, in retrospect, does he not agree that it would have been better to wait for next week's statement? I

am sure that Mr Swinney will find out then that the Scottish Executive's ambition is higher than the SNP's low level of ambition to raise investment in the dental service by just £50 million a year.

**Mr Swinney:** Mr Rumbles is free to correct me if I misrepresented his remarks, which I did not intend to do. However, we did not have to wait for the ministerial statement, only for this morning's exclusive edition of the *Daily Record*, which has a great smiling picture on the front, to find out what the Government is going to do. That makes my point. The Government tries to direct the agenda to suit itself, when it should start directing the agenda to suit my constituents and those of Mr Stevenson, Mr Lochhead, Mr Rumbles, Mrs Radcliffe and other members, who are suffering as a result of the lack of capacity in dental provision in Scotland.

I am most concerned about the effect on children. We all accept that if we influence children's behaviour, attitudes and approach at the earliest stage, we will reap the benefits in the long term. My oral health is a tribute to the persistence of my mother in taking me regularly to the dentist when I was an infant, much against my will. I am grateful to her for that—and, I would add, for many other things. If children throughout Scotland do not have easy access to dental services, we will have enormous problems in the years to come. We have presided over an era—the six years of the partnership Government and perhaps the years since the Conservatives closed the Edinburgh dental school—in which deliberately taken actions have led to the neglect of the oral health of children in Scotland.

Health services must be accessible. Like other members, I represent a large rural constituency. Just because a dental practice is available 10, 20 or 30 miles away, that does not make it easy for people to gain access to dental health care services. People who live in small towns in my constituency where dentists have given up NHS dentistry have to travel an extra 30 or 40 miles to access treatment. How can we expect parents and hard-working families in that situation to deliver for their children? We need the Government to have the highest ambition. If the Government delivers a great injection of resources and energy into dental health services in Scotland, I will have the good grace to welcome that, but it had better do so quickly, because people in the country are suffering and they should not suffer any longer.

10:17

**Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab):** It is, literally, painfully obvious that there is a big problem in NHS primary care dentistry; we do not need the SNP or anybody else to tell us that. We could trace the problem back to the

independent-contractor status of dentists at the inception of the NHS back in 1945. More particularly, we could trace it back to the deregulation of NHS dentistry in the 1980s and the closure of the Edinburgh dental school in 1996 by another Government, to which a number of members have referred. It would be easy to show that the nationalist agenda would only make things worse; the important issue is to understand the immediate problem and to work together to achieve solutions.

I understand the problem only too well. A substantial number of my constituents in places such as Haddington and Longniddry have been dumped as NHS patients by dentists who have gone private. I declare a personal interest: the dentist who had treated my family for 20 years or so wrote to me last year to say that he was no longer willing to treat us as NHS patients but that he would take us on as private patients, at a price and on the understanding that we would turn our backs on the NHS. By an unhappy coincidence, I lost one of my front teeth at the same time. Therefore, I am extremely grateful to the NHS dentist in Edinburgh who accepted my family as patients when my dentist in the Borders privatised his practice. However, it is not tolerable for any patient to be compelled to make a round trip of 120 miles or more to see an NHS dentist.

I was seriously shocked when a constituent who was in pain came to my constituency office this week to ask for advice from my secretary when he was refused treatment by his local dentist. That is an outrageous state of affairs, particularly in a country that has such an awful dental health record. Patients who cannot afford private treatment are being held to ransom.

**Rhona Brankin:** Does the member welcome the appointment of two new dentists, in Kelso and Hawick?

**Mr Home Robertson:** That is good news. My secretary got in touch with Lothian NHS Board about that constituent's problem, which occurred in Dunbar. I welcome what is being done, but there is clearly a problem.

We look to the Executive and, importantly, to the dental profession to find solutions that will enable all citizens to get regular dental checks and treatment. It seems clear enough that the Executive is willing to help to find solutions. As the minister said, it has taken steps to increase the number of dentists who are being trained—the target is to have 150 undergraduates starting every year—but it needs to look to the future with the dental profession. Patients should be entitled to expect appropriate commitment from that profession. I understand that the average earnings for dentists in Scotland are between £51,000 and £65,000 a year, after allowing for practice costs.

The PayFinder.com website says that dentists are the second best paid professionals in Scotland after finance directors. I do not begrudge them their money, but in those circumstances it should not be too much to expect appropriate commitment from dentists to NHS patients in all parts of Scotland.

The dental profession might accept its share of responsibility for the present situation, but it must play its part in achieving solutions. Like doctors, dentists are rightly held in high esteem and their remuneration is high, but I am beginning to hear some strong criticisms of them. It worries me when I hear people using terms such as “greedy” and “uncaring” about an important group of health professionals.

I conclude by urging the minister to bring the Executive's authority and its resources to bear to help to rebuild NHS dentistry. Scots have some of the worst teeth in the world and people in every part of the country need regular access to good-quality dental checks and treatment. I hope that the minister will direct NHS boards throughout Scotland to identify areas where NHS dentists are required and to take steps to meet that need.

People are entitled to expect the Executive and the NHS to play their part in resolving what is a serious problem, but it is just as important that patients are entitled to expect the dental profession to be professional and to demonstrate a proper commitment to treating NHS patients in return for fair remuneration. The minister has shown that she is listening; I just hope that dentists are listening, too.

10:21

**Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP):** I start by agreeing with John Swinney that the Executive has a cheek to condemn any party for bringing forward a debate about dental health when Labour has neglected dental health since it came into power in this Parliament in 1999 and at Westminster in 1997. The Government has accepted that there is a crisis since as far back as 2001, but it has done nothing. Although it concluded its consultation on modernising dentistry last year, a year later it has taken the publication of a report by the Health Committee and the threat of a debate on the subject by Opposition parties to force it to make a statement. Even now, the Executive is not prepared to make a statement today and tell us what it intends to do, although it is prepared to make a statement to the *Daily Record*. That just about sums things up.

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

**Carolyn Leckie:** I am sorry; I tried to intervene on the minister, but she did not let me. I might give way later.

We need to put the situation into perspective. I remember when I was a small child in what were—in comparison with what we have now, at any rate—the glory days of the welfare state. I noticed at first hand the improvements that resulted from the move to community dentistry and the establishment of clinics. The Florence Street clinic in the Gorbals was brilliant, but before it came into being I had a horrific experience when I was about three years old: a dentist up a close in the Gorbals slapped me around to wake me up from an anaesthetic after an extraction. Thank goodness for the Florence Street clinic. Such clinics have not attracted the necessary investment since then. Their ability to radically change children's oral health demonstrates the arguments for universality.

My next example demonstrates the need for universality even more. The fact that most people are excluded from free dental treatment unless they are on income support or are pregnant can give rise to terrible situations. I remember the awful sight of my mother—who at the time was pregnant with my little brother—standing over the sink with blood pouring out of her mouth because she had taken the opportunity that being pregnant gave her to get all her teeth extracted and to have dentures fitted. She knew that she would not be able to afford any dentistry after my wee brother was born. Such horrors demonstrate the necessity for universality in dental treatment.

Since its inception, the NHS has failed to properly incorporate dental services. We are seeing the symptoms of that now. The system of having dentists attached to community health provision and general practitioner services obviously works very well. That is the case in Greenhills, the area of East Kilbride in which I live. I pay tribute to the dentists there who, despite all the difficulties, are still working to provide NHS services.

We have had some vague commitments to increase the number of dentists. Rhona Brankin said that there might be an extra 10 dentists a year. That would still amount to only a quarter of the 40 a year that were lost as a result of the closure of the Edinburgh dental school, so the Executive is not doing much better than the Tories.

In some responses to the Executive consultation, arguments have been put forward in favour of regressive charging methods, whereby those people who were most in need and could least afford treatment would have an incentive to take responsibility for improving their own health. What utter claptrap. That was the situation that prevailed prior to the establishment of the NHS and it is why, in 1948, a third of dental appointments were for the extraction of all teeth

and the fitting of dentures. If we do not act, the state of the nation's teeth will deteriorate even further and we will soon have the situation in which every third person whom we bump into on the street has a set of wallies. We need to act now.

10:26

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** What I hear from all quarters of the chamber about the lack of dental services rings a bell with me. As members can imagine, the remoteness of my constituency means that the problem there is acute.

I want to deal with what other members have said. Shona Robison was correct to mention the need to increase the number of dentists. The revelation that the SNP seeks an increase of £40 million to £50 million in funding is interesting and bears scrutiny. That figure should be compared with the figure that the minister announces next week.

**Shona Robison:** The Executive can increase the level of fees and the amount of infrastructure support that it provides by as much as it wants. What I am saying is that if we are to start to make a difference, a minimum of £50 million is required. If the Executive's figure is bigger than that, we will be the first to welcome it. I am sure that Mike Rumbles knows whether that is the case because he decides Executive policy on such matters.

**Mr Stone:** The SNP's figure has gone from £40 million to £50 million.

The issue is not just about the numbers of dentists; I will return to that point.

The minister is right to talk about the doubling of practice allowances, which is important. Although Nanette Milne and Mary Scanlon represent the nice face of the Tory party—I am trying to be a gentleman—it is very difficult for them to account for the mistake that was made when the Edinburgh dental school was closed. I am afraid that that is an unhappy episode in history. We must learn from that and never repeat the mistake. Mike Rumbles is quite correct to say that in the partnership agreement we have gone for the new dental school. He mentioned outreach, to which I will return, along with Shona Robison's point about the numbers of dentists.

Stewart Stevenson commented on the goal of providing free dental checks by 2007, which is a worthy aspiration. All parties acknowledge the difficulty of reaching that target, but it is right for us to set our sights high. I thank Mr Stevenson for his support on that point.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Is it correct that the member is prepared to set high targets and fail

rather than set achievable targets that can be resourced?

**Mr Stone:** That is ludicrous. The member knows me well enough to realise that I would go for a higher target all the way. Nice try.

Eleanor Scott's point about the link with diet was correct and I whole-heartedly endorse it. In a high-quality speech, John Swinney referred to the influence of his mother. The point that he made is true. By taking children to dentists and giving them proper things to eat, we can head off problems. John Home Robertson's impassioned speech spelled out the sorts of problems that we all face.

I turn to my view. The issue almost transcends party politics; that is why I welcomed John Swinney's worthy speech. In the Highlands, Eleanor Scott, Maureen Macmillan and members of all parties—except the Scottish Socialist Party, unfortunately—have been working together with NHS Highland in a think-tank to try to come up with solutions.

I return to the point about the numbers of dentists. That is not the only problem in the Highlands. We could have all the dentists in the world, but how could we persuade them to come to Caithness? In relation to Mike Rumbles's point about outreach, it is interesting that we are in the process of developing a system whereby two or three students will come north to work in a practice in Caithness for a number of weeks or months. The extractions and fillings that the students do will take a little longer, but they have the necessary skills. We hope that the students will come to love that special part of the world, which may increase the chance that they will stay there.

I will finish with a personal comment—it is my view, not that of my party. I believe that in dentistry, and perhaps with GPs, we might be able to be imaginative by emulating what the armed forces do. They pay students a salary while they are at university on condition that they sign up to the colours for five years. We could do that with dental students, who could agree to be put where a particular NHS board wanted them to go. It might be possible for them to be sent to Sutherland, Dumfriesshire or wherever. That sort of creative thinking from all political quarters is what is needed to address the problem.

The minister has done well. I look forward to next week's announcement; I am sure that the figure will be substantially more than £50 million.

10:30

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I am pleased to debate dentistry—or the lack of it—this week, next week or any time after that. As Jamie Stone said, dentistry is one of the main issues in the Highlands.

If members focus only on the closure of the Edinburgh dental school, they are missing the mark. The retention of dentists is a real problem. Members should be asking how many trained, qualified and experienced dentists are not working in their own profession.

One of the points that John Swinney made took me back to the time when I paid for my two children to have fissure sealing. Although at the time it cost £8 per tooth, my two children are now in their 30s and neither of them has any fillings. As fissure sealing can now be provided free of charge, I hope that it will be made available to more children.

I point out the fact that a million more people in Scotland have their natural teeth than was the case 30 years ago, but in Caithness alone, 15,000 people are on the waiting list for NHS dentistry. In the town of Nairn, people face a wait of almost four years if they want to see an NHS dentist. Dentistry is not just about fillings: an extensive dentistry check-up will pick up the early stages of and the problems that are associated with oral cancer, which is one of the fastest-growing cancers in Scotland.

That takes me to the £16.8 million that Tom McCabe has allocated for free dental check-ups for everybody by 2007. Like Shona Robison, I want to know whether the check-up will be the £7 quick look round the mouth; the more extensive £9.95 check-up; or the full case assessment at £20.80. That point is important. If the free check-up is to be only the basic check-up, 2.5 million people will get it; if it is to be the £9.95 check-up, 1.68 million will get it; and if it is to be the all-singing, all-dancing full case check-up, just over 800,000 people will get it.

By any account, we are not talking about free dental check-ups for every person in Scotland. Whatever check-up it is, it is certainly not what was promised in the partnership agreement. Apart from the question of which check-up is on offer, I would like to know how many dentists the Executive has signed up to provide them. I understand that not many dentists have signed up—certainly not enough. The question of how many dentists do so will naturally depend on the payment that they receive from the Executive.

Although many people in the Highlands can afford the check-up at a price of between £25 and £32, they cannot afford the treatment. Every six months for four years, the free check-up will tell people what dental treatment they need, but all the while they wait to be treated. If people want to shop around for treatment in Inverness, they have to pay £25 to £32 for every estimate.

When we read the Government jargon, we learn that pregnant women and others are entitled to



free dental treatment. However, they are entitled to that treatment only if they can find an NHS dentist. I return to another of the points that John Swinney made. Under an MEL—management executive letter—all children should be given three free check-ups during their primary and secondary education. That does not happen in the Highlands and I doubt that it happens elsewhere.

And now for the good news. I attended the dental think-tank meeting in Thurso recently with my colleague Jamie Stone. I commend Cathy Lush of NHS Highland and Professor Bill Saunders, dean of dentistry at Dundee dental school, for their innovative approach to outreach clinics for the training of advanced undergraduate dental students. Although the initiative is not the full answer to the lack of dentistry provision in remote and rural areas, I have no doubt that it will help. I also hope that it will help in the recruitment of local dentists who will act as trainers. The advanced undergraduate students will provide a better integration between our community dental services and the dental school in Dundee.

I have one final point to make, which has not been mentioned so far in the debate. I hope that the Executive will take account of the six-minute clean-up time that is required for infection control, which now takes place between each patient appointment. Naturally, those clean-ups will reduce the time in the working day that is available to treat patients.

10:34

**Rhona Brankin:** I listened with interest to the various issues that have been discussed in today's debate. Clearly, we still have a lot to do if we are to improve the poor state of Scotland's dental health; nobody would disagree with that.

In Scottish dental services, we have matched all United Kingdom developments; in fact, Scotland leads the way on changing dental services.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Will the minister give way?

**Rhona Brankin:** No. I would like to finish the point. If the member will allow me to do so, I will respond to one of his earlier points.

As I said, Scotland leads the way in changing dental services with, for example, our individual preventive programmes for children. Clearly, we have a long way to go, but we have more dentists per head of population than the UK average.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Will the minister now give way?

**Rhona Brankin:** No. In reply to the member's point that we have no targets, I suggest that he reads the workforce plan that was published in 2004. If he does so, he will see that by July 2008,

we will have 143 dental graduates and, by July 2009, 157 graduates. That is a steady increase and I am sure that Mr Stevenson will want to welcome it.

**Stewart Stevenson rose—**

**Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP):** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Rhona Brankin:** No, I would like to make progress.

We have made a considerable and encouraging start with the additional funding and short-term measures that we have introduced, including those that are uniquely Scottish. That said, the process needs to be inclusive, not exclusive. If we are to make a real success of improving the dental health of our people, we need to work in partnership with the professions, the service and patients.

Improving children's dental health is a priority for the Executive. A number of the initiatives that we currently undertake relate to prevention: if we are to secure lasting gains, prevention must be the right way forward. I am proud of the toothbrushing schemes that are now to be found in the majority of nursery schools and of the provision of fissure sealants for six and seven-year olds, free fruit for young children and the nutritional guidelines for schools.

We need to do more, however. By ensuring that parents register their children with a dentist at an early age and by providing advice on toothbrushing and the benefits of a healthy diet, we can offer an effective way of improving oral health.

**Richard Lochhead:** Will the minister give way?

**Rhona Brankin:** No. If the member does not mind, I would like to make progress.

Prevention cannot start too early. As well as contacting all parents with new babies, we have introduced a unique toothbrushing scheme that already delivers daily toothbrushing training to over half the infants who attend nurseries in Scotland.

There is already a wide variety of initiatives to improve the diet of children throughout Scotland. Those initiatives include fruit for infants in pre-school settings such as local playgroups; support for breakfast clubs; and fruit and salad bars in school settings. The initiatives will increase the consumption of fruit, vegetables and carbohydrates. They are also likely to reduce the amount of unhealthy snacks, crisps and sweets that young children consume and so contribute to improved oral health.

Making cool water fountains or water points available to all young children in educational

settings will also make considerable inroads into improving oral health. Our introduction of fissure sealing for the teeth of young children, through the enhanced capitation schemes that are targeted at those in most need, can only assist in the fight against tooth decay.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Will the minister take an intervention now?

**Rhona Brankin:** No. If I may, I prefer to carry on.

On access to NHS dental services, I am aware that availability in some parts of Scotland is getting worse, particularly for adults. It is unfortunate that some dentists have chosen to move towards the provision of private services. As we have heard, that was encouraged from the time that the Conservatives were in power.

In circumstances where health boards have experienced particular difficulties in providing access to NHS dentistry, we are able to authorise the provision of salaried dentists. We will continue to operate and build on the salaried service. In fact, over 100 salaried dentists now operate in Scotland. Over the past two years, we have also made additional funding available for the provision of emergency dental services. If we can build on that provision, we will ensure that people who suffer unnecessary pain get quick and effective support.

There has been debate about the number of dentists we produce in Scotland and whether that number is sufficient to provide an adequate service. We have double the number of graduates per head of population than the rest of the UK. We have more dentists than ever before in Scotland and we have taken positive steps further to increase the number of dental professionals training in Scotland. We will keep that under review.

The nature of primary care dental services has also changed considerably, not least because of advances in technology.

**Stewart Stevenson:** One last chance, minister?

**Rhona Brankin:** No. I am in my final minute. I have let Mr Stevenson intervene once already, and it was an exceptionally long intervention.

We need to continue to build on those developments—particularly in the quality and standards of service and in the rewarding of dentists who are committed to the NHS, to ensure that a modern NHS dental service meets the expectations of the people of Scotland.

As I mentioned earlier, the Executive will announce on 17 March its response to the consultations on children's oral health and on modernising NHS dental services. Our response

will build on the work that we have already undertaken and will introduce further measures to support both prevention and the provision of NHS dentistry in Scotland.

10:40

**Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP):** The minister and her back-bench colleagues may be unhappy that the SNP has chosen this subject for debate. In her opening remarks, she said that she was surprised by the choice. I explain to the minister and her colleagues that the reason why the SNP chose this subject for debate is that it is one of the biggest health issues in our constituencies the length and breadth of Scotland. The minister should perhaps bring the issue to the chamber more often, to let the country know what she is doing.

I have been amazed by the number of people in Grampian who have contacted me on this issue in the past few years. At a meeting just last week, I spoke to a person who asked me—after we had discussed what we were there to discuss—whether I could tell her how she could access an NHS dentist. I then went to the University of Aberdeen to meet an academic to discuss the oil industry. At the end of the conversation, he said, “By the way, can you give me some advice on how to get an NHS dentist, because I’ve just been deregistered?”

Dentistry is a huge issue in all our constituencies, which is why we have to discuss it here today. As John Swinney said, we are in the sixth year of devolution but we are still waiting for real progress. We are in the sixth year of this Labour-Lib Dem coalition and we now have our sixth deputy minister with responsibility for health who is charged with trying to sort out the mess in the NHS dentistry sector. Iain Gray was the first to have a go; then we had Malcolm Chisholm, Frank McAveety, Mary Mulligan and Tom McCabe; and now Rhona Brankin is at the helm. I know that it is a huge task to follow in the illustrious footsteps of those immense individuals who came before her.

**Mike Rumbles:** Mr Lochhead mentions how long we have had to wait—and it has been a long time—but would it not be wiser to wait just one more week? I hope that Mr Lochhead will then welcome the Executive's initiatives, which will show much greater ambition than that shown by the SNP.

**Richard Lochhead:** I have to say that it would be helpful if the minister made more announcements to this Parliament, as opposed to going to the *Daily Record*. We might then have more of an idea of what the Government is doing.

We hope that this will be sixth time lucky. The minister has the chance to succeed where others

before her have failed. The people of Scotland are keen to move on and to get access to NHS dentists in their communities as soon as possible.

The minister has not got off to a great start. One of her first actions was to allow the chief dental officer in Scotland to go part-time. That decision left dentists throughout Scotland completely perplexed. It was a sign of complacency. The minister is not taking the issue seriously enough.

**Rhona Brankin:** Does the member acknowledge that the chief dental officer will in fact continue to work with the NHS and to work in the education field? That is a hugely important role, given his contribution to what Mr Lochhead will be hearing about next week, in our announcement on modernising dental services.

**Richard Lochhead:** That just shows how out of touch the minister is. She does not acknowledge the terrible message that has been sent out to patients and dentists in Scotland. At the height of the NHS dentistry crisis, she allows her chief civil servant to go part-time.

The minister has to acknowledge the scale of the crisis. Many members have today tried to illustrate the crisis in constituencies throughout Scotland. Mike Rumbles, Stewart Stevenson and others have talked about the scale of the crisis in Grampian—a crisis that Andy Kerr, the Minister for Health and Community Care, denied existed on his visit to the area a couple of weeks ago. As Mike Rumbles quite rightly said, it is a crisis. There is no other word for it.

Grampian region alone accounts for one third of patients in Scotland who have been deregistered from the NHS over the past few years. No dentist is currently taking on new NHS patients. The local helpline has been inundated with calls from worried constituents. Emergency dental services in Grampian and elsewhere in Scotland have become the first—and perhaps the only—port of call for patients who are trying to get dental treatment. Because they cannot see a local dentist for preventive work, patients are having to wait until the problem is so serious that they have to go to the emergency dental service at the local hospital.

We have heard about the queues at Oldmeldrum, Stonehaven and elsewhere. A Hungarian who is resident in Aberdeen found that it was cheaper to fly to London, then to fly to Hungary for treatment, and then to fly back, than it would have been to pay for private treatment locally.

The problem affects many rural areas, especially the Highlands, the Borders, Dumfries and Galloway and Grampian. People have seen their shops and banks close; now they cannot even get access to a local dentist. Salaried dentists are part

of the answer—there should be more of them—but in rural areas that will not work unless a health board unit with a salaried dentist opens up in every community. We have to attract dentists back into the NHS.

I want to touch briefly on the growing problem in hospital-based dental services, which creates more of a logjam for local dental practices. In areas such as Grampian, local hospital-based services are overstretched. There is only one orthodontic consultant to cover the whole of Grampian, although there should be three. We heard about the family from Ellon who had to remortgage their house to get £3,000 for private orthodontic treatment for their 13-year-old son. Their son had been on the local waiting list for orthodontic treatment since he was nine. That is unacceptable; we have to address it.

**Rhona Brankin:** Does the member welcome the fact that Grampian NHS Board has recently provided orthodontic consultations in the private sector, to try to alleviate the backlog?

**Richard Lochhead:** Of course I welcome that, but I am trying to convey to the minister the scale of the crisis in NHS dental services—not just in local communities but in hospitals in some parts of Scotland.

We have heard a lot about the benefits of oral health, and Eleanor Scott spoke about diet and other ways of improving oral health.

If we are to deliver free dental checks, we need the dentists. There is no point in making pledges that cannot be fulfilled. That is irresponsible. The minister does not even seem to know how many dentists we will need in Scotland to fulfil the pledge to deliver free dental checks. We have to attract more dentists to work in Scotland and we have to train more dentists here in Scotland.

At present, there are many more applications to dental schools than there are places. There is therefore scope to expand the training of dentists in Scotland. We may have to open new dental schools, because we have to ensure that more dentists are working in our communities.

This Government has somehow—at a time of record NHS investment—allowed dental services to implode in many areas. The Tory party's legacy in Scotland was long dole queues; this Government's legacy will be queues of people trying to get basic access to NHS dentists in their communities. The minister should acknowledge that this is a huge crisis that should be top of her health agenda.

## Early Years Education and Child Care

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-2547, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on early years education and child care.

10:48

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** I will attempt to provide a link from the previous debate to this one by complimenting the Executive—I admit that I do not do that very often. This week, at his eight-month check, my baby son received a toothbrush and toothpaste from the health board. I am not sure about access to dental services for all babies who were born last year, but my son also received, in a canvas bag, baby books from the book store initiative, which is supported by the Executive. I therefore acknowledge that universal access to support for an early start in education is already part of policy.

Some children start nursery having never had a book in the home, and having never had the love and nurturing that most children receive. It is not only the child's development that can be supported. Early years policy supports working families and society in general. However, in the Government's policy, there has been too much emphasis on getting single mums back into the workforce. Tackling poverty is crucial, but there is a danger that the Government, in doing that, has lost sight of the primacy of the development of the individual child as the driving force behind policy. Developing motor skills and cognitive understanding is about more than simply improving later results; it is about enhancing the child's ability to understand the world, delivering for the child the magic of discovery and learning, and creating a wonder that will continue to feed interest and to create a hunger for learning to last a lifetime.

What about societal benefits? The abecedarian project in the United States, which offered intensive pre-school education, concentrated on children from low-income, multirisk families. Studies at age 21 of young adults who had attended the project produced impressive results. Those young adults were more likely to have attended tertiary education, and the study results showed a reduction in the number of teenage pregnancies and the use of illegal drugs. The US Perry pre-school project pointed towards a cost-benefit analysis: for every \$1 spent on the US abecedarian project, society saved \$4, while every \$1 spent on the Perry pre-school project saved \$8.

Where stands Scotland? I understand that we expect to see the Government's national early

years strategy soon, but it was first consulted on in 2003, it was promised by March 2004 and it has been delayed in publication. It is right and proper that, in the absence of such a strategy, the Parliament should state its views on what it can expect.

In the meantime, the issue of the recognition of the work of nursery nurses still awaits long-term resolution. Scotland is ahead of England in many respects in early years education, and all that Labour in England is promising at the forthcoming election is 15 hours a week of education by 2010. In Scotland, if the Executive heeds the Scottish National Party call, we could increase provision to 3.25 hours a day for 38 weeks, starting now. That would mean an extra 200 hours of early years education this year for more than 100,000 children. The Government currently provides 12.5 hours a week for only 33 weeks a year, which is equivalent to only 11 hours a week over a normal primary school year of 38 weeks. A move to full half-day provision, as called for by the SNP, could be started this summer, where staff and accommodation capacity exist, rather than by some distant target in 2010.

Our ambition for young Scots does not stop there. The SNP would seek that increase as part of a commitment to move to eventual full-day provision for education and child care. Denmark and Sweden spend 2 per cent of their gross domestic product on early years education and child care, while Scotland spends only 0.5 per cent. Only 8 per cent of five to 10-year-olds in Scotland receive formal out-of-school care; in Sweden, the figure is almost 75 per cent. Schools should become children's centres for the community, and there should be a presumption against the closure of rural schools such as those that are currently under threat in Aberdeenshire; their use should be expanded to provide community child care.

If we want to tackle fundamentally the inequalities and if we want to cultivate the cognitive skills that the future economy will need—as an increasing number of economists, from Nicholas Crafts to Professor Heyman, have said—early years is the place that will make the biggest impact. Until we have the powers over the tax and benefit system that would come with independence, we are restricted here in Scotland in what we can do. We are operating child care policy with one hand tied behind our back.

**Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** I am grateful for the credit that Fiona Hyslop gives to the Executive for its work on the issue, but at the end of the day her aspirations would have to be paid for. How, from the point of view of independence—which is what Fiona Hyslop is really proposing—would those aspirations be paid for? How do we raise

spending by four times merely by moving to independence?

**Fiona Hyslop:** No Trident; no illegal wars; no identity cards; and by investing in children rather than bombs.

The SNP policy of early education and child care for all would mean a universal, comprehensive system in which there would be a fundamental and radical policy shift; public money from the state would be moved from subsidising the demand side to subsidising the supply side, or child care providers. Instead of operating an expensive, bureaucratic taxation system that subsidises parents' access to expensive, often inaccessible, child care, the Government would subsidise the providers of accessible, quality, affordable child care. For the Tories, that could mean parents. In short, if we are to emulate our Scandinavian cousins, instead of subsidising a few parents for 70 per cent of the 100 per cent of child care costs that they pay, the state would subsidise child care provision so that parents would have to pay only 30 per cent of the cost in the first place. No one would lose out and everyone would benefit. What better way to spend the benefits of an independent Scottish economy, growing at 4 per cent a year? That is real ambition. That is a real smart, successful Scotland.

The power of early years development and education in young children is staggering; the power for damage to be done at such an early age is frightening. If we want a strong, confident nation we need to build firm foundations for our future generations.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the vital role of early years education and the importance of quality, accessible childcare in stimulating children's development and supporting working families in particular and the wider economy and society generally; notes with concern the delay in the publication of the national strategy for early years with provision for a national settlement for nursery nurses from the Scottish Executive; supports the immediate extension of free nursery education for three and four-year-olds to a full half day from the current part-time provision and the extension of "nurture groups" across Scotland for vulnerable young pupils, and recognises, however, that in order for Scotland to be able to shape and deliver comprehensive early education and childcare the Scottish government needs to have powers over tax and benefits in order to provide a universal entitlement to emulate the provision of Scandinavian countries who spend four times the proportion of their GDP in support of children in the early years as Scotland.

10:55

**The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Euan Robson):** Today's debate is a welcome opportunity to say just how much is being invested in early years education and child care. There is a mass of evidence that shows that

positive interventions, such as high-quality early education and child care, when a child is very young, can have a significant beneficial impact on that child's whole life and future direction. Fiona Hyslop mentioned a number of such pieces of evidence. As I said in last week's debate on school meals, the Executive's vision is that children are safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, respected, responsible and included. We also want to ensure that children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society and at work.

So what investment is the Executive making in early years education and child care? I want to devote a few moments to underline just how much resource the Executive has already committed and will commit. Scottish Executive child care strategy funding this year is £30 million, rising to £43 million in 2005-06. Sure start Scotland funding for our youngest and most vulnerable children is £35 million this year, rising to £53 million next year. We also have more than £1 million for 2004-06 from the Department for Work and Pensions for two extended schools child care pilots, providing child care for lone parents who are on income support. We have provided £20 million from 2004-06, under the working for families fund, to provide child care support in the most deprived areas, to help parents to access education, training or employment.

In addition, community regeneration funding can support child care. The Minister for Communities announced on 9 December 2004 that the CRF will amount to £318 million over three years: £104 million in 2005-06; £106 million in 2006-07; and £108 million in 2007-08. Local authorities spent £195 million on pre-primary education in 2002-03, covering services that they provide directly as well as those that they provide in partnership with the private and voluntary sectors. At December 2004, more than 32,000 families in Scotland were benefiting from the child care element of the working tax credit, with an average award of £47 a week. Separately, awards from the big lottery fund child care programme totalled an average of £7.9 million per year for Scotland for the period 2001-03, and £14.5 million is available from its quality child care programme. I mention all that because sometimes we lose sight of how much we invest in child care and early years education. That is a key investment and one that we will continue to achieve.

Not only can child care help children in their growth, development and achievement, but it can support parents who are working or who want to work. We know that work is the best route out of poverty, so good-quality, accessible and affordable child care can help to prevent poverty.

Our Scottish child care strategy—which aims to ensure that good-quality, affordable child care is available for all—has been in place since 1998 and we have made progress. The Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care now regulates all child care up to age 16, working jointly with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education on the inspection of pre-school education. There has been an expansion of child care, with 243,000 children—28 per cent of all children aged up to 14 and a 7 per cent increase on the previous year—now receiving formal care. Out-of-school care in particular has benefited from lottery funding programmes, with £29 million going into creating over 48,000 places. There is a pre-school education place for all three and four-year-olds whose parents want one, and we should celebrate the fact that 85 per cent of three-year-olds and 100 per cent of four-year-olds—a total of more than 103,000 children—attended pre-school education in 2004. The workforce is better qualified than ever before; almost three quarters of early education and child care staff hold qualifications.

Of course, in the pre-election period, while the Tories crank up the gramophone to play the worn-out tune of vouchers, the Scottish National Party feels obliged to dream up some ideas for what to say and promise in the full knowledge that it will have to deliver none of them. Despite that luxurious position—the ability to afford anything without the need to develop its proposals—the SNP still cannot offer much. It says nothing about quality of provision or flexibility and choice for parents and it deals with only one dimension of current provision. As the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister have said in recent weeks, we have ambition to expand provision even further and, when we do, we will not take the SNP's one-dimensional approach; we will show real ambition for parents and children and the quality of provision to which they aspire.

I move amendment S2M-2547.1, to leave out from “notes” to end and insert:

“supports the Scottish Executive's aim to provide more flexible and available childcare to all; acknowledges the significant successes already achieved through the Scottish Childcare Strategy, including making available free part-time pre-school education for every three and four-year-old, establishing a coherent regulatory framework under the Care Commission and expanding childcare provision across all sectors, and endorses the Executive's commitment to universal early education and childcare services with specific support to disadvantaged groups, including those for whom lack of childcare is a barrier to employment, education or training.”

11:01

**Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con):** In the absence of our education spokesman—who will, I hope, be playing his part in a Government defeat in another

place—I will speak to and move the Conservative amendment.

The debate is one of those in which we all agree on the ultimate goal—we all wish young children to be given the best possible start in life and consider pre-school education to be an essential part of that—but differ on how that may be achieved. The Conservatives' watchword in that respect is flexibility. I say to the minister that that is not the gramophone being cranked up, but a state-of-the-art CD player, which indicates our modern approach to education, as to everything else. That approach is based on the belief that families, not Governments, should decide how to run their family life. As Ms Hyslop will confirm, no one knows better than parents how children should be brought up. For some families, it might be better for the children to use a breakfast club or after-school club; for others, it might not. However, it is essential that parents should be given that choice.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Choice means services being available. It is not possible to have choice if there are no services, and the state can help to provide the services.

**Bill Aitken:** Exactly; that is why I take issue with some of the SNP's policies on early years provision, which will result in many of the services not being available. Despite her able put-down of Mr Brown, Ms Hyslop has not explained satisfactorily how the proposals that the SNP has in mind would be costed. Indeed, some of the SNP's policies are likely to have the opposite effect to the one that she seeks. For example, the SNP's dogmatic approach to the private finance initiative would result in our simply not having new nursery or primary school buildings. That is the bottom line.

I return to choice, which is important. I am sure that we all agree that class sizes should be the minimum possible that is compatible with educational accountability. The smaller the class, the more likely the child is to succeed, but if parents were to put class sizes before school reputations, they would select schools with half-empty classes rather than schools that were full to overflowing because of their performance and reputation. Of course we want smaller class sizes, but that is not a top priority for parents, who want quality of education, which must be the priority.

I fully acknowledge that more money has gone into the system, but despite that fact, the Executive's stance has not exactly been inspiring. One need only read the evidence of the Scottish Independent Nurseries Association to see how political dogma stands in the way of the provision of a more imaginative and flexible service than that which local authorities provide.

I have no doubt that members noted with interest a piece in the *Edinburgh Evening News* a couple of weeks ago reporting the concern—indeed, the anger—of Edinburgh parents at the City of Edinburgh Council's plans to close four nurseries and replace them with one supernursery. It seems that child factories are to join granny farms as the way forward. The Conservatives would allow the funds to follow the child, and the parents would decide which centres remained open. Parents would be given the choice and there can be no doubt that, on that issue—like everything else in life—if the individual is given choice, matters will improve. That is a fundamental truth in education in particular.

The debate is short, and I would have liked to raise other issues, such as the ability of schools, working with the voluntary sector, to do a great deal for young children's physical fitness. To be frank, the Executive is obstructing that at the moment.

**Euan Robson:** What?

**Bill Aitken:** Yes; the schools' ability to do that is being obstructed by the Executive's attitude towards the voluntary sector. The Executive seems to think that local authorities should do everything and that acts as a positive disincentive to those who are willing to give their time to provide children's services that the local authorities manifestly do not provide.

I move amendment S2M-2547.2, to leave out from "working families" to end and insert:

"parents who choose to work; notes that both the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament's Education Committee are currently reviewing early years provision, including issues of recruitment and retention of staff and pay and conditions, and believes that parents must have the flexibility to choose the form of nursery education best suited to their family circumstances and that a nursery voucher that can be topped up represents the best way to achieve this."

11:06

**Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP):** Good-quality child care and early years education are crucial to the well-being and development of the youngest in our society. Many parents and children are trapped in a life of poverty because of the lack of affordable child care. Provision of nursery places for all three and four-year-olds is to be welcomed, but it does not solve the problem for working families, who require flexible arrangements for the care of their children. We need available places in after-school clubs and breakfast clubs, as well as day care for the very young. Private nurseries are expensive and beyond the budgets of many parents, which is why we need publicly funded child care provision.

The Scottish Socialist Party welcomes nursery provision for all three and four-year-olds, but we would like that provision to be extended. We should value investment for children, because, after all, they are the future of Scotland. Therefore, we should value the professionals who work with them. Nursery nurses took industrial action a year ago to secure an improvement in their pay and conditions and the recognition that they are key education professionals. What did they get in return? Local agreements with different wage settlements—nursery nurses remain poorly paid and undervalued. Talk is cheap, but it takes money to provide a professional service. Nursery nurses deserve that money, and so do our children.

Given the months of industrial action and the promises that were made, it is unacceptable that the Executive has delayed the publication of the national strategy for early years education, and I hope that the minister will give some indication of when the strategy will be published.

The Scottish Socialist Party believes that all child care should be state funded at the point of need and that flexibility to accommodate families' needs should be the norm. There should be a mixture of high-quality care and education for all children from birth to school age; child care that is provided by trained and valued staff; provision that suits the working lives of families; and early intervention to ensure the best possible start for all.

It is vital that the lasting benefits of early intervention be recognised, because a sound foundation in the early years is key to future learning and development. Early identification of special educational needs or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties reduces the long-term risk of underachievement and disaffection. Nursery nurses are the professionals at the front line of that issue and, alongside health workers, have a crucial role to play. Unfortunately, like many teachers, nursery nurses are frustrated by a lack of joined-up services and a shortage of educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, speech and language therapists and social workers; such shortages lead to gaps in provision and poor transitions because the resources to support the nursery nurses are not provided. In one case that I dealt with recently, a child with Asperger's syndrome ended up by suffering part-time education for the whole of primary 1 despite the fact that a pre-school community assessment had been undertaken.

The same thing happens with those children who display early signs of behavioural difficulties. Nursery nurses who taught children whom I received in transition from primary to secondary school have asked me, "How's wee Jimmy doing?"

and I have replied, "He's been excluded for setting fire to the toilets." The nursery nurses then say, "That wee boy had real problems from day one. We tried to get support for him and his family, but the intensive help they needed was not available." We reap the benefits of indiscipline in our schools later because we do not deal with those issues early and we do not put the resources into sorting out young people and supporting parents. We do not help people with parenting skills or with getting support from the nursery nurses, who are the professionals and who can provide support at an early stage. We make those mistakes over and over again and many nursery nurses, primary teachers and secondary teachers are frustrated by the situation.

Putting children into smaller classes in primary school would make a significant difference. Having classes of 20 or fewer would allow for individual support and, crucially, for the teacher to interact with the children in a smaller setting. That, along with the provision of support staff, would make an immediate difference to meeting the needs of all our children.

We need a fundamental shift in what we do at the early stages of child development. I ask the Executive to look at the Danish system, whereby playing, singing, role playing, going out into the woods and making the best use of nature provides three and four-year-olds—who are at a crucial stage—with the best start in life socially and in every other way. We should consider adopting that approach instead of keeping the formal curriculum that we have at the moment.

I move amendment S2M-2547.3, to leave out from "in particular" to end and insert:

"; calls for a recognition of the professionalism of nursery nurses and the immediate establishment of national pay and conditions commensurate with that professionalism; further calls for an immediate response from the Minister for Education and Young People regarding the delay in the publication of the national strategy for early years; demands a system of accessible childcare and nursery education publicly-funded and free at the point of need for all families; supports the wisdom of early intervention in the early stages of education and the implementation of developmental needs provision rather than formal learning, and calls for appropriate support for children with special educational needs and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and also appropriate support for parents and carers of these children."

11:11

**Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab):** In the previous debate, Carolyn Leckie said that she was a wee girl in the heyday of the welfare state. Given that Ms Leckie and I are roughly the same age, I assume that she meant the 1960s. In that period, I attended Carleton nursery in Glenrothes, which was run by the local authority. Let us be honest: in the 1960s, it was rare for any four-year-old to have

a nursery place, even in Fife. Fife County Council, then Fife Regional Council and eventually Fife Council were well ahead of the national game in pre-school education. I am glad that it was a Labour initiative that ensured that all four-year-olds, and now all three-year-olds, whose parents desire it, have a nursery place, so that young people will have the same advantages and start in life that I was fortunate to have in 1966. I, more than most members in the chamber, know the benefits that a good-quality pre-school education can have for achievements at school, which I have mentioned in previous debates.

I am glad that when we debate education in general, and pre-school education in particular, there is consensus among all members about the needs of young children. We do not have to argue about that; it is a given. It is a bit unfortunate that the Conservatives have come round to the idea so late, because they had so much opportunity to do something about pre-school education when they were in power, but patently did not.

Bill Aitken made the bold statement that all parents know what is best for their children. I wish that that were the case but, for a small minority, it is not. We would not have child protection investigations into physical abuse and injury, emotional abuse and failure to thrive if parents always knew what was best for their children. The Conservatives should take on board the fact that parents do not always know best and that the state has an important role to play in ensuring that young people's needs are met properly.

**Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con):** Does the member agree that we should be talking about the state giving choice and guidance to parents, who ultimately must make the choice that is in the best interests of their family?

**Scott Barrie:** No. I do not accept that, if choice means returning to the old has-been of a voucher system, which gives some people a better start but does not offer the universal provision that I, and I think most members, believe that young people deserve.

The SNP motion highlights Scandinavia, and Fiona Hyslop mentioned Sweden and Denmark in her speech. We might also mention the Netherlands, whose pre-school provision is renowned and which has a compulsory education starting age of six. We should consider that when we talk about pre-school education and the compulsory school age. Fiona Hyslop did not develop the cost of immediately offering Scandinavian-type provision. It is incumbent on anyone who brings proposals to the chamber to spell out the costs. We cannot have Scandinavian-type provision with Republic of Ireland tax rates. The SNP must answer that fundamental conundrum. If we want the level of public provision



and services that exists in Scandinavia, we must also invest the amount of money that is spent there, and the Republic of Ireland does not spend that amount of money. It is said constantly of the Scottish economy that we should follow the Republic of Ireland model. If we do so, it stands to reason that we will have the same level of public services that the Republic of Ireland has, which is nothing like the level enjoyed in Scandinavia.

Rosemary Byrne said that an integrated approach was required in pre-school education. She is absolutely right, but even when such an approach is taken, it is not always the case that youngsters do not fall apart.

Let us not deride the developments that have taken place and the improvements that have been made but build on them.

11:16

**Mr Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP):**

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in support of the motion in the name of my colleague, Fiona Hyslop. On what Scott Barrie just said about investing in our young children, can he answer this question: what would be the cost of not investing properly in them? That is the question that should be asked, not how much this or that cost. Those are genuine and relevant questions, but the fundamental question is what the outcome will be if we do not invest in the education and care of pre-school children. We see the outcome in some of the problems in our society today.

One of the most important things that the Parliament could do for families is to provide at least a full half-day's child care for three and four-year-olds, which is readily accessible to all parents, which means preferably within walking distance. That is not what we have at the moment, no matter what the minister might try to pretend.

By way of example, I cite my experience of trying to deal with child care arrangements for a pre-school child. The current arrangements are far from perfect. When it was time for my daughter to attend nursery school, we duly completed the local authority form, which included spaces to state whether we wanted mornings or afternoons and which nursery we wanted our child to attend. We asked for mornings and for a place at the nearest nursery, which happened to be located in the primary school that my daughter would be attending the following year. Some time later, the letter from the council arrived informing us of the offer that it was making us. We found that instead of mornings in a nursery within walking distance of our house, we were being offered afternoons in a nursery in a different area that was not within walking distance. Given that there is no direct public transport route between where we live and

the nursery and that we did not have access to a car, it was impossible for us to accept the offer.

There is no point in saying that nursery provision is available to all, because that is not the case on the ground. The reality is that many parents cannot take up offers because of accessibility problems. We rejected our offer because it was completely useless. It is no use having places available if they do not match the needs of parents. Places must match what families need. Therefore, they must be accessible to families and, in particular, to mothers, given that the burden of child care usually falls disproportionately on women. We know that many women do not have regular access to a car. Even if a family own a car, often the working parent needs it to access their place of work.

**Robert Brown:** Does the member acknowledge that, nevertheless, something like 99.5 per cent of four-year-olds are taking up the opportunity of nursery education? We have to put the situation in perspective.

**Mr Maxwell:** I accept the figures absolutely and I accept that it is better to have the care than not to have it. However, I am saying that the provision is not good enough at the moment.

Even if a family have a car, it is often not accessible to the parent who is looking after the child. We all know that many of the people who need services most are in the section of the population with the lowest percentage of car ownership. Therefore, they need places close at hand.

The issue should not be regarded as being merely about the needs of young children or of parents. Fundamentally, it is an equal opportunities and women's rights issue as much as it is a children's issue. The problem with the current arrangement is not just accessibility. The main problem is that provision simply does not meet the needs of women who wish to return to employment. Two hours of child care per day is not good enough. Women who want to, and often need to, return to work while their children are young depend on child care provision. The provision of two hours per day completely fails to help, even if a woman wants to take up part-time employment. Perhaps when the minister winds up he will be able to identify a single job that would allow a woman to work for an hour, or an hour and a half at the most, per day. Two hours' child care does not equate to two hours' work when travelling time is taken into account. That is why we must move on and provide a full half-day's child care at the very least. With a full half-day's child care, part-time work becomes possible for the first time.

**Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Mr Maxwell:** No, I do not have time. Sorry.

Many employers have posts that can be job-shared so that mornings or afternoons can be worked. It is clear from the amount of money that we invest in early years education and child care compared with the amount invested by many small, independent countries, such as Denmark and Sweden, that we are failing properly to address the issue. If we want to make a difference to young children, mothers and families, we need to solve the problem and give them the support that they need to grow, develop and prosper.

This Parliament cannot do everything that is required to sort out the problems that our country, operating with one hand tied behind its back, faces. Only by taking all the necessary powers to deal with the issues can we tackle the core problem.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):** Quickly.

**Mr Maxwell:** In conclusion, if we think that the provision of two hours of child care per day in any way helps families who cannot afford to pay for child care for the rest of the day, we are kidding ourselves. We are doing nothing more than window dressing what is a serious problem for so many families in Scotland.

I urge members to support the motion.

11:21

**Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** All members so far have emphasised the importance of early years education and early years child care, although I do not think that Stewart Maxwell realises that there is an important difference between education and child care.

I would like a more holistic service for children and families. I agree that we look forward impatiently to the introduction by the Executive of an integrated early years strategy. Of course, such a strategy has implications for the assessment of comparative pay, conditions, qualifications, training needs and career paths between the various sectors of child care and nursery education. Making that assessment is much more of a challenge than just addressing the need for agreed pay and career structures for qualified nursery nurses. I note that, when the matter was debated in June last year, the Executive said that it would have proposals on the table within a year. I hope that we will see them by the summer. Average pay in the child care sector is about £8 per hour compared with the Scottish average of £11 per hour. I hope that the Executive will take the opportunity to show its commitment to equal pay for women.

Universal, free nursery education for four-year-olds was at the heart of Labour's manifesto in the 1997 elections and the Scottish Executive extended such education to three-year-olds. Delivering that was not an easy task for local authorities, particularly for rural local authorities such as Highland Council, which often have to provide for a handful of children in remote and rural communities. Councils try to organise transport to nursery groups through community networks and voluntary organisations, and I have spoken to the minister about those pressures in the past.

Early years provision in rural areas has been helped considerably by the increase in both child care and sure start funding from the Executive. That increase has also allowed funding for family projects in deprived urban areas, which we also have in the Highlands, and the working for families fund has supported parents—mainly single parents—into work in remote areas by providing child care.

Highland Council is to be commended for what it has achieved from almost a standing start in both English-medium and Gaelic-medium nursery and playgroup provision. It has worked in partnership with various voluntary organisations. Bill Aitken gave the impression that such working does not happen, but I will mention some of those organisations and the sterling work that they do. My first example is a project that has been much visited by ministers. NCH's excellent project at Merkinch in Inverness supports young families in one of our most challenging environments.

There are also projects in remote and rural areas, such as the project that is run by Family First in Skye, Wester Ross, Sutherland and Lochaber. Vulnerable young families are supported in their parenting skills through one-to-one encouragement and engagement and they are given help to make contact with peer groups in the community. Home-Start Scotland, which operates throughout Scotland, also offers one-to-one support through home visits. Those two organisations operate with well-trained and dedicated volunteers and they provide a valuable service to our most vulnerable people. It has been shown in Scandinavia that the maximum benefit comes from supporting parents in looking after their children in the early years rather than from nursery education. The Scottish Childminding Association also deserves recognition for its contribution. Often, it cannot access funding for its training needs because it supports people who run businesses.

I mention those various bodies and funding needs to show that supporting children is about a lot more than free nursery education. The money that the SNP would spend on providing all children

with an extra three quarters of an hour of nursery per day might be better directed towards the more vulnerable families who need more intensive support. I will not go into the £9 billion black hole, but I ask whether we would have the same levels of child benefit under the SNP. Would we still have the working tax credit, which gives families an average of almost £50 per week for child care? Would we have nursery education at all?

In conclusion, I ask the Executive when its integrated early years strategy will be published. Some councils are already some way down the line; Highland Council no longer has child care partnerships but has a family resource alliance.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Quickly.

**Maureen Macmillan:** I also urge the Executive to consider how important the care of children is to society and to show its appreciation of that when it publishes its recommendations on the salary and career structures of those to whom we entrust our children.

**Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I wonder whether you can do anything about the heat in the chamber this morning, which is excruciating.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Actually, no, I cannot. Members who were present yesterday afternoon will remember that when whatever happens up here happened, it was very noisy and disruptive and it interrupted Ms Hyslop's speech, so perhaps it would be best if the matter was dealt with over the lunch period.

11:27

**Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** That is perhaps an example of the lack of practical politics in the SNP.

Fiona Hyslop introduced today's debate with a powerful speech, most of which I agreed with. However, her colleague Stewart Maxwell then spoiled matters with his gross exaggeration, building an edifice on a pin-prick of local difficulties. I recognise that such difficulties will exist from time to time, but they are perfectly capable of being dealt with.

**Mr Maxwell:** Is the member really saying that two hours of child care per day, often in the middle of the day, is sufficient to allow women to go back to work?

**Robert Brown:** No. I am saying that the achievements of the Executive and the Parliament on the matter have been substantial. Fiona Hyslop rightly gave recognition to them, but Mr Maxwell seems to dismiss them out of hand and suggest that they are non-existent to build his local problem of rural access—although that is an important point—into a general theory.

The SNP motion is, to parody Winston Churchill, a platitude wrapped up in an aspiration inside a non sequitur. The platitude is the recognition of the vital role of early years education and accessible child care. I doubt that anyone in the Parliament disagrees with that. Indeed, it is one of the proudest boasts of the Liberal Democrats that, through the partnership agreement with Labour, the Executive has delivered the right to and the reality of free nursery school education for three and four-year-olds. That is a stupendous achievement and it should pay huge dividends in the years to come. While the SNP has dilly-dallied in the highways and byways of constitutional rearrangements and the assorted irrelevancies, the Liberal Democrat and Labour Executive has delivered.

Of course, more could be done. My view, and the view of the Executive, is that a comprehensive, accessible and affordable early years education and child care service is in sight. The Education Committee is to conduct an inquiry into early years learning later in the year to map out where we are and identify what works, what does not, what the priorities are and what changes are needed. Fiona Hyslop's aspiration is pretty similar to the aspirations of most members in the chamber. Many of us have considered or read about nurture groups for vulnerable youngsters and we recognise their value, as does the Executive.

So we have a platitude, we have an aspiration and we come to fulfilment. The SNP contention is that the Parliament needs powers over taxes and benefits to increase spending on early years support to four times its current level. That is a non sequitur of a truly impressive kind. Liberal Democrats have always held the view that Scotland should have much stronger fiscal powers, but for good reasons: democratic accountability and transparency and to support the proper federal relationship that should exist between Scotland and the United Kingdom.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Robert Brown:** No.

Since 1999, the Executive's budget has risen from £14 billion to about £22 billion, which is a rise of more than 50 per cent. It is simply not credible for the SNP to claim that it can magic up more funding through independence—indeed, the motion does not ask for independence—and, as far as we understand, by reducing taxes.

The SNP's financial policies make even the Conservatives look like models of financial rectitude and practicality. The SNP should not play financial conjuring tricks with the future of Scotland's children. It should say where it will find four times as much funding for early years care as

is provided now—that was not in the debating points of Fiona Hyslop's answer earlier—and say which services it would cut and which taxes it would raise.

The Liberal Democrat vision for Scotland's children does not rest content with current progress, impressive though that is. We believe that nothing is more important than giving every child in Scotland the best start in life and the best opportunity to fulfil his or her potential. Maureen Macmillan made important and useful points about the breadth of approach that we must take. Constant improvement in public resource is needed to bring about that vision.

I have much pleasure in supporting the Executive amendment.

11:31

**Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP):**

The question in the debate is what we want. We are after access for parents to good-quality child care and a Government guarantee that when a parent puts their young and vulnerable child in the hands of a carer, they will have good early years education. I take Maureen Macmillan's point that child care and early years education are different, but she should accept that, for most families and working mothers, they are tied together, because of the decisions that we must take.

We want professionals to be responsible for our children when we put them into child care and we want the resources to allow children to develop. That is what we want and need, but the reality is that Government policy is fragmented. Robert Brown said in an intervention that 99.5 per cent of four-year-olds have nursery provision. What a scream that is. I agree with Stewart Maxwell that two or three hours of provision a day is a complete waste of time for most part-time working women, never mind full-time working women.

**Maureen Macmillan:** Will the member give way?

**Frances Curran:** No; I want to finish my point.

If a parent accepts that provision, they have more hassle to arrange child care before and after the place that the Executive deigns to give them. Stewart Maxwell's experience is not a pin-prick; it represents what usually happens to most parents—mainly women—who want to take up a nursery place.

Full-time places for three and four-year-olds are few and far between in council, public and partnership nurseries and have a huge waiting list. Parents must fill in a criteria form for a decision on whether they can obtain a place, and 90 per cent of people who want a place do not obtain one. That is the reality of the option that is available from the Executive.

Early years learning initiatives from the Executive are falling on professionals like confetti. I do not have time to go through the unbelievable number of initiatives that have been produced in the past few years. At some point, the Executive will have to learn that its progress and performance are judged not on the number of bits of paper that it produces, but on how it treats the service and the professionals in it.

The professionals who are on the receiving end of the initiatives—the diktats from the Executive—and who are expected to implement them without resources or recognition of professional status are the nursery nurses who went on strike against the Executive. The situation is not good enough. Maureen Macmillan said that the Executive hoped to have a review within a year. We have not had that and we do not know what the progress has been. Will we achieve equal pay and accept that we want professionals in the sector? Is the Executive prepared to put its money where its mouth is and to back that professional section of the workforce? We have plenty of bits of paper, but no evidence that the Executive will follow them through.

I agree in particular with the part of the SNP motion that calls for the immediate introduction of full-time nursery places in local authorities for all three and four-year-olds whose parents want such a place. Why is that target so hard to hit? Why is that aspiration beyond the Parliament? Why can we not implement that proposal? It is implemented in half of Europe, for goodness' sake. Child care provision goes much further in countries such as Denmark, but we have apologies for ministers who say that the aspiration goes too far. That shows the Executive's poverty of vision. We need the measure and I urge the Executive to support it.

11:36

**Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** I thank the SNP for the opportunity to debate early years education because Labour in local, Scottish and UK Government has made a huge difference to it in the past 10 years. I thank the SNP for the opportunity to celebrate Labour's success and look forward to what we can achieve in the future.

My children were all born when Mrs Thatcher was Prime Minister—under a Tory Government, people had to do something to cheer themselves up. At that time, only 25 per cent of pre-school children who lived in Ayrshire—the part of Strathclyde in which we lived—were offered a half-day nursery place in the year before they started school. A parent had to put the child's name into a ballot in the hope that they might get something. No choice of establishment or time was available and many areas of South Ayrshire had no provision. I probably used up all my lottery luck—I

must have, because I have never won in the lottery—by having all three of my children being offered a place through that ballot. As a working mother, I appreciate that problems existed at that time in organising wraparound care, but that provision was still valuable and its extension is still a tremendous success.

Addressing the issue was a key priority for Labour South Ayrshire Council—Murray Tosh will remember its election in 1995, only 10 years ago. At that time, local government had to consider the Tories' voucher scheme, but the council decided not to become involved in it. I hope that the Tories will give us the opportunity before the general election to debate their proposals, because they will find that we are ready for their arguments.

We in South Ayrshire Council established nursery classes in primary schools that had capacity and by building additional classrooms. As convener of education services then, I was extremely proud to open nursery classes in areas that had previously had no nursery provision, such as the class at Kingcase Primary School in Prestwick, which my children attended. Those are among the moments of which I am most proud in my time as a politician.

Of course, things became a great deal better when Labour was elected to power in 1997, because we had the commitment to provision of free half-day nursery places for four-year-olds, and the establishment of child care partnerships that meant that for the first time the public, voluntary and private sectors worked together to provide a service for all families. Bill Aitken talked a load of unsubstantiated tripe about the Executive's attitude to the private and voluntary sectors—valuable partnerships have been established up and down the country.

**Bill Aitken:** Will the member give way?

**Dr Murray:** No. I am sorry; I must press on.

The introduction of child tax credits and working tax credits has assisted families who are on lower incomes. Support has been provided for the first child in a lowest-income family, which will be £60 a week from next month. That is far more than was available under the Tories. We have also introduced a statutory right to paternity leave.

Things have become even better under the Labour-Liberal Scottish Executive. We have the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000, which placed a duty on local authorities to secure a pre-school education place for every three and four-year-old whose parents want one. Other members have mentioned the sure start programme, which operates on both sides of the border. This year, £23 million will be spent on the programme and £50 million will be spent in 2006. We also have the review of the early years and

child care workforce. I agree with Maureen Macmillan and Rosemary Byrne that the review needs to address a number of complex workforce issues.

More will come if Labour is re-elected at Westminster this year. We will see extension of the entitlement to statutory maternity pay to nine months by 2007 and to 12 months by the end of the next Parliament. There will be increasing flexibility to allow both parents to share maternity leave entitlement or to take leave when the child is older. We also have a commitment on both sides of the border to expand both the right to nursery education and opportunities for early learning to all young children and their families. I thank the SNP for giving me a chance to run through just a few of the achievements of the UK Government and the Scottish Executive in serving Scotland's young families.

As many other members have said, including Scott Barrie and Robert Brown, the SNP motion is full of worthy aspirations, but there is no cost analysis of how they would be achieved. I reject totally the constitutional guff at the end of the motion.

Labour and Liberal Democrat members will continue to make progress to secure the best possible learning opportunities for our youngest citizens, by working in partnership with Westminster colleagues. I agree strongly with Rosemary Byrne and Maureen Macmillan that we need to address behavioural problems as early as possible, but we are making progress. That progress must not be halted by the election at Westminster this year of a Tory Government, with its stated intention to make £35 billion-worth of cuts.

11:41

**Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con):** When Fiona Hyslop opened the debate, I thought that her speech would be very interesting. Speaking as a dedicated mother, she made points with which no one could disagree. In particular, she talked about the development of a child's cognitive skills, the discovery of learning and so on. However, she might also have commented on the development of parents. Children often need extra help because their parents have not been developed sufficiently early to be able to understand the issues. It is important that we do not isolate children from parents.

Fiona Hyslop was the first of a number of speakers to mention the delay in publication of the Scottish Executive's early years strategy. It is pertinent at this point for me to ask the minister to give us when he winds up the exact date at which it will be brought to Parliament. I appreciate that

the Education Committee is, as Robert Brown said, conducting an inquiry into the issue, but I do not know whether the Executive wants to delay the announcement of its strategy until it has the benefit of the committee's input or whether it will put the strategy up front for the committee to debate.

The SNP provided no costings whatever—we heard the usual spend, spend, spend. Obviously, the money tree is still flourishing. However, I was surprised by one thing, which was that Fiona Hyslop did not mention staffing, qualifications or the 24 per cent of staff who do not have qualifications. A big chunk of that 24 per cent is not even in training. The Scottish Executive must consider qualifications.

The minister gave us a litany of spending—I presume that he was trying to outbid the SNP. However, there was nothing about quality or the access problems that affect so many parents. As I had in the past, many parents in my area have difficulty accessing convenient care and education for their children. Some people want to have somewhere near their place of work, whereas others want a place near where they live. Choice is distinctly lacking in the system. As Bill Aitken said, we all have the same main aims, but we differ on the routes to achieving them, and we differ most sincerely from the Executive in respect of the system's lack of flexibility and choice for parents.

Rosemary Byrne mentioned affordability and suggested that the private sector is too expensive. I am sorry to say that vouchers allow people to get over that hurdle if the appropriate care for their child is available in the private sector. That represents a way of putting money into the system so that new capacity can be built. The independent sector claims that it does not get the same support that some council systems get and we must somehow address the fact that early years care is a low-pay industry, so that we can attract people to enter the system and to take qualifications. A number of members made that point.

Maureen Macmillan was right to say that we need to consider holistic services for young children. I would go further and say that we must start early years screening literally from birth. I refer to screening for health problems that would hold back a child's learning process, as well as screening for sight, hearing and other difficulties. It is vital that we introduce early tests. They should be part and parcel of the assessment that would help to decide what sort of pre-school education and care a child needs.

It is interesting that the Scottish Executive admitted in its draft budget for 2005-06 that it is failing to meet the targets that it had set. It will be

interesting to hear from the minister when he winds up exactly what he expects to deliver, given the comments of the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform in the draft budget.

Many people want to return to work, and Scotland needs them to do so. We must ensure that appropriate choice and help is given to parents so that they can do that. We need many skilled people who have taken career breaks and so on to get back into the workplace. However, at the end of the day the money should follow the child and not be used simply to set up bureaucratic systems under local government control, which would not necessarily provide the support that parents seek and the care that their children definitely need.

11:46

**Euan Robson:** This morning's debate has been interesting and useful. It has been about not only children and young people, but parents and families, closing the opportunity gap and achieving everyone's full potential. The debate has touched on a broad expanse of policy areas.

Before I respond to points that members have made, I reiterate that our approach is not—contrary to what Mr Davidson said—one dimensional. We are intent on securing quality and depth in our provision. For that reason, we have published national care standards for child care services. We have introduced a robust inspection regime for child care, run by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care. We have introduced joint inspection of pre-school education provision by the care commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education. We have established the Scottish Social Services Council, which from 2006 will regulate the early years and child care workforce. As has been alluded to in the debate, we have established a national review of the early years and child care workforce, in order to secure the workforce that will be required to meet the needs of children and families in the future. I confirm to Maureen Macmillan that the national review will report in the summer, as she suggested.

We have also provided £15.6 million between 2003 and 2006 to increase the qualifications of the early years and child care workforce. More than 6,000 child care qualifications will be awarded during that period.

**Mr Davidson:** About 7,200 people—24 per cent of staff—do not currently have qualifications. By what date will all people in the service either be in training or have a qualification?

**Euan Robson:** That will depend on who is in the workforce at any given time. We cannot put a final date on something that depends on the development of the workforce.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 will be implemented by the end of the year. That act places a duty on education authorities and other agencies to meet every child's additional support for learning needs—a point that has not yet been widely recognised. It also places a duty on education authorities to meet the needs—identified by health authorities—of under-threes whom education authorities determine as having additional support for learning needs.

Maureen Macmillan, Rosemary Byrne and David Davidson talked about the early years strategy. Last year we published a baseline study of outcome indicators for early years policies. In the next couple of months, we will publish guidance for practitioners. We will publish the early years strategy when we are ready to do so—we are not ready to do so at the moment.

Scott Barrie was right to allude to the partnership agreement commitment to make primary 1 less formal, which will be taken forward in the curriculum review. Referring to nurseries in Edinburgh, Bill Aitken blamed the Executive for limiting choice. However, he defeated his argument by saying that the council is closing the nurseries. Like Elaine Murray, I did not understand his point.

The Executive is also examining the quality of delivery of provision. We are undertaking a longitudinal study that is similar to the effective provision of pre-school education project in England. That will help us to see over 20 years or more what differences a wide range of early years policies make in practice to the people of Scotland. It will be a long-term evaluation of the work that we are doing.

We already know from evidence of the evaluation of sure start Scotland—the programme that is aimed at vulnerable families with very young children—that there are obvious benefits in early years provision. I remind Parliament that the 2002 report on mapping of sure start Scotland showed that service providers saw the programme as a major impetus for change leading to new and improved services for young children. An update of that mapping is under way, which will give us more detail about the numbers who are benefiting from sure start, the types and levels of services and the planning and partnership working that is taking place.

As I said earlier, the Tories play the worn-out gramophone record about vouchers and in his speech, Robert Brown rightly tried to pin down the costs of SNP policies. In the context of child care and early years provision, its initial policy proposal would cost some £80 million. Not only that, but there was no mention by Fiona Hyslop of the costs of Parliament's taking powers over tax and

benefits or of the enormous cost of disaggregating the Scottish component of the benefits system. As always, pinning down the SNP on the cost of its policies is like trying to nail jelly to the wall.

The Scottish Executive does not lose sight of the bigger picture. We want extensive provision and quality provision. The whole reason why Government intervenes in people's lives is to make lives better. For the Executive, that means all the people of Scotland.

11:52

**Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP):**

The defining feature of the Executive is its lack of vision and ambition for Scotland. Nowhere is that more evident than in its policies for children and young people. With problems such as one in three children living in poverty and one in 20 being referred to the children's hearings system for care and protection, we should focus on the need to nurture our children better, rather than make the flagship policy an attack on antisocial behaviour, which is surely but one symptom of a deeper malaise.

Robert Brown is kidding himself about Liberal Democrat influence on Executive policy; the Executive is content to let policy development in early years education and child care be driven by London, although it may be a question of the Executive's waiting for the parameters to be set by Gordon Brown before it provides its own version of UK policy with minor Scottish variations. Either way, we are unlikely to have the kind of policy objectives that we need to establish in Scotland, let alone the resources to achieve them.

As Fiona Hyslop spelled out, our overriding objective would be to provide universal access to affordable high-quality education and child care services from the early years onwards. To do that effectively, we need to move away from means-tested targeting—through the use of tax credits and the like—to subsidising service providers along the lines of the Scandinavian model. That is not achievable overnight, nor can we deliver it using the paltry powers that are available to Parliament now. However, we can work towards that goal.

**Robert Brown:** I would be grateful for an indication of the SNP view on the appropriate resources for Scotland. Given that the block grant has gone up from £14 billion to £22 billion, how much more would the SNP require to achieve its objectives?

**Mr Ingram:** We have been challenged by a number of speakers on what our proposals would cost. Robert Brown should be patient; I will come to that in due course.

We are starting from where we are as regards our goals for child care and education. We are

looking for incremental change now, but we need to support initiatives such as nurture groups that seek to help children who have missed out on the early experiences and relationships that provide healthy development. A growing number of very young children are being brought up in socially and emotionally deprived households by drug-misusing parents, for example. Those children have not learned to make trusting relationships with adults or to relate appropriately to other children and they cannot settle in school. The nurture-group approach has been successful where it has been adopted, most notably in Glasgow. It addresses the needs of children who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, it stimulates cognitive gains and it returns them to their base classes ready, willing and able to participate fully, like their peers. The nurture-group approach shows the clear benefits that are to be gained from high-quality provision, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As the director of the Social Market Foundation pointed out in his January newsletter, the single biggest determinant of quality provision is a highly qualified workforce. That cannot be bought on the cheap and certainly not by people who are in receipt of child care tax credits. To bring quality provision to areas where the cognitive gains to children will be greatest will require significant reductions in parental contributions to costs and increased provider subsidies. If we are to bring children under three into the system, provision will be even more expensive, given the need for much lower staff-to-child ratios.

We recognise that maximising access to high-quality subsidised early education and child care is an expensive policy to pursue. Spending will have to rise from the £320 million that we currently spend to about £1 billion a year. However, the educational, social and economic benefits that would accrue from such a policy would far outweigh the financial costs. The policies would include attacking child poverty and educational inequalities at their roots; lifting the financial burden of child care from parents; allowing women in particular to increase families' income by participating more fully in the labour force; and not least, reducing the burdens that are imposed by dysfunctional behaviour on our education, health and criminal justice systems.

That is a truly ambitious policy. It is a policy to transform the life prospects of future generations for the better. Surely that is what Parliament should be all about.

## First Minister's Question Time

11:58

### Prime Minister (Meetings)

**1. Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister and what issues will be discussed. (S2F-1501)

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

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Unlike the Prime Minister when he was in Scotland last week, I want to talk about the Scottish health service. Of all the patients who were seen as out-patients for the first time in the last quarter, how many had to wait more than a year for their appointments?

**The First Minister:** I do not have that figure with me today, but I am sure that Ms Sturgeon is about to inform me of it.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I advise the First Minister that the information that I am about to bring to his attention has not yet been published, but it was given to me just yesterday by his central statistics unit. Is he aware that in June 1999 the number of out-patients who had waited more than a year to see a consultant was just 885, but that by the end of the most recent quarter, in December, the number of patients who had to wait more than a year was 7,679?

Two weeks ago, the First Minister told members that there had been

"a reduction in out-patient waiting times"

and a

"significant reduction in the number of people who have been waiting the longest".—[*Official Report*, 24 February 2005; c 14741.]

What did he mean?

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Before the First Minister answers, I ask Miss Leckie to withdraw the poster that she is showing to members. [*Interruption.*]

Miss Leckie, I regard your refusal to withdraw the poster as a discourtesy to the chamber. I judge you to be guilty of disorderly behaviour and I ask you to withdraw from the chamber.

**The First Minister:** The position on out-patients is clear and I have continually stated it in this chamber during recent years. The position on out-patient waiting times in Scotland was very poor indeed, which is why it required attention. The focus on the longest in-patient waits was right in relation to in-patients, but one of the reasons why



waiting times for out-patients were coming down in England but not in Scotland was the decision to concentrate on in-patients in Scotland at a very early stage. We believed that it was also important to concentrate on out-patient waiting times, to ensure that they, too, came down, which is precisely why we established the centre for change and innovation and made its immediate priority to tackle out-patient waits. Because of that attention, the figures that were published in February indicated a dramatic reduction in out-patient waiting times in Scotland, for the first time in several years. That is to be welcomed, not condemned, and the figure will come down even further throughout Scotland.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I do not know what question the First Minister answered, but it was not the one that I asked. I asked him why the number of out-patients who had to wait more than a year for a first appointment had risen from 885 in 1999 to 7,679 in the last quarter. Will he address the central point? There are now eight times as many out-patients waiting more than a year to see a consultant than there were when the Government took office. The number has almost trebled since Mr McConnell became First Minister and it is still going up. How can the First Minister square those facts with his claim in the chamber two weeks ago that he is reducing the longest out-patient waiting times? The question is simple, so may we have an answer?

**The First Minister:** If Ms Sturgeon had listened, she would have heard her question being answered. The very reason why there was a concentrated effort to reduce out-patient waiting times, particularly in the past year, was that those waiting times had gone up. Precisely because the number of people who were waiting too long for an out-patient appointment had gone up, the initial priority of the centre for change and innovation was to reduce out-patient waiting times. Because of that effort throughout the health service in Scotland, those waiting times are coming down. I agree that it is many years too late for those waiting times to be coming down, but they are coming down and they will continue to come down, because the focus is now rightly on out-patient as well as in-patient waiting times. The earlier decision to concentrate solely on in-patient waiting times led to an unacceptable increase in delays for out-patients, which had to be tackled.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** The waiting times are not coming down.

**The First Minister:** Yes they are.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** At the end of the last quarter, 7,679 patients had waited more than a year for a first appointment. The figure was up on the previous quarter and the one before it, as well as the quarter before that one, and it was up from

885 in 1999. Is it not the case that the figures show the real experience of out-patients in Scotland and that the First Minister should be embarrassed by them? The Prime Minister is clearly embarrassed by the figures, which is why he talks about the English health service when he comes to Scotland. Does the First Minister realise that every time he tries to deny the black-and-white facts he insults every patient who is waiting too long for an appointment? When will he stop spinning and start standing up for patients in Scotland?

**The First Minister:** The reality is as was published by the health service's statistics division just two weeks ago. Out-patient waiting times in Scotland are now finally coming down, because of the hard work of people in the health service in Scotland. As I have said before, I believe that that is far too late, but waiting times are now coming down and they will go down even further. It is to the credit of members of staff in the health service throughout Scotland that they are now achieving those reductions in waiting times.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** But the figures are not coming down; they are going up.

**The First Minister:** If Ms Sturgeon disbelieves the figures that were published only two weeks ago by the health service in Scotland—

**Nicola Sturgeon:** These are your figures.

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** If Ms Sturgeon disbelieves those figures, she is questioning something very serious indeed; she is questioning the statisticians who published the figures and who are independent of the Executive. Their figures are subject to scrutiny in the Parliament every quarter, in the proper way.

## Cabinet (Meetings)

**2. David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands)**  
**(Con):** To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Executive's Cabinet. (S2F-1502)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** We will discuss a range of issues at Cabinet next week, all of which I am sure will be very important to the people of Scotland.

**David McLetchie:** I am sure that they will be. Perhaps I could suggest one issue: the early release of prisoners from our jails. When I raised the matter with the First Minister at question time on 22 April last year, he told me that the early release of people from prison on licence was a matter for the Sentencing Commission. Earlier this week, through its Management of Offenders etc (Scotland) Bill, the Executive announced that it would introduce a home detention curfew scheme,

which could mean that some prisoners will serve only a quarter of the sentence that is handed out to them in court. Will he please tell me why the Executive is issuing more get-out-of-jail-free cards before it has even received the report from its Sentencing Commission?

**The First Minister:** That is perhaps not a surprising question, although, given his training, Mr McLetchie should understand the system. As I pointed out to him last year, we were absolutely determined to review the system and we will do so sensibly and effectively through the Sentencing Commission, in the interests of the victims of criminals. I believe that the early release of prisoners without condition is unacceptable to the people of Scotland and needs to be reviewed sensibly and in a judicial context. That is entirely different from a tough regime of home detention curfews, which ensures that there are conditions on those prisoners who leave prison earlier than their full sentence. The curfews put conditions on those people when they are out in the community, making sure that they are properly rehabilitated so that they do not offend again.

We cannot go on with the level of reoffending that takes place among people who go in and out of our prisons. It is time to act on that and it is time to learn from the international lessons what is effective, to ensure that, within their sentence, people serve under tough conditions in the community. That element of the home detention curfew could work for certain individual prisoners.

**David McLetchie:** The First Minister's idea with the Sentencing Commission was to kick a scandalous situation into the long grass. I remind him that the commission was established in November 2003 and that we are still waiting for a report. Is it not the case that, the longer we wait for a report from the Sentencing Commission and for action to be taken, the greater the number of violent criminals who will be released to commit further crimes? The policies of the Scottish Executive demonstrate that it is far more concerned with emptying our prisons than it is with protecting the public.

**The First Minister:** That is absolute rubbish. The proposals announced this week under the Management of Offenders etc (Scotland) Bill are indeed designed to ensure that we keep people out of prison. We will do that by stopping them reoffending and by ensuring that we have fewer people going in and out of prison again and again because of the ineffectiveness of the system. We will do it by ensuring that we have a tougher regime in prison for those who should be there, locked up for the security of the public, and for those who need to be rehabilitated so that, when they end their short sentence, they do not go back out into the community and commit crimes but go back out into the community with a job, looking

after a family and taking some responsibility for their actions and behaviour. That is the purpose of the Management of Offenders etc (Scotland) Bill, which, alongside our new measures to end the early release of sex offenders, will protect more effectively the public and those victims who suffer from the actions of reoffending criminals.

**David McLetchie:** The problem with the First Minister's answer is that, from the evidence from England—where the scheme was first introduced—the reoffending rates of people who were on the home detention curfew scheme are no better than the reoffending rates of those who were not on it. When the scheme was introduced in England, we were told by the Home Secretary that it would apply only to low-risk prisoners. However, since its introduction, 2,107 prisoners who have been released have reoffended—they have been responsible for 3,748 crimes, including 10 sexual offences, 44 robberies and 525 crimes of violence. Is that the First Minister's idea of a successful policy? Will he put the protection of the public first rather than let criminals out of jail early?

**The First Minister:** Of course we put the protection of the public first. That is why we propose to change the management scheme for offenders in this country and why we want to ensure that we have a system that, from top to bottom, is more coherent, seamless and in the interests of victims. We want a system that ensures that, whether a person is given a custodial or a non-custodial sentence, as well as serving their time, they will be forced to be rehabilitated in the process. In due course, that will ensure that fewer people will reoffend in Scotland after having committed a crime and served time. It is in the interests not only of victims of initial crimes, but of everybody in Scotland to ensure that we have a better system and less crime in the future, with fewer people reoffending and more people returning back into the community from their first offence and sentence to proper jobs, looking after their families and being decent members of society.

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Did the First Minister see last night's BBC documentary on Kilmarnock prison? The programme vindicated all the points that I have made in the past six years about the anarchic shambles that is Kilmarnock prison. Does he agree that a particular concern is that there have been seven suicides in the prison, at least two of which could have been prevented if the prison had been properly managed? Stewart Yates, a former assistant director of the prison, said:

"The primary focus of running the prison was the financial outcomes".

Does the First Minister agree that it is now time to take profit out of prisons and to make prisons a genuine service to punish and rehabilitate

prisoners rather than a service that is about profits?

**The First Minister:** To describe the situation in Kilmarnock as an “anarchic shambles” is, in effect, to call the prisons inspectorate liars. I say to Mr Neil that that is an unfortunate exaggeration of the situation. The prisons inspectorate is responsible for inspecting our prisons and ensuring that where action is required, it is taken. The Scottish Prison Service will rightly look into the matter as a result of the programme that was shown last night. We expect it to take the action that is required to ensure that anything that needs to be corrected in Kilmarnock prison will be corrected as soon as possible.

**Margaret Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab):** As the local member for Kilmarnock, I would welcome Mr Neil coming along to Kilmarnock prison with me. I have visited the prison and met the workforce many times.

Does the First Minister agree that the facility at Kilmarnock prison has been shown to be much better than that at prisons elsewhere in Scotland by the prisons inspectorate and that SNP members should accept that many employees in Kilmarnock prison are doing a good job in difficult circumstances?

**The First Minister:** Those are fair points. It is also important to take on board the points that were made last night by a very independent former chief inspector of prisons in Scotland in the small bit of the programme that I saw. He said that public and private sector prisons in Scotland must deal with these matters. In tackling these matters and setting standards, we must not only ensure that existing standards are met; it is also vital to improve on those standards. That is precisely why we introduced the Management of Offenders etc (Scotland) Bill in the Parliament this week. We want to ensure that our prisons and our community sentences system stop reoffending and ensure that criminals learn from their actions and that the public come first.

### **Public Sector Workers (Pensions)**

**3. Colin Fox (Lothians) (SSP):** To ask the First Minister whether he will attend a rally on 23 March 2005 organised by public sector workers in defence of their pension rights and in opposition to plans to raise their retirement age by five years. (S2F-1511)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** No, but I encourage all who have views to express about those matters to respond to the on-going consultations.

**Colin Fox:** Surely the fact that the Labour Party conference last weekend voted to condemn the United Kingdom Government's great pensions

robbery is ample reason for the First Minister to attend the rally. On which side of Labour's great pensions divide does the First Minister stand—the side of the Scottish Labour Party conference or the side of the national Labour Government? Does he believe that public sector workers throughout Scotland are right to be up in arms about the great pensions swindle that they are suffering, or does he believe that they are mistaken about the Government's plans to rob them of their pension rights and force them to work five years longer? What does he intend to do to defend their pension rights?

**The First Minister:** Those claims are not true for the staff who are currently in public sector pension schemes and they are not true for those who will retire between now and 2013. It is important that people respond to the current consultations. The Government at the UK level, where the responsibility for much of the issue lies, and here in Scotland will not respond to those consultations until they are over and we have heard everybody's views. We will then have the chance to make decisions about the way forward.

**Colin Fox:** Is it not true that each public sector worker stands to lose at least £20,000 if the proposed changes go ahead? I am sure that public sector workers throughout the country will be, frankly, disgusted by the First Minister's evasions. Will he do them and the Parliament the courtesy of providing straight answers to three straight questions? Does he support the raising of the retirement age by five years—yes or no? Does he support the early retirement age being pushed back by five years—yes or no? Does he support the abolition of the final salary pension scheme—yes or no?

**The First Minister:** I do not think that anybody who had any interest in taxpayers' money or in the proper, efficient use of public resources would deny the fact that there should be a review of public sector pensions to ensure that we are able not only to adapt our public sector pension schemes to the changing nature of the workforce and our society, in which people are living longer and wanting to work longer, but to look after public finances properly. The consultation is on-going and it is important that people respond to it. The consultation responses will be listened to and we will respond to them in due course.

### **Air-guns**

**4. Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what action will be taken to curb reckless and irresponsible use of air-guns. (S2F-1512)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** The tragic shooting in Glasgow last week demonstrated just how dangerous air weapons are

in the wrong hands. I am sure that the Parliament will join me in expressing our sympathy with the family of young Andrew Morton. We are contributing to the current Home Office review of firearms law, which is considering carefully whether further controls on air weapons are necessary. We will report back to the Parliament as soon as we can.

**Mr McAveety:** Like everyone else in Scotland, I was saddened and distressed by the events in Craigend last week. The area is represented by my colleague Margaret Curran and I had the privilege to serve it as a Glasgow city councillor for eight years. Does the First Minister recognise the fact that the decent majority of people in areas such as Craigend require our constant support in tackling persistent problems of antisocial behaviour—none more antisocial and dangerous than the misuse of air rifles? Will he ensure that the Executive makes it an urgent priority to deal with the purchase, regulation and use of such weapons in Scotland to reduce the possibility of such a tragedy occurring again?

**The First Minister:** I agree with Mr McAveety. As I said last weekend, it would be wrong for politicians to have an immediate, knee-jerk reaction to the tragic circumstances facing that family and that community. Nevertheless, it is important that we do not rule out even the most severe action that we could take. We need to make it more difficult for people to acquire air-guns and to ensure that there are fewer air-guns in circulation. We are actively engaged with the Home Office in determining measures that will help to secure those objectives. The Executive is determined to close loopholes and to consider all options for tighter control and we will press the Home Office to make any changes that we think are required.

I believe that many gun holders and, in particular, parents of young gun holders will be appalled at what happened last week in Glasgow and will want to assist us in taking air-guns off the streets. We will work with Scottish police forces quickly to put in place arrangements that allow people in every community in Scotland who want to ensure that their air-guns or their children's air-guns are taken out of circulation to do so speedily and securely in co-operation with the local police force. My message, particularly to parents of young gun holders, is to bring the gun in, get it off the street and ensure that Scotland is a safer place.

**Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP):** I welcome the First Minister's comments. However, I should point out that replica weapons are as much of a problem as air-guns in our society. As we approach the ninth anniversary of the Dunblane massacre, is it not about time that we

had a consolidated act that addressed such matters? Why, when Scottish ministers are competent and capable of taking a different approach from that taken south of the border to the problem of knives and swords, are we incapable of addressing the problem of the prevalence of replica weapons and air-guns, which are causing misery and tragedy in our society?

**The First Minister:** Mr MacAskill might feel incapable, but I certainly do not. We intend to take action on the issue not only in conjunction with the Home Office but in a measured way. I believe that the Home Office confirmed this morning that it has already proposed to take action on replica weapons and that it is already considering new legislation on firearms. However, I think that it probably needs to go further than that.

I believe that we need to take a measured approach to the issue. I do not want to take an immediate decision in the week after this family tragedy. However, we need to introduce tighter controls on air-guns and to ensure that communities in Scotland and throughout the United Kingdom are safer. Although we will work with the Home Office to secure that additional legislation, we will do so in a measured and reasonable way.

### Prevention of Terrorism Bill

**5. Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Executive expects Scottish police forces to employ the proposed house arrest, tagging and curfew measures outlined in the Prevention of Terrorism Bill. (S2F-1517)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** The Prevention of Terrorism Bill is reserved legislation, but Scottish police forces have a duty to enforce the law, no matter whether it is made at Westminster or at Holyrood.

**Robert Brown:** The First Minister is aware that Liberal Democrats and many others, including eminent Labour people such as Helena Kennedy and Derry Irvine, are very uneasy about the direction of the Labour Government's proposed anti-terrorism legislation. Is he aware that that unease is particularly shared by many people in Scotland's law-abiding Muslim community, who fear that they could be targeted by the legislation? Does he agree that the bill's somewhat questionable advantages would not be worth the cost of impairing the good relations with Scotland's Muslim community that the Executive has worked so hard to achieve? What practical reassurances can he give that community on the matter?

**The Presiding Officer:** I should point out that we are straying into reserved matters.

**The First Minister:** As the bill will go through many debates and, potentially, more changes in the day-to-day business of the House of Commons, it would be a good leap of the imagination to talk about what might result at the end of the day. However, I must say that I do not agree with Robert Brown. There is a case for looking at the legislation. We have a duty in Scotland to ensure not only that our police forces enforce the law, wherever it is made, but that we work very closely with Muslim and other minority communities in Scotland so that they are properly a part of our society. They must feel strongly that they have a part to play in enforcing the law, not that they are unreasonably subject to it. We will therefore continue to work closely with the Muslim community and others to ensure that everyone feels very welcome in Scotland.

### Private Health Cover

**6. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** To ask the First Minister how many people have opted out of the national health service to take private health cover in the last year. (S2F-1508)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** Fortunately, because the Tories have not won the general election yet—

**David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con):** Yet.

**The First Minister:** I was there first. We need to remind people that that is still a possibility, because they need to know what might happen.

Everyone in this country still has access to the national health service, regardless of whether they receive private health care. The only circumstance this year in which people in Scotland might have to opt out of the national health service and choose private health care is if the Tories win the general election and force them to do so.

**Mary Scanlon:** I thank the First Minister for not answering my question. I advise him that figures from a private health analyst show that 1,000 Scots leave the NHS and pay for private health care every week and that thousands more are forced to seek private treatment in dentistry and chiropody. Does he acknowledge that, whereas the Tories would offer people the choice of paying for private treatment, the Liberals and Labour are forcing people into private care?

**The First Minister:** Thankfully, so far—although one never knows what the Scottish National Party will do—the Tory party is the only party that supports forcing people to opt out of the national health service to secure operations in the private sector. Yet again, Mr McLetchie has made it absolutely clear that the Tory party's main policy—in fact, its only policy—for the health service that

has been publicised for the forthcoming general election is that people who can already afford to pay will get a subsidy directly from the health service to help them to pay for private health care. That money will be taken away from the care of those who cannot afford to pay. Everyone in Scotland needs to know that the direct implication of electing the Tories in the general election would be that those who can afford to pay would get a subsidy and those who cannot afford to pay would get less.

**Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP):** Despite all the bluster, is the First Minister not concerned that the increase in the number of people taking up private medical insurance in Scotland, which is faster than the increase south of the border, reflects people's frustration and concern about waiting too long for treatment? My colleague Nicola Sturgeon pointed out that frustration earlier, but the First Minister did not respond to the point. Given the Executive's pledge to decrease out-patient waiting times to no more than six months by the end of 2005, will the First Minister explain why 35,058 people were waiting for more than six months at the end of last year? How will he meet his pledge and reassure people, so that they do not have to turn to private medical insurance because of the NHS's failure to get to grips with waiting times?

**The First Minister:** I am glad that Ms Robison has the figures, which show that out-patient waiting times came down in Scotland in the last quarter. I hope that she will give them to Ms Sturgeon, who was clearly ill informed in her earlier question. I will not take lessons from the SNP on health service spending in a week when it proposed to take £1 billion directly out of the Scottish budget—more than £700 million in corporation tax and more than £200 million in business rates. Given that the health service in Scotland takes up a third of our budget, that means that more than £300 million would be taken out of the service if the SNP ever managed to achieve independence. The SNP should be more honest about where the cuts would come, rather than proposing them on a Tuesday and not wanting to talk about them on a Thursday.

**Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab):** Does the First Minister agree with me—

**Members:** Yes.

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Christine May:** Does the First Minister agree that the election of a Tory Government would put at risk the £130 million capital investment in the right for Fife project and the new St Andrews community hospital? Does he agree that, under the Tories, we would not have the investment in improving out-patient and local community care services that we have had under the Executive?

**The First Minister:** Services would be put at risk by the incredible scale of cuts that the Tories propose and by the cuts that the SNP proposes. The fact that the number of people in Scotland who wait more than six months, nine months and 12 months is lower than anywhere else in the United Kingdom and that Scotland is the only place in the UK where no one waits more than nine months for in-patient treatment would also be put at risk. Scotland has a lower median wait than anywhere else in the UK. It has the fastest treatment times for heart disease in the UK. By voting for the SNP or the Tories, people would be putting at risk all those achievements and improvements and all that investment. I urge them not to do it.

12:30

*Meeting suspended until 14:00.*

14:00

*On resuming—*

## Question Time

### SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

#### Enterprise, Lifelong Learning and Transport

##### Economy (Performance Indicators)

**1. Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive what performance indicators it has set for ministers with responsibility for developing the economy. (S2O-5684)

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson):** The Scottish Executive does not set performance indicators for ministers.

**Mr Davidson:** That is a surprise, as it seems to have set targets for everyone else.

I thought that the Scottish Executive's priority was growing the economy, yet statistics show that, from 1995 to 2003, the United Kingdom economy grew by nearly 24 per cent while the Scottish economy grew by only 16.9 per cent. The rate of business start-ups per head of population in Scotland is only three quarters of the UK rate. The highest business survival rate is 72 per cent, in Northern Ireland, but the Scottish rate is only 65 per cent.

Does the minister agree that it is time for the Executive to accept that it is failing in its responsibility? What measures will be taken to ensure that ministers carry out the policies that they claim to have?

**Allan Wilson:** I would not accept that we are failing—quite the contrary. Mr Davidson's question referred to performance indicators for ministers as opposed to the economy. Of course, we set a number of performance indicators under "The Framework for Economic Development", which considers adult education and skills; research and development; entrepreneurial dynamism; the electronic and physical infrastructure; and managing public sector resources. "A Smart, Successful Scotland", which we recently refreshed, gives a range of related indicators against which we manage progress. There are also a couple of sustainable development indicators that we add to the mix.

Mr Davidson's basic contention is completely without foundation.

**Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):** Does the minister agree that there is a compelling

case for a target annual growth rate in Scotland? Over the past 25 years, economic growth in Scotland has trailed that in the rest of the United Kingdom and has been lower than that of most small European countries. Further, it has been dwarfed by economic growth in Ireland—over the past 25 years, Irish economic growth has been 5.2 per cent a year compared with 1.8 per cent in Scotland. Does the minister accept that those indicators amount to a compelling reason why Scotland should have the full economic and financial power that independence would bring to allow us to strengthen the Scottish economy?

**Allan Wilson:** No. Surprisingly enough, I do not believe that. We set performance targets for the Scottish economy. We aspire to see Scotland reaching the upper quartile of comparator Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development nations. As I said, “The Framework for Economic Development” sets aspirations across a range of indicators.

I do not accept that independence would be beneficial to the Scottish economy and I think that there are a number of questions that the Scottish National Party needs to answer relating to the day after independence. Will there be a Scottish pound? Will there be a Scottish interest rate? At what level would that interest rate be set? What would the SNP’s fiscal and monetary policies be? All those questions need to be answered by the nationalists.

### Graduate Endowment

**2. Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has any plans to increase the graduate endowment above the rate of inflation. (S2O-5722)

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson):** There are no plans to increase the graduate endowment above the rate of inflation.

**Mike Rumbles:** I am delighted to hear that the endowment fund is tied to the level of inflation. As the endowment is used exclusively for student support, how much would it cost the Executive to fund that directly?

**Allan Wilson:** We estimate that the resource cost to the Scottish Executive of paying the graduate endowment would be approximately £3.3 million in 2005-06 and £19.6 million in 2006-07. That would rise slightly in subsequent years.

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** Does the minister agree that the graduate endowment will add to the already heavy burden of student loans and that it will further exacerbate the problem of graduate debt? Will he take this opportunity to explain why the publication of the research on student poverty and graduate debt, which was

supposed to take place in January, has now been postponed until the summer? Has the publication of the research been delayed because it will show that graduate debt is a millstone round the necks of individuals and an unsustainable drag on the Scottish economy?

**Allan Wilson:** I do not believe that. Entrance to universities and higher education is at an all-time high as a result of the policies of this partnership Government. Further, the introduction of the young students bursary is helping to ensure that young students from low-income backgrounds get the opportunity to go to university. Far from adding to student debt, the graduate endowment has reduced overall student debt.

### European Regional Development Fund (Highlands and Islands)

**3. Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will ensure that the European Commission is provided speedily with the full information that it needs to complete the audit into ERDF funding in the Highlands and Islands. (S2O-5712)

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson):** We have already provided a substantive response to the Commission’s draft report, which included all the detailed documentation that was requested by the Commission. As to the second audit, which takes place this month, officials are working closely with applicants to ensure that all documentation is available. However, ultimately it is the responsibility of the individual applicants to ensure that all original documentation is to hand.

**Mr Stone:** It will come as no surprise that I am asking this question. We were fearful that bits of the Highlands and Islands might lose future funding. Will the minister confirm that there are parts of the Highlands and Islands that are in desperate need of European assistance and, despite what might or might not have happened in the past, will he support the case for the Highlands and Islands getting access to European funds?

**Allan Wilson:** I will indeed and the Executive is working tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that the appropriate information is available to the Commission to ensure that there is no clawback of the much-needed funds to which Jamie Stone refers. We are also working in close concert with the United Kingdom Government to ensure that, in the current negotiations on future structural support for the Highlands and Islands in particular, and for the whole of Scotland, we maximise the benefit that European structural funding can bring to Scotland. I am confident that we will be able to secure an advantageous settlement for the Highlands and Islands within the overall settlement.

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP):** The minister has just informed the chamber that he is working tirelessly to get future European funding for Scotland. We all recognise the past importance of that funding and we hope that it will play an important role in the future.

I have a very straightforward question for the minister, which I hope he will answer using one of the options that are rarely tried—yes or no. Has the Executive set out in a position paper to the European Commission its views on what Scotland should receive?

**Allan Wilson:** In more than one position paper, we have put our views on the future organisation of structural funds to the European Commission through the UK Government. We work very closely with our colleagues in the Westminster Government because that is how we maximise our impact on the Commission. As the member knows, the issue comes entirely under the aegis of the European Commission, so it is important that we have the strength of the UK behind us when we make those representations.

To address the substance of the member's point, I am hopeful that the Scottish position—if I can call it that—will be adopted by the Commission on future areas of regional selective assistance. Without that, an important arm of regional development policy would be lost to the Parliament and it is important for the future of Scottish industrial growth that it is retained.

#### **Energy Efficiency (Business Support)**

**4. Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to ensure that businesses have access to support and advice on energy efficiency, waste minimisation and improved resource efficiency. (S2O-5778)

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson):** The Executive is highly committed to improving resource efficiency in Scotland. We already fund a number of organisations that promote better energy and environment management. Those include the Carbon Trust, the Energy Saving Trust, Envirowise and the Business Environment Partnership.

**Eleanor Scott:** As the minister outlined, a number of organisations provide support and advice to businesses on how to use resources efficiently. Does he acknowledge the potential for confusion among businesses about which of those organisations they should ask for such advice? Will the Executive ensure that any overlap between those organisations is minimised, perhaps by providing a one-stop shop, so that

businesses find it more straightforward to seek advice?

**Allan Wilson:** I am not sure which of the organisations the member argues is superfluous. Each organisation does an important job in providing advice and assistance. The Carbon Trust and, say, the Business Environment Partnership each bring different perspectives to bear in the domestic and industrial sectors. However, there may be a case for bringing together organisations so that they can work more collaboratively and co-operatively to maximise the potential benefits.

#### **Economy**

**5. Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what progress it has made on its priority of growing the economy. (S2O-5757)

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson):** Over the 12 months to the end of quarter 3 of 2004-05, the Scottish economy has shown a positive performance, with gross domestic product continuing to expand. The labour market is strong: employment is at its highest since quarterly records began in 1992; the employment rate is above that of the United Kingdom and is second only to that of Denmark when compared with the employment rates of the 25 member states of the European Union; and unemployment is at its lowest for a generation. Those indicators should give us all great confidence in the future of the Scottish economy.

**Christine May:** My constituents in Central Fife have also benefited from that growth, but the Levenmouth area in particular still has pockets of very high unemployment. The central Fife economic action plan is designed to deal with that problem, but part of the solution must be good transport links. Does the minister agree that the Executive's investment in transport is vital for growing the economy? Will he meet me, my colleague Marilyn Livingstone and interested bodies to discuss the potential for transport developments in Fife, including the reopening of a rail link to Levenmouth?

**Allan Wilson:** I agree that the cumulative effect of the increased investment both in transport and across the range of the Scottish devolved Government's responsibilities is making a difference. In the most recent quarter, Scotland's economic growth outstripped—indeed, it was double—that of the UK and it was greater than that of many of our economic competitors. As a consequence, employment is at an all-time high and there have been substantial falls in unemployment, especially in youth unemployment. However, there is still much to do.



I will be delighted to visit Fife to speak to colleagues about how we can build on that success in the kingdom.

**Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP):** In response to John Swinney's earlier question on the same subject, the minister said that the Executive's target is for Scotland to be in the upper quartile of OECD countries. I assume that the target refers to GDP growth. Can the minister say when the Executive aims to meet that target?

**Allan Wilson:** Our aspiration is to move progressively towards being in that position. We believe that we will achieve that through "The Framework for Economic Development". That is completely contrary to the position of Scottish National Party members, whose latest contribution to the debate I noticed on the back of an envelope. When the nationalists are in a position to tell us how they will set fiscal policy, monetary policy and interest rates and whether there will be a Scottish pound in an independent Scotland, they can come to the chamber to argue their case. Until then, they should not try to tell us how to grow the economy.

### Wave and Tidal Power

**6. Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what action is being taken to promote the development of wave and tidal power. (S2O-5758)

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson):** We have contributed more than £3 million to the establishment of the European Marine Energy Centre in Orkney. We will also undertake a strategic environmental assessment of the coastline of Scotland to assist developers in identifying the best sites for wave and tidal energy devices.

**Helen Eadie:** I warmly welcome the Scottish Executive's commitment to the development of a range of types of renewable energy. I note that, according to the recent forum for renewable energy development in Scotland report, apart from wave and tidal power, there is tremendous potential in the development of biomass, from which approximately 64 per cent of total European Union renewable energy is derived, and that there is much more that Scots can do to develop the biomass industry. Does the minister have plans to discuss with the Department for Trade and Industry how we might attract to Scotland some of the £40 million that is believed to be available at national level from unspent allocations to develop projects here in Scotland?

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** I have to say that the original question was specific to the development of wave and tidal power, Mr Wilson.

**Allan Wilson:** There is £42 million available from a DTI fund specifically for the development of wave and tidal power. It is the Scottish Executive's intention to maximise the proportion of that amount of money that we can use to promote wave and tidal power, as well as using the £8 million that is available for capital development. We see the development of wave and tidal power, with biomass, as extremely important in meeting our renewable energy targets.

**Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP):** In connection with the £42 million that the DTI has available for wave and tidal power, is the minister of a mind to support the scheme that is currently proposed at Robert Gordon University to put devices in harbours round Scotland? Will he ensure that opportunities for small-scale projects are researched, developed and turned into commercial reality?

**Allan Wilson:** It is the latter point that concerns us most. We want to see the technology turned into commercial reality. That is why the £42 million to which I referred will be used to give revenue support for the development of new ideas and new devices and the £8 million will be given in capital support for construction. The strategic environmental assessment that we will conduct round the coast will give us better information on where and how such devices might best be deployed in our nation's waters.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** The minister talks a good game, but on the ground—or perhaps I should say on the waves—the situation is rather different. He will be aware of the difficulties that are faced by the Inverness-based renewables company Wavegen, which was behind the world's first grid-connected wave power plant of its kind, on Islay, but which has faced serious financial problems. Does that not show that the Executive needs to do more to encourage those new technologies, which many rural communities much prefer to onshore wind developments?

**Allan Wilson:** Members should be aware that the Tories used to be a party of innovation and—

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** When? We want to know when.

**Allan Wilson:** It would have been at the turn of the century, I suspect.

There will obviously be failures. We are developing a new technology and there is no commercial example that I am aware of, globally, that is producing marine energy commercially. There will be failures along the way, but there are Scottish companies that are major players in the field and which are at the cutting edge of the technology. I hope that, as we invest more in the technology, it will bear fruit in the fullness of time.

**Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD):** Does the minister agree that the predictability of wave and tidal power enables it to support base-load and that that is important in sustaining the Scottish Executive's policy that we should not invest in new nuclear generation until arrangements are in place that are satisfactory for dealing with nuclear waste?

**Allan Wilson:** That is a tried and tested theory in relation to wave and tidal power. There is, of course, intermittent energy supply from those sources, as well as potential base-load capacity. As far as the nuclear question is concerned, we are on record as saying that there will be no further development until such time as we have resolved the waste disposal issue.

**Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green):** Although we all welcome the funding that is being given to the marine renewables industry, little though it is, would it not serve the industry better if there were, to use the words of one of the developers, a "stable policy route map" rather than random funding handouts?

**Allan Wilson:** The member may consider that £50 million is not very much by way of direct state intervention in developing the technology, but I do not share that view. Scottish companies are also investing several hundred million pounds in the technology. I am confident of this, if of nothing else: if it cannot be done here by those major Scottish engineering and electricity generating companies, it cannot be done elsewhere. We have a stable route map. That is what the strategic environmental assessment of our coastline is designed to produce.

## Justice and Law Officers

### Release of Offenders (Notification)

**1. Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what action it has taken to improve the way victims are notified about the release of offenders from prison. (S2O-5746)

**The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry):** The Scottish Executive introduced a statutory victim notification scheme last November. The scheme gives eligible victims the right to be notified of the release of a prisoner who has committed a prescribed offence against them and who has been sentenced to four or more years' imprisonment or detention. The scheme is open to all eligible victims, regardless of when the prisoner was convicted.

**Michael McMahon:** Does the minister agree that it is important to continue to support victims, even after the offenders have gone to jail, and that it is doubly important that we provide quick and

efficient notification when an offender is released early from prison? Does he agree that the increasing number of offenders who are released early will place a burden on existing victim notification services and that it is crucial that the Scottish Executive ensures that no victim or family of a victim discovers that their attacker is free by running into them in their community? Can he elaborate on the actions that are being taken to ensure that victim notification is up to date and expedient and that the appropriate safeguards are in place in our communities?

**Hugh Henry:** Michael McMahon raises pertinent points. Some of the questions that he has posed require a much more detailed response and, if necessary, I will either write to him or speak to him separately.

Michael McMahon is right to say that victims need that information at the appropriate time. We have put great emphasis on the need to support victims and to make them aware. The changes that we have brought in are intended to do that. I do not pretend that all schemes always work well—mistakes sometimes happen—but I think that generally we are starting to see improvements in the service and improved notification. However, I recognise that we need to do much more to make victims aware, to support them and to ensure that they are given the pertinent information.

## G8 Summit (Security)

**2. Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Executive what progress is being made on security arrangements for the G8 summit. (S2O-5769)

**The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson):** Tayside police have overall operational responsibility for policing and security for the summit. A planning team, led by Tayside police and drawing in officers from a range of police forces and law enforcement agencies, is co-ordinating security arrangements in connection with the event.

**Mark Ballard:** Does the minister agree that peaceful protesters who come to Scotland must be made to feel welcome and secure? Does she recognise that local authorities such as the City of Edinburgh Council and Perth and Kinross Council will require financial support to do that effectively? Does she also recognise that the key to making people who exercise their right to peaceful protest feel secure and welcome will be the sensitive policing of which we have a good tradition in Scotland, particularly in situations such as that at Faslane, rather than the police brutality that we saw at Genoa?

**Cathy Jamieson:** I agree that people have the right to protest peacefully, as well as the

responsibility to ensure that they keep within the law and do not cause difficulty for local residents by straying outwith the law. Of course, the aim of the Scottish police forces and the police officers or members of the other services that will be involved in the operation is to ensure that people who want to protest peacefully are welcome, but those people will have to comply with the law.

I again place on record that we would not welcome people who wish to cause problems in our communities by taking part in violent protests. I hope that the member and his party would also endorse that view.

**Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):** On Tuesday, the European and External Relations Committee heard from the chief constable of Tayside police and the chief executive of Perth and Kinross Council about the security arrangements for the G8 summit. One of the points that our witnesses could not confirm for us was the extent to which the Scottish Executive or the Foreign and Commonwealth Office would support the local authorities and Tayside police in meeting the financial consequentials of additional security activities. Can the minister give us an answer today?

**Cathy Jamieson:** I am certainly not going to comment on the detailed security arrangements surrounding the event, but I can say that the Scottish Executive has been in close contact with our Westminster colleagues. A lot of good work has gone on and the police have been liaising with the local authorities in question. Of course we will examine the financial issues, but I am certainly not going to give any information that would compromise security arrangements.

### Crimestoppers

**3. Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive how it is publicising the campaign to encourage reporting drug dealing by telephoning Crimestoppers 0800 555 111. (S2O-5743)

**The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry):** The drug dealers don't care campaign is focused on supporting local communities to get drug dealers off the streets by providing a route for members of the public to provide information anonymously. The campaign is being publicised through national and local press, local radio, posters, leaflets, beer mats and direct mailing.

**Marilyn Livingstone:** The Crimestoppers project is welcome, and I am pleased to hear of the campaign that the minister has outlined. However, does he agree that the campaign has to be undertaken as part of a package of measures, including support for addicts? Does he agree that Fife is an exemplar of best practice, given the

work that is being carried out there by the police and projects such as the Drug and Alcohol Project (Levenmouth)?

**Hugh Henry:** Recently in Fife we have seen commendable actions being taken on a range of issues, including dealing with antisocial behaviour. Specifically on the drug dealers don't care campaign, which is aimed at tackling the scourge of drug dealing, I have been encouraged by what we have seen so far. There have been 1,227 drug-related calls to Crimestoppers, which represents more than a four-fold increase on the usual volume.

We intend this short, sharp campaign to raise awareness and generate confidence in local communities that individuals can take action safely to make their communities better places. However, we see it as only one part of on-going work to improve what is happening at a local level to encourage the various partners to work together. I know from the work that is being done in Fife that some of it is starting to bear fruit.

### Arrest Warrants (Delays in Processing)

**4. Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive how it is monitoring the incidence of arrest warrants not being executed because delays in processing have led to them overrunning their time limits. (S2O-5721)

**The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson):** Although the execution of warrants is not subject to a time limit, action is being taken to make procedures more effective. We are implementing the recommendations of the report of the outstanding warrants group, which we published in December. Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary is examining police warrant procedures and a multi-agency group is being set up to improve on the existing protocols between the police and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.

**Donald Gorrie:** One reason why warrants are sometimes not properly proceeded with is that the organisation that starts them off does not give the police proper accurate information about the individuals concerned. I know that there are legal issues to do with personal information, but could the minister try to ensure that the rules that she describes address the point, so that it is easier for the police to get accurate information that they can then more rapidly pursue?

**Cathy Jamieson:** I give the member the absolute assurance that he seeks. The issue is important and it is important to recognise that the protocols try to ensure that those warrants that are issued for the most serious crimes are given priority. We also have to remember that some outstanding warrants will relate to the non-

payment of fines and others will be for offences that require people to be brought back into the courts. Of course it is important that people have accurate information in order to serve those warrants.

### **Life Sentences (Female Prisoners)**

**5. Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive what average time is served by female prisoners serving life sentences. (S2O-5679)

**The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson):** Five female prisoners have been released from life sentences since October 2001, when the Convention Rights (Compliance) (Scotland) Act 2001 began to apply. The sentences served by those prisoners ranged from four years and 10 months to 36 years and five months.

**Phil Gallie:** Can the minister guarantee that all life sentence prisoners have minimum time limits set on their sentences in compliance with the European convention on human rights? Will she assure me that there is no gender imbalance between the time that is served by female life-term prisoners and that which is served by male life-term prisoners?

**Cathy Jamieson:** I can give Mr Gallie the assurance that he seeks in relation to punishment having been set in terms of ECHR compliance. Of course, it is for the judge in any case to consider all the aspects of sentencing before setting the sentence. I would be surprised if there was a problem with gender imbalance. From the information that I have given him, Mr Gallie will see that the sentences that some female prisoners serve in prison are substantial.

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab):** According to the provisional data for 2004 that I received in a written answer, it appears that the number of female receptions into prison is falling. Does the minister agree that we urgently need to make more progress in reducing the number of women in custody? Does she also agree that prison is not always the best place for many women?

Furthermore, in relation to the time-out centre in my constituency, which is designed to provide an alternative to custody, does the minister agree that that facility must be shown to be effective in the ways in which it provides an alternative to custody? If we can show that such facilities are a successful way forward, they can be rolled out to other parts of the country.

**Cathy Jamieson:** I agree with the points that Pauline McNeill has raised. We know that many of the women who went to prison in the past had committed relatively minor offences and posed little risk to their communities. They could have

been dealt with by an appropriate community penalty.

We would like to continue to reduce the number of women who are imprisoned. Of course, when people commit serious crimes, it is right and proper that they spend time in prison. That said, we believe that we can do more. That is why initiatives such as the time-out centre have been set up and why we are working on supervised attendance orders to try to reduce the likelihood of people—particularly women—ending up in custody because of fine default.

Pauline McNeill is absolutely right that the time-out centre must prove that it is able to deal with some of those who would otherwise be in the custodial system. It needs to be assessed on the basis of positive outcomes for those individuals.

### **Alcohol (Under-18s)**

**6. Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive what sanctions it takes through the justice system against those who supply alcohol to, or purchase alcohol on behalf of, under-18s. (S2O-5699)

**The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson):** On conviction for the offence of supplying alcohol to, or purchasing alcohol on behalf of, under-18s, a person is subject to a fine of up to £1,000. The local licensing board can consider whether any action should be taken to suspend a liquor licence as a result of such an offence taking place on licensed premises. In addition, the Licensing (Scotland) Bill, which was published on 1 March, proposes extending the offence to cover any sale of alcohol and not just sales that take place on licensed premises. It also proposes an increase in the level of the fine to £5,000.

**Richard Lochhead:** I am sure that the minister will share my concern about the number of under-16s—not just the number of under-18s—who are being discharged from hospital in Grampian following alcohol misuse. Not only is alcohol misuse on the increase, but Grampian has among the highest rates in the whole of Scotland. Clearly, those young people are accessing alcohol from somewhere.

I welcome the minister's outline of some of the measures that can be taken. However, recent parliamentary answers show that the number of prosecutions against licensees, for instance, is very low indeed. Is she confident that the justice system is enforcing the law? Will she discuss the issue with all the various players in the justice system to ensure that the law is being applied?

**Cathy Jamieson:** Of course it is important that the law is applied. Like Mr Lochhead, I too have grave concerns about the number of instances, including some in my own part of Ayrshire, in

which quite young people have found themselves hospitalised as a result of having consumed too much alcohol.

It is important to recognise that a number of measures will be taken forward in the Licensing (Scotland) Bill. A no-proof, no-sale policy will apply to all licensed premises in Scotland and, for on-sales, licensees will be required to opt in to access by children, with approval having to be given by a licensing board. There will be wider offences that relate to selling alcohol to a child anywhere. It is worth remembering that there will also be a statutory requirement to display notices. That will ensure that people understand that it is an offence for a person under the age of 18 to buy or attempt to buy alcohol on the premises, and that it is an offence for a person to buy alcohol on behalf of a person under the age of 18.

When the legislation is in place, we will of course expect it to be enforced.

**Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab):** I welcome the minister's range of initiatives to tackle this problem. I want to ask about proof of age. I welcome the commitment to a no-proof, no-sale policy, but does the minister accept that we should consider a national proof-of-age scheme? I am told by those in the know that, although we have many small local schemes, some people are able to forge the cards. A national, validated scheme might help to deliver the minister's policy objectives.

**Cathy Jamieson:** The member may be aware of this, but I will repeat it in case other members are not. Dialogue youth and Young Scot smart card pilots are being run in Angus, Glasgow, Argyll and Bute and Edinburgh. Accreditation for the proof-of-age standard scheme—the PASS scheme—has now been received, and the full distribution of the card to all 32 local authority areas is currently taking place.

**The Presiding Officer:** Question 7 has been withdrawn.

### **Courts (Facilities for Deaf People)**

**8. Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive what facilities are available for deaf people in courts. (S2O-5728)

**The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson):** The Scottish Court Service subscribes to RNID Typetalk and uses British Sign Language interpreters where necessary. Induction loops and infrared systems will be in all sheriff courts by July 2005.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I am aware that a loop system is in place in Perth sheriff court. However, is the minister aware of a recent case in which, although the loop system was used for a

deaf litigant on a first calling, the system was not in use during the subsequent substantive calling? As a result, the litigant missed about 90 per cent of what was happening in court. The litigant lost his case and had expenses awarded against him. That might not have had anything to do with the loop system, but does the minister agree that, as well as a system being in place, staff must be trained and educated to use it so that it will be of benefit to those who are deaf?

**Cathy Jamieson:** Ms Cunningham raises an important point. She has acknowledged that Perth sheriff court has sound-enhancement systems. Such systems are in place in the three main courtrooms. There is also mobile equipment for use in a smaller courtroom, and sound-enhancement systems are available at the public counter. I am assured that the systems are routinely checked to ensure that they are working.

I have not been made aware of the particular case that Ms Cunningham refers to, but if she cares to provide me with the details, I will look further into it.

### **Antisocial Behaviour**

**9. Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will publish guidance on good practice in tackling antisocial behaviour. (S2O-5748)

**The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry):** Guidance has already been published on many parts of the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004 to help practitioners to take effective and appropriate action in local communities. That has already helped agencies to implement new measures, such as closure orders and powers of dispersal. Further good practice guidance will be published as the antisocial behaviour strategy is rolled out.

**Christine May:** The minister and the chamber may have noted that, once again, Fife was in the media being congratulated on its success in dealing with antisocial behaviour. Does the minister agree that the severe measures that have been highlighted in those reports should be used only as a last resort? However, will he encourage all police forces and local authorities to send out the clear message that—as in Fife—if all else fails, the most severe measures will be used against those who persist in refusing all help and who continue to indulge in antisocial behaviour?

**Hugh Henry:** The measures that we have taken—in legislation and in resource support to local authorities and other partners—are about ensuring early and effective intervention. We are keen to encourage the use of mediation; we are also keen that disputes and problems should be resolved as early as possible. However, those who

persist in causing problems and mayhem in communities must be dealt with. The powers are now available to ensure that that happens.

I commend Fife for the range of measures that is being deployed there and for the imaginative use of the recently introduced powers. All authorities in Scotland should be looking closely at what is happening in Fife. I want the guidance on good practice to be made available so that everyone in Scotland can see examples of good practice and can build on them. As recently as this afternoon, I had a further meeting with officials to reinforce my determination to get that information out to local authorities and others throughout Scotland.

## General Questions

### European Environmental Law (Breaches)

**1. Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Executive what action it will take in respect of its 32 alleged breaches of European environmental law currently being investigated by the European Commission. (S2O-5788)

**The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie):** Of the 32 alleged breaches, 27 cases fall on my department, including six on animal health and welfare, five on fisheries and 16 on the environment generally. A further four relate to environmental impact assessment—a development function—and one, on asylum seekers, cuts across several portfolios. In the animal and plant health cases, recent transposition deadlines have all passed. In such instances, infraction proceedings are opened automatically. We are in the process of stating our progress to the Commission and are making arrangements to complete transposition as soon as practically possible. The fisheries, EIA and environment cases relate to regimes that have been transposed and arise because the Commission itself wishes more information or because an individual member of the public or a body has raised an issue with the Commission. All the cases have been discussed with the Commission but have not yet been taken further.

There is a well-defined procedure for handling queries about member states' transposition of European law. During that process, some cases are closed, while others progress to further stages of investigation. Member states are not in breach of their obligations until the process is completed. We shall continue to work constructively with the European Union on the matter. Such cases constitute formal legal proceedings and, as all matters may therefore result in a court hearing, I hope that members will understand that it is not possible, prior to such a hearing, for me to discuss the details of these cases in public. In the meantime, the Scottish Executive will be as open

and transparent as it can be regarding the environmental and other infractions, and the information published recently will be maintained henceforth in its publication scheme.

**Robin Harper:** I thank the minister for the level of detail that he has provided, which has been difficult to get so far. I am sure that he would agree that, in the week in which the First Minister launched the sustainable development framework, it is a bit embarrassing to find that the Executive is being hauled over the coals for 32 infractions. Does the minister agree that it would be better if we were now to be given the exact details of how the Executive is alleged to be failing the environment, rather than being left to speculate about it? Will he agree to release further details of those proceedings?

**Ross Finnie:** It is a bit much to jump from saying that there is an alleged breach to our being overwhelmingly embarrassed by the fact that these cases have been brought to account. If—as I am sure he was—the member was listening carefully to the final part of my answer, he will have heard me say that, although they may be trivial, those cases nevertheless constitute legal proceedings. I sought members' indulgence for the fact that it would be inappropriate for me to disclose further details until those matters have been heard properly.

### Agriculture (Casual Labour)

**2. Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has had any discussions with the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board about its powers to investigate the employment of casual labour in agricultural businesses. (S2O-5690)

**The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie):** There have been no such discussions.

**Mr Home Robertson:** Is the minister aware that there are serious concerns that a large number of foreign workers may be working excessive hours, below the minimum wage, for gangmasters used by Monaghan Mushrooms at Fenton Barns? What action has been taken by the wages board on the information that I gave it on 28 October? When will the board reply to my letter of 17 January about the investigation of Monaghan Mushrooms, Pleroma and other related companies whose records may be held outside Scotland? Those are longstanding and serious allegations affecting both foreign and local workers. Will the minister please intervene to ensure that the case is brought to a proper conclusion?

**Ross Finnie:** It was only on receipt of John Home Robertson's question that I became aware that his letters had not received responses from the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board, or that he

had not had any substantive response to the very serious matters that he has drawn to the board's attention. All that I can do is give Mr Home Robertson the undertaking that, as a consequence of his question, I will take the matter up with the wages board and see that he gets a response as soon as that can be arranged.

**Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife)**

**(LD):** The minister assures me that casual labour will be brought under the remit of the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board, but the point that John Home Robertson raised is important. If we do not have casual labour now, the soft-fruit and vegetable industries in Scotland will collapse, so I ask the minister to reaffirm his commitment to bring casual labour under the board's remit.

**Ross Finnie:** I am happy to undertake to ensure that the statutory powers that the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board has will be implemented in full. That would encompass the role that it has in protecting casual labourers in the industries that Andrew Arbuckle mentioned. As I said in my earlier answer, John Home Robertson has raised a serious matter on which he is entitled to a response.

**Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab):** I ask that the minister, in addition to consulting the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board, consider accommodation, welfare and other matters that are related to casual employment in the agricultural industry, which is as important in areas round about Leven, Leslie and other parts of my constituency as it is in the more rural areas of Scotland.

**Ross Finnie:** I was certainly not seeking to discriminate in the extent to which I will investigate the matter. We are all aware that, in agriculture and inshore fisheries, extensive use is made of incoming workers. The Scottish Agricultural Wages Board has rather restricted powers over the setting of wages and over the question whether persons employing people under such contracts fulfil statutory requirements. The other issues to which Christine May refers, such as accommodation, fall under other remits, but I will try to ensure that a comprehensive response is made to the concerns that have been raised this afternoon.

### Asthma

**3. Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife)**

**(SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to improve the quality of care and treatment for people with asthma to enable them to lead their lives free from the symptoms of asthma. (S2O-5708)

**The Minister for Health and Community Care**

**(Mr Andy Kerr):** The Executive is participating in a range of measures to improve the quality of care

for people with asthma. Most importantly, NHS Quality Improvement Scotland is now working, with input from Asthma UK Scotland, on a project to develop and promote personal management plans for asthma. The asthma project is being supported by funding from the Scottish Executive and includes training programmes for medical professionals.

**Bruce Crawford:** I am sure that the minister is aware that the Asthma UK report "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Asthma in Scotland today" was launched today. That report examines the impact that asthma has on the daily lives of the 390,000 people who have the condition, 100,000 of whom are children. Does he agree that, given the scale and seriousness of asthma and other chronic conditions, such as diabetes and epilepsy, there is an urgent need for a co-ordinated approach to tackling such conditions? If he agrees—I hope that he does—will he assure me of his support for the creation of a long-term medical conditions alliance?

**Mr Kerr:** Those who suffer from asthma are neither out of my mind nor out of my sight. Some of the measures that we have taken to date have been, and continue to be, successful. For instance, the general practitioner contract, which includes reference to asthma, will attract our GPs' interest and ensure that we are giving out the right advice and carrying out the right measures in relation to the cessation of smoking, as well as collecting relevant data on such matters. The contract also includes influenza immunisation for people with asthma. We also have a children's steering group, which is chaired by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland and which considers services for our children, whom Bruce Crawford mentioned. There are a number of other measures, including £700,000-worth of asthma-related research projects. Bruce Crawford can rest assured that, far from those with asthma being out of sight or out of mind, we are focusing closely on the matter.

On Bruce Crawford's further point, I am more than happy to ensure that the idea of a long-term medical conditions alliance is put through the work that we are doing on the national framework for service change, which includes a paper on the management of long-term conditions. I await the outcome of that work, but I am more than happy to consider that broad perspective on the conditions that Bruce Crawford mentions.

**Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab):** I know that the minister, having recently joined me at a meeting in Dundee organised by Asthma UK, Diabetes UK and Epilepsy Scotland, is aware of the collaborative work that those organisations are undertaking. Does he agree that, on treatment and access to services, those chronic conditions raise

similar issues and that, as Bruce Crawford suggested, a long-term medical conditions alliance would be of benefit not only to asthma sufferers, but to the many sufferers of diabetes and epilepsy in Scotland?

**Mr Kerr:** As I indicated, I am more than happy to listen to that perspective on the management of long-term chronic conditions. The Executive's health improvement strategy is based on not only the management but the prevention—which is also important—of many chronic conditions and covers diet, exercise, smoking and alcohol abuse and issues relating to people's general mental well-being. The collaborative measures that are being taken in relation to public health improvement will make a significant difference.

Asthma UK has acknowledged the work that the Executive is doing on smoking cessation and has welcomed strongly the measures that we intend to take regarding environmental tobacco smoke. The work that we want the Parliament to take forward is about having a balance of measures and effecting a real lifestyle change for Scotland's smokers through the bill that we have introduced. That measure will contribute to the overall agenda of public health improvement and will ensure that the health service organises better the management of chronic conditions. One of the lessons that we have learned is how the work of the managed clinical networks can be applied to conditions such as asthma and others. I am happy to reassure members that I am listening to their views and will respond in due course. The work that is being done in the Kerr review in relation to the management of long-term chronic conditions will be significant.

**Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):** According to the Asthma UK report that was just mentioned, around half of all people with severe asthma symptoms said that access to asthma specialists would benefit them in reducing their symptoms, yet one in five sufferers does not have such access. What is the Executive doing to increase patient access to specialists and the number of specialists with an interest in asthma?

**Mr Kerr:** There are an increasing number of specialists in the NHS. Under the GP contract, we want to ensure that we are seeking out people actively and passing them through the NHS to ensure that they get specific advice. The quality outcomes framework in the GP contract will assist us in the task of ensuring that people suffering from asthma take the right patient journey through the health service, get the right level of treatment and reflect that back to us so that we organise the health service around long-term chronic conditions. Again, I assure members that I am listening to their views.

**Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD):** I draw to the minister's attention an organisation in my part of

the world called Asthma Support in Rural Scotland, which is particularly concerned with people living in rural areas who might need medical attention rapidly. The group is trying to ensure that medical records of chronic asthma patients include a map reference, so that if emergency treatment is needed, there are no difficulties such as the emergency services getting lost on the way.

**Mr Kerr:** I confess that I have not heard of that initiative before, but I am more than happy to consider putting such information on patient records as an innovative step to ensure that the level and quality of care are appropriate to people in rural areas.

### European Constitution

**4. Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it considers that the answer to question 208258 by Dr Denis MacShane MP on 17 January 2005 shows that the European constitution does not ensure the involvement of the Scottish Executive and the Parliament in the European Union legislative process to a greater degree than at present. (S2O-5681)

**The Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform (Mr Tom McCabe):** On the contrary, the constitutional treaty contains important references to the role of the legislative regions for the first time in any European treaty. By any measure that is a significant step forward. The treaty makes it clear that it is for national Parliaments to consult regional Parliaments with legislative powers. It will be for this Parliament to agree with the Westminster Parliament how the arrangements will work in practice.

**Phil Gallie:** The question was whether there was any change with respect to the consultative process, whether or not the constitution is signed up to—clearly there is no such change. Ministers in this Parliament have advised members continually that the principal reason why we should sign up to the constitution is that it will give the Scottish Parliament a greater say in such issues. Once again, Mr MacShane—someone with whom I do not always agree—demonstrates that that is not the case. Will the minister now step back from his original position?

**Mr McCabe:** No, I will not. The United Kingdom Government has said consistently that the Scottish Parliament should be involved in the subsidiarity mechanism. I refer the member to the joint paper that was submitted to the convention on the future of Europe by Peter Hain. I also refer the member to the evidence that was given by the United Kingdom Government to the House of Lords inquiry in which it committed itself to—



**Phil Gallie:** Was that the Tory Government or the Labour Government?

**The Presiding Officer:** Order, Mr Gallie.

**Mr McCabe:** The Tory Government was a long time ago, Phil.

The UK Government is committed to liaising with the devolved Administrations at an early stage in the preparation of the memorandum on subsidiarity, so there is no position. I can also assure the member that I met Mr MacShane in Brussels earlier this year and we had a constructive and warm meeting. He is as keen as he has ever been, on behalf of the United Kingdom Government, to make sure that the Scottish Parliament gets fresh and enhanced powers with regard to the new treaty.

**Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):** The minister will recall that around the time of the meeting of the group of regions with legislative power—or Regleg—in Edinburgh last year, the First Minister announced the establishment of a pilot project that would demonstrate how Scotland would have greater access to the European Commission and the European Union as a result of his discussions. Since then, we have heard nothing about that arrangement. Can the minister give us some further details in Parliament today?

**Mr McCabe:** I fully appreciate that Mr Swinney may have heard nothing since then. As soon as we are in a position to provide more information to the Parliament and to Mr Swinney, we will do so.

**Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab):** Does the minister agree that article 2 of the protocol on subsidiarity makes clear the Commission's commitment to consult widely, taking into account the regional and local dimension of legislative action? That is something that was supported by the Labour Party in this Parliament. Does he further agree that the new treaty will ensure better regulation and increased transparency and accountability and that it will bring Europe closer to its citizens, which is something else for which we have argued?

**Mr McCabe:** I agree with those points. The new treaty will give the Parliament an enhanced role and a fresh voice in our dealings with the UK Government and the representations that it makes to the European Union. That can only be a good thing. It is a further development of the influence that the Parliament has not only in the United Kingdom but in Europe.

**The Presiding Officer:** Question 5 has been withdrawn.

#### **Dementia (Short-life Working Group)**

**6. Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will

report on progress made by the short-life working group on dementia. (S2O-5715)

**The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Rhona Brankin):** Outcome guidance was published in November last year as an addition to "A Framework for Mental Health Services in Scotland", which offers advice on the best organisation of care and support for those with dementia and their carers. The guidance is already informing change—for example, it has had a strong influence on the design of the pilot project for a dementia managed care network in Tayside. We are also helping to fund the workshops that are delivered by Alzheimer Scotland to promote the guidance and encourage further improvement in services.

**Irene Oldfather:** I thank the minister for her answer; I know that she has a particular interest in the matter. The recommendations and conclusions of the working group are welcomed by dementia sufferers and their families, but does she agree that full implementation of the recommendations is vital? Will she give an assurance that the Executive intends to monitor health boards throughout Scotland to ensure that that important piece of work remains firmly at the top of the health agenda?

**Rhona Brankin:** Yes—absolutely. I will be meeting Alzheimer Scotland again later this month to discuss the continuing agenda and I will address the dementia care conference in April. It is a hugely important matter, and we need to look closely at the results of the pilot project for a dementia managed care network in Tayside. I am conscious of the member's interest in the matter and I give her the assurance that she seeks. We will ensure that anybody who suffers from dementia has access to the highest possible level of care.

#### **Race Equality and Racism (Media Campaign)**

**7. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Executive how it intends to evaluate the impact of its media campaign to promote race equality and tackle racism. (S2O-5789)

**The Minister for Communities (Malcolm Chisholm):** As with previous phases of the campaign, an evaluation of the current phase of media advertising will be undertaken when it concludes at the end of March. The results will be published on the one Scotland website, alongside the evaluations of previous phases.

**Patrick Harvie:** I am sure that the minister is aware of some people's concern that although high-profile media campaigns have value in raising awareness of racism, they do less to tackle the underlying, deep-seated attitudes that promote racism in Scotland. Will he commit the Executive

to valuing the grassroots anti-racism work that needs to take place in communities alongside the media campaign?

It might also help if the minister told Parliament what discussions he has had with colleagues in London about the equalities review that the Department of Trade and Industry is establishing. Will that review cover reserved issues alone? Will the Executive review devolved issues? I am sure that the review will impact heavily on the Executive's work under its commitment to tackle racism.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I assure Patrick Harvie that I and others in the Executive are discussing with London that review, which was announced only a few days ago.

We are well aware of the excellent work that many organisations do and we have conducted a review that Margaret Curran initiated into local ethnic minority work. We fund many relevant initiatives. The one Scotland, many cultures campaign is not a substitute for them; it complements them and conveys strong messages. A key message in the current phase is that racism is a virus, but the campaign also has positive messages about people coming to live and work in Scotland. The campaign has been widely welcomed, but of course much more must be done, and we are doing much more.

## Infrastructure Investment Plan

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

The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-2554, in the name of Tom McCabe, on the infrastructure investment plan.

15:02

### **The Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform (Mr Tom McCabe):**

The coalition Government is committed to its historic drive to improve services for the people of Scotland. That is why "Building a Better Scotland: Infrastructure Investment Plan" was published on 25 February. The plan is an important development that has arisen from the fruits of devolution. It builds on the spending review, which outlined our substantial funding increases from 2005 to 2008.

As we have said many times, growing the economy is our top priority. Only long-term funding will do that and secure the improved quality of life that we aim to achieve. The infrastructure investment plan sets out what we will invest in the longer term to support our top priority. We will support it by delivering high-quality transport to strengthen Scotland's economy and support all our communities; by providing better learning environments to help to inspire pupils, students and adults to achieve the best that they can; by supporting businesses, encouraging enterprise and improving skills and employability; and by investing in new and affordable housing in modern social environments to support economic growth.

Last year, ministers committed to increasing net investment by 5 per cent per annum in real terms over the spending review period. The infrastructure investment plan shows how we have gone beyond that to provide the infrastructure that is needed to improve public services. This is the first such plan. It sets out the broad strategy for our investments. By publishing the plan now, we will show our approach to improved delivery by raising awareness in the public and private sectors.

Our commitment to building the Scottish economy means engaging with business and seeking and taking on board private and public sector views. We are committed to jointly engaging in the efficient and successful delivery of policies that will help Scotland to grow and prosper. In the coming months, I will meet key people in the public and private sectors to discuss the plan's wider implications and to promote its delivery.

No one should doubt that there is much work to do. We have inherited dilapidated infrastructure and we are determined to reverse that by ensuring the long-term maintenance of existing assets as

well as creating new assets. To ensure success, we need to improve delivery skills and learn to deal with high-value investment options, including private sector funding.

Since 1999, we have substantially increased investment in infrastructure to start the process of delivering services fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That investment includes the largest hospital building programme in the history of our national health service. Two examples of such projects are Hairmyres hospital and Wishaw general hospital.

There has been unparalleled investment in schools infrastructure. Three hundred new schools will be provided by 2009. The programme also includes £3 billion-worth of capital investment, the prudential borrowing scheme that is now available to local government and £420 million of investment in the infrastructure and estate of the higher and further education sectors.

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Given that public-private partnership projects are effectively off book and not part of public spending, why does the minister think it appropriate for the Executive to take credit for them when council tax payers will fund them?

**Mr McCabe:** For some time, I have regarded Mr Monteith as slightly detached, but he has just moved into new areas. The PPP projects produce public goods for the consumption of the general public in Scotland. That is why we think that they are a good idea. I know that Conservatives do not pay a great deal of attention to this, but the public appreciate new schools, hospitals and roads.

Included in the plan is our work on housing in Scotland: stock transfers from local authorities to housing associations, the eradication of fuel poverty and building to sustainable standards. Also included is the redevelopment of our transport infrastructure, which will involve the expenditure of £3 billion over the next 10 years, links to both Edinburgh and Glasgow airports and improvements in integration through the new transport agency.

The sum of £1.8 billion will be invested in our water system to improve drinking water and sewage treatment. A strategic waste fund of £500 million will be available to local authorities to assist with recycling and waste treatment.

It is important that we end the sterile debate about whether private sector or public sector delivery is best. We need to recognise and use the best of both. We need to celebrate successes in both sectors, and both sectors need to learn from mistakes that are made.

The funding for our plans will come from a variety of managed processes, demonstrating our mixed-economy approach. Those will include

increased conventional funding; increasing exploration of the benefits of partnership arrangements; additional private finance through PPP; and the prudential framework that is now available to local government, as I said.

PPPs are one example of our mixed-economy approach. Investment in PPPs represents about 13 per cent of total Scottish block capital investment and shows that we can combine the best of public and private expertise, innovation and financing to deliver effective public services in Scotland.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** As the minister would expect, I will ask a relatively technical question at this stage, in the hope that he may develop it. There is much in the plan that is entirely welcome. It is described as relating to investment in infrastructure, which is defined as "fixed capital equipment". Can he explain where the fixed capital is in central heating in homes, which is going on the Executive's balance sheet; in supporting provision of broadband to the last few houses that would not otherwise get it; and in funding investigation of PPPs? Where is the capital benefit that derives from those activities and goes on to the Executive's balance sheet? I do not necessarily oppose them; I just want to know the accounting.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I will give the minister an extra minute. I will take it from Mr Stevenson's speech.

**Mr McCabe:** I am greatly obliged, Presiding Officer.

I am sure that Mr Stevenson takes an interest in those very technical matters, but the general public in Scotland are interested in where the investment plan will increase the stock of goods in our country and whether it will allow the important partnership between all the sectors of our economy to build the entire Scottish economy and make Scotland a far better place in which to live, work, visit and study. That is what is important.

It is also important that public sector managers understand and appraise all delivery options and select the way forward objectively, on the basis of optimum risk allocation and value for money. The plan shows consistently high levels of investment over the next 10 years at least.

The challenge to industry is to match skills and resources to meet the investment plan. We want to give a clear sight of the nature, value and timing of all investments requiring a market response, in a United Kingdom and a global market context. All that will be backed up by other initiatives, such as industry days, website information and more intimate engagement with the public and private sectors to make sure that they are aware of all the opportunities that the plan provides. The market

has choices and Scotland has to be smart and attractive with its projects and procurement management.

The ambitious plan is an important building block in the Scottish Government's arrangements, in which we will provide open information about forward plans and work with the public and private sectors to create sound infrastructure over the long term. That is an appropriate approach for a modern democracy.

I need hardly say that infrastructure investment in Scotland should be important to us all. It is important to see the plan through for the benefit of the people of Scotland now and in the medium and long terms. I welcome the opportunity to debate aspects of the plan today. I hope that members will join us in contributing to that debate and assist us through what they say in our engagement with the public and private sectors so that we can outline the genuine opportunities for business in Scotland and, through that process, improve our country, grow our economy and make Scotland the best small country in the world.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the record level of infrastructure investment, as set out in the first infrastructure plan for Scotland, *Building a Better Scotland: Infrastructure Investment Plan: Investing in the Future of Scotland*; acknowledges that the plan addresses the problems bequeathed by decades of underinvestment; recognises that the Scottish Executive is open to working across the public and private sectors in order to ensure that Scotland has the modern infrastructure that is necessary to support economic growth and secure an improved quality of life for the people of Scotland, and agrees that the infrastructure plan will deliver, for the long term, better public services, improved transport infrastructure, modernised colleges and universities, new hospitals, improved housing and new schools.

15:11

**Jim Mather (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** In discussing issues such as the infrastructure investment plan with the Scottish Executive, I begin to feel like a golf instructor whose pupil never quite manages to be competitive because he always leaves half his clubs at home and, although he makes some of the right moves, can never compete against others who are equipped with the full range of skills. However, unlike such a golf instructor, I have the comfort of knowing that Scotland has no option but eventually to use all the tools that it needs. Scotland must be more competitive and it must do better, because there is simply too much at stake for us as a nation. That is why I would prefer to focus on building Scottish skills, capability, infrastructure and competitiveness with all the tools that are available to our competitor nations.

However, we are where we are and today's Executive motion, which is a much-puffed

retrospective attempt to prove the existence of a better balance between capital and revenue spending, is not enough. In some ways, it is like Gordon Brown's decision to pass control of interest rates to the Bank of England—not so much evidence of good economic management as an exercise in belated learning from our European neighbours.

Most of our European neighbours have a much better track record on capital expenditure, with consistently higher levels of investment in their people and infrastructure over recent years. The sadness for us is that the Executive's plan is undermined by the failure to go the whole hog through completely following role-model countries in other monetary unions.

Let us look at what Gordon Brown has done. He did the right thing in removing political influence from interest rate and inflation level management, but he continues to impose tax harmonisation on Scotland. The Scottish Executive claims to have rediscovered the need to invest in capital projects, yet it chooses to have no meaningful revenue-earning capability and no means of increasing competitiveness, thereby putting itself in a position in which it cannot guarantee that Scottish capital expenditure will grow year after year.

**Mr McCabe:** I highlighted in my speech significant investment in our education and physical infrastructures. Do those things not lead to a more competitive Scotland that is better able to play its part in the world and better able to offer opportunities to our people?

**Jim Mather:** That represents a significant catch-up, but the problem is that there is a hole in the bucket. Even if we educate our kids to a better level, if they leave Scotland, Scotland will not be advantaged in the way that I would like.

We read in yesterday's *Financial Times* that the International Monetary Fund describes the Treasury's forecast on UK tax revenues as

"somewhat more optimistic than warranted"

and calls for "more realistic" projections for economic growth and revenues. Even the current projections might not be fully delivered. That leaves Scotland more vulnerable, because Gordon Brown and the Scottish Government refuse to see the cracks that are beginning to appear in the current economic model.

The current model offers a system that tries to ignore and distort Scottish economic performance, while at the same time making economic growth its top priority. It is a system in which Government prefers to focus on UK growth, hiding much lower levels of growth in Scotland and preferring to heap praise on itself for returning Scottish taxpayers' money back to Scotland via the Barnett formula in

a process that is meant to compensate us for being locked into a system that precludes our ability to compete and grow. What kind of arrangement is that? The model offers a settlement that no self-respecting state in the United States of America or country in the European Union would consider. It is surely time to make the point that it is necessary to allow constituent members of monetary unions—be they denominated in dollars, euros or pounds—to control their own taxes.

**Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** Will the member give way?

**Jim Mather:** Let me finish my point. I will share with members a quote from an important editorial in *The Economist* in January, which said that when countries

“shed their ... monetary and exchange rate policies, they need more fiscal independence, not less.”

Why did *The Economist* editorial say that? In a word, the answer is experience. Perhaps the experience of Scotland amply demonstrates what happens when a country lacks economic powers; certainly experience on the positive side, from the United States, Europe and the new European Union accession states, shows a definite small country-big country pattern whereby smaller countries that are close to larger neighbours have to be more competitive and flexible.

**Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab):** Will the member give way?

**Jeremy Purvis:** Will the member give way?

**Jim Mather:** I will give way to Des McNulty in a moment.

The phenomenon is discussed every week in *The Economist*. It is a self-evident truth, which is increasingly supported in Scotland and is dismissed and denied only by the representatives of vested interests, such as Des McNulty. For that reason, I will take an intervention from Des McNulty.

**Des McNulty:** When will Mr Mather address the infrastructure investment plan for Scotland? His speeches have a habit of making us feel more and more as though we were experiencing “Groundhog Day”. It would be interesting to hear him address the issues that are involved.

**Jim Mather:** I will not justify Des McNulty’s nihilistic approach, which would paint Scotland into a corner where it must accept a declining population and low economic growth, and I will not grace the infrastructure investment plan with the suggestion that it offers the solution, because it is only part of the solution, as members of the Executive parties know in their hearts. Outwith the Parliament, the majority of committed people in

Scotland want the Parliament to have more economic powers. We will secure those powers—and that positive view demands support and focus, which it gets from me.

I have no time to castigate Des McNulty on his approach—I will leave that for future generations—but I will paint a positive picture of what should and could happen in Scotland if we were to combine the increased capital spending with increased powers. In such an environment, we would make Scotland competitive and our economy would grow and converge on the higher levels that are enjoyed elsewhere.

The chief economist of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Jean-Philippe Cotis, made a point last week that illuminates the debate. He said:

“At the end of the day, being unable to converge is nothing other than losing the capacity to learn from others and their successes.”

That is what we are witnessing from members.

**Jeremy Purvis:** Will the member give way?

**Jim Mather:** Jeremy Purvis should hear what Jean-Philippe Cotis went on to say. He said:

“Regaining this capacity to learn implies first an ability to situate oneself on the international scale and to evaluate the gaps that need to be bridged.”

In a spirit of consensus, and given that other small countries and small companies can provide such information, I suggest, first, that the Scottish Executive would do well to provide objective data that show where its business—Scotland—currently sits on the international scale. I suggest that the Executive consult the report of the International Institute for Management Development in Switzerland. Secondly, I suggest that the Executive use that source and other sources objectively to evaluate the gaps. Will the Executive genuinely do that? I do not think that it will, because such an approach would subject its performance to a rigorous audit and expose the absence of effective evaluation and the weakness of an approach that tries to fix an economy with a limited subset of tools, of which the infrastructure investment plan unfortunately represents a classic example.

I move amendment S2M-2554.1, to leave out from “acknowledges” to end and insert:

“and regrets that this investment is not being matched with other credible measures by the Scottish Executive that could genuinely and incrementally increase sustainable economic growth in Scotland.”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Brian Monteith to speak to and move amendment S2M-2544.2.

**Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP):** Just read it out, Brian.

15:19

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I am rather tempted just to read out the amendment and then sit down, but such is the length—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I do not think that there is time for you to do that.

**Mr Monteith:** Such is the amendment's length in listing the Conservatives' infrastructure achievements that I know that reading it out would take up too much time, so I will make a speech instead.

I am pleased to speak in the debate, if only to set the record straight. The Conservatives have no difficulty in supporting the Government's improvements in infrastructure, be they improvements to the transport network or the building of new hospitals, galleries or schools. We will give the Executive our support on those matters. However, for the minister to present his proposals as necessary because of decades of dilapidation, neglect and underinvestment, as mentioned in the plan and the motion, is to behave in a crass and partisan manner. The First Minister says that we should avoid doing that and that we should raise our game. He must be desperately disappointed in such a display of backward behaviour from his ministerial team.

My amendment contains only a short list of some of the infrastructure improvements that were made when the Conservatives enjoyed their 18 adventurous years in power. The list is not comprehensive—indeed, I think that we have probably forgotten more than we have remembered. In fact, a member of the public who was visiting the Parliament today volunteered the names of two more hospitals—one in Campbeltown and one in Oban—that were not included in the amendment. Furthermore, only this afternoon, Jamie McGrigor—I almost said Jamie Stone, but he is not in our party yet—passed me a note with a further list of more hospitals that could have been added. Such is the number of the Conservatives' achievements.

**Stewart Stevenson:** I note that Mr Monteith's amendment claims credit for dualling the A90 and key sections of the A96. When did he last drive the full length of the A90?

**Mr Monteith:** I cannot remember when I last did so, but I know that I am doing so on Saturday to watch Hibs in Aberdeen.

I do not suggest that the improvements in my amendment were achieved only by the Tories; many of them were achieved in partnership.

Partnership is important. Of course, many of them were achieved in spite of the bitter opposition of those on the Executive benches. However, to justify their failure to deliver so little in the past five years and to justify the increase in spending, ministers need to pretend that nothing happened before they took office.

So mean spirited and self-delusional is the coalition Cabinet that I can just see some of the ministers sitting huddled together like the characters in that famous sketch in one of my favourite films, the "Life of Brian". At a meeting of the popular front for the liberation of Lanarkshire, three men are sitting with towels on their heads. Comrade Tom says, "What did the Tories ever do for us?" "Yeah, what did the Tories ever do for us?" says Comrade Jack. Then Comrade Andy pipes up: "Yeah, what did the Tories ever do for us, apart from modernising the roads?" "Yeah, modernising the roads," says Jack. "Okay, what did they ever do for us apart from the roads?" asks Tom. "And the hospitals," says Jack. "And the rail electrification," says Andy. "Okay," says Tom, "what did the Tories ever do for us, apart from modernising the roads, the rail electrification, the hospitals, the power stations, the galleries, the museums, the theatres and the airports?" Need I go on? I think that members get the point. "Yeah, what did the Tories ever do for us?" they say, as they take the towels off their heads and leave the staff sauna in Victoria Quay, also built for them by the Tories.

The problem is that the Scottish Government has shown itself to be singularly inefficient at spending the money at its disposal. I have not listed what all the Conservative achievements cost, because that is not important. What is important is that those improvements were made and brought about an improvement in services. Waiting lists and waiting times started to fall. The rise in crime was halted. Our goods and services could get to market more efficiently and our commuters saw improvements in journey times. In short, standards of living improved for the majority of people.

**Jeremy Purvis:** Mr Monteith suggests that the people of Scotland were ungrateful in 1997. Given all the great work that he has said the Tories did, can he tell us why the Tories were wiped out in Scotland in 1997?

**Mr Monteith:** There is absolutely no point in trying to cover old ground. What I am doing today is offering a hand of friendship. I was keen to support the minister and his motion, but he has removed that possibility by saying that everything is the Tories' fault. It is not the Tories' fault; we can build a better Scotland together. That is what raising our game is all about.

I notice that the clock is running, so let me close with an example of why we do not trust the

Executive to deliver. If we consider the figures for spending on housing, which is an important component of capital spending, we find that since 1997 the real-terms spend has been less than in the final year of the Conservative Government. In 2003-04, the spend was £243 million, compared with £412 million in 1996-97. Even in 2005-06, the spend will still not be higher.

We welcome the expenditure on infrastructure and will support the Executive. However, let us be honest; trying to pin the blame for the current situation on the problems of the past does not make the Executive's plans any better or any more acceptable.

I move amendment S2M-2554.2, to leave out from "welcomes" to end and insert:

"recognises the substantial level of capital invested in infrastructure in Scotland by successive Conservative governments between 1979 and 1997 which included, amongst many projects, the M8 motorway extension, the Edinburgh City Bypass, upgrade of the A74 to motorway status, the first M77 motorway section, dualling of the A90 and key sections of the A96, the Dunblane by-pass, dualling of sections of the A9, dualling of the A1 between Edinburgh and Haddington, the St James Interchange at Glasgow Airport, dualling of the northern stretch of the A737, dualling of the A78 to by-pass Troon and Loans, dualling of the A71 from Irvine to Kilmarnock, the Dornoch Firth Bridge, the Kessock Bridge, the Kylesku Bridge, reopening of the Edinburgh to Bathgate railway line, electrification of the East Coast main line, electrification of the North Berwick spur line, electrification of the Glasgow to Ayr railway line, the Skye Bridge development, a new ferry service between Campbeltown and Northern Ireland, a new air traffic control centre, the redevelopment of Aberdeen Airport, £8 billion invested in council houses across Scotland, the New Life for Urban Scotland programme, Western Isles Hospital, Caithness Hospital, medicine for the elderly wards and a day hospital at Perth Royal Infirmary, a neo-natal intensive care ward and a midwife-led unit at Forth Park Hospital, a new phase of the Queen Margaret Hospital in Dunfermline, St John's Hospital at Livingston, Ayr Hospital, major refurbishment to Stirling Royal Infirmary, major refurbishment to Falkirk Royal Infirmary, HM Prison Shotts Phase 2, Peterhead Power Station, Torness Power Station, Greengairs Power Station, the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, the Edinburgh Festival Theatre, the Edinburgh International Conference Centre, the Dean Gallery, the Royal Museum of Scotland extension and renovation of the National Library of Scotland; recalls that many of the infrastructure achievements that the Scottish Executive now takes credit for, such as seven new hospital developments, namely the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, Wishaw General Hospital, Hairmyres Hospital, East Ayrshire Community Hospital, Glasgow Royal Infirmary extension, the Western General Hospital extension and Southern Isles Community Hospital, were in fact part of the Conservative Scottish Office programme; reminds members of the Parliament that the Scottish Office between 1997 and 1999 postponed further infrastructure projects by introducing a moratorium on roads spending for two years which delayed initiatives such as the A8000 upgrade to dual carriageway, the new Kincardine Bridge, the Kincardine Bypass and the M74 extension; is pleased to celebrate this year the 10th anniversary of the National Lottery which brought a new and very substantial income

stream for capital investment in public buildings that would otherwise not have been built or renovated; notes that increases in spending by the Executive have not led to improvements in service delivery; believes that the Executive has thus far demonstrated that it has a poor record of spending taxpayers' money wisely; welcomes the fact that the Executive is open to working across public and private sectors in order to ensure that we have the modern infrastructure Scotland needs, and believes, however, that in order to support economic growth the Executive needs to cut business rates to at least the same poundage as in England, invest more significantly in roads and transport, open up Scottish Water to full competition and greater investment through privatisation and cut red tape."

15:25

**Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** What we have just heard was not so much the life of Brian as the search for the holy grail.

Two months ago, an accountant friend with one of the leading firms in Scotland was giving me the benefit of his opinion of the work of the Scottish Parliament. From his point of view, there had been an admirable concentration on repairing and improving the social fabric of our society, but he felt that the failings of the infrastructure of our nation were not being addressed to the same extent and that Scottish business was being disadvantaged as a result. His views were probably crystallised by the low level of capital investment in Scotland in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although I initially looked at Brian Monteith's list with some awe, I soon realised that it covers an 18-year period, whereas today we are talking about the period up to 2007-08.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Can Mr Arbuckle give me a list of infrastructure projects that have been completed in his and my region of Mid Scotland and Fife in the past six years?

**Mr Arbuckle:** I will provide that information after the debate, because I do not wish to take up all my time by doing what Mr Monteith did. Today we are considering our long-term investment plans and I am sure that my accountant friend will change his mind.

It is difficult to imagine the sheer scale of expenditure contained within the plan, especially when the figures are rolled up and the zeros are lopped off the end for the sake of simplicity. The temptation for lesser financial mortals must be to see the sums as large heaps of £1 coins. However, for those of us who can visualise the scale and range of the work ahead, the evidence is of record expenditure on roads, schools, higher education establishments and hospitals.

As someone who is moving up into one of the older age brackets, I am pleased to see the long-term commitment to improving the services that will provide the framework for our society for the

next generation. There is a saying in agriculture that we live for today but we farm for tomorrow. That means that all our efforts should be channelled into making the land better for those who are coming behind—the next generation. I hope that in future years the people of Scotland will be able to say that, at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Scottish Government invested in the future. I believe that the investment plan will be of long-term benefit to this country, its people and its economy.

It is impossible to cover all aspects of the investment plan in a few minutes, but I will say that I approve most heartily of the link-ups that are now planned for our transport system. For decades, airport users from Fife and the north have bemoaned the fact that they were transported along a railway line that went within yards of the airport terminal but that the—here I have an adjective blanked out—train did not stop until it reached central Edinburgh. A much-needed link is also planned for Glasgow airport. Those two projects alone will help to provide a better balance in our transport usage.

The developments in Kincardine and the reopening of the Stirling to Alloa railway line will also reduce pressure on the Forth road bridge. At long last, in that and in other transport initiatives, we are employing much-needed joined-up thinking. Although “joined-up thinking” is a cliché and seldom exists in reality, we have it in the investment plan. We are considering different transport systems to provide for Scotland’s future needs.

As part of my homework before I joined the Finance Committee, I read a few of the committee’s papers and noticed concerns about the consequences of short-term planning for capital works. I hope that members from all parts of the chamber will acknowledge that we now have a massive increase in expenditure married to cross-sector objectives and that the plan represents a framework for the long term.

My one concern about the plan, as with any major capital investment programme, relates to the timescales. Any development that disturbs local communities normally provokes two views: some want the development to progress to fruition at top speed, whereas others feel that they are being imposed upon either during construction or following completion. A great deal of consultation will need to be carried out by the development companies and agencies if they are to ensure democratic involvement as the plans progress. Let us hope that developers find the right balance between those two conflicting forces. As Scottish Water and local authorities have already experienced, it is easy for the timetables for large-scale schemes to slip as they go through the democratic process.

I have no doubt that those who maintain a permanently bleak view of the Scottish economy and those whose pet projects are not included in the long-term plan will use this opportunity to carp and complain, but that is democracy. However, I believe that the infrastructure investment plan represents the biggest joined-up investment plan that Scotland has ever known. We should welcome it.

15:31

**Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie)**

**(Lab):** Of course, the “Life of Brian” ends with Brian on the cross singing “Always look on the bright side of life”. That might be a metaphor for the text of Brian Monteith’s amendment. Although the amendment identifies a fairly long list of projects, it can be argued that the Conservatives conducted an infrastructure non-investment plan during their 18 years in power. I well remember that, during the final two years of Conservative rule, the deputy director of education for Strathclyde Regional Council, David Montgomery, told councillors that, at the existing rate of replacement, each school in the region was expected to last for 400 years. Subsequent to the Conservatives’ removal from power, Glasgow City Council, North Lanarkshire Council, South Lanarkshire Council and councils throughout Scotland have been able to put in place substantial school building programmes that have significantly increased the level of investment in education. I believe that that has transformed the quality of education that is delivered.

**Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab):** Mr Monteith pointed out that West Lothian benefited from the reopening of the Bathgate to Airdrie line, but that was only because it was paying the price of 20 per cent unemployment. Does Des McNulty agree that, whereas the Tories invested only to address economic failure, we are investing to ensure Scotland’s continued economic success?

**Des McNulty:** Bristow Muldoon is quite correct. We can also point to other areas of investment. Investment in our water and sewerage infrastructure is currently running at £40 million a month. I suspect that it was running at less than £4 million a month during the Conservative years. That reflects a huge step change, which has been cumulatively arrived at.

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

**Des McNulty:** I will, but let me finish this point.

The infrastructure investment plan comes on top of a doubling of capital spending in the period between 2000 and 2004. Having doubled spending, we are now providing a further substantial increase, to the extent that capital spending is increasing at a rate that is twice as



fast as that of the rest of the budget. That is absolutely in line with what the Finance Committee called for, but it represents a huge shift from what happened in the 1980s and 1990s.

**Mr Monteith:** Given the evidence that the large-scale building programme in the early 1960s meant that the hospital programme needed to be completed in the 1980s and 1990s, and given the fact that we have supported education private finance initiatives, which came on stream as a concept only in the mid to late 1990s, does the member not agree that, had we remained in power in 1997, we would have delivered new schools in Glasgow and the rest of Scotland using the same PFI-type schemes that the Executive has used?

**Des McNulty:** The PFI-type schemes would not have been the same, because we have shifted the mechanism substantially. I claim an element of personal involvement in the Tory wipe-out in 1997, because I believe that the water referendum that we staged in Strathclyde in 1994 set the final seal on the Conservatives' loss of credibility across Scotland. One of the things that is particularly interesting in the Conservative amendment is the shift on Scottish Water, which comes right at the end of the amendment, and in relation to which they talk about full competition. Are they talking about privatisation? If so, that is a significant shift from what Brian Monteith was saying relatively recently.

I believe that the employment and job consequences of the investment package are considerable. We know that new capital investment—new schools, new hospitals and new roads—generates employment in the construction industry. I believe that it will also significantly enhance productivity. We should not be frightened of saying that investing in the public sector is a mechanism for generating new and higher levels of productivity. In the investment plan, the Executive has identified the key priorities for Scotland, which are transport, schools and hospitals. We need to identify the mechanisms that underpin economic growth and can drive it forward, to stimulate the economy in a way that benefits everybody.

I am also pleased by the plan's emphasis on targeting resources on deprived areas. The one area of disappointment that I want to flag up is that the plan does not specify how that targeting would be achieved, nor does it put any numbers to it. I believe that deprived areas of Scotland—particularly areas such as those that I represent in Clydebank, which is similar to places such as Inverclyde, Glasgow and Renfrewshire—require some kind of priority in terms of investment. We should not be allocating resources purely on a population basis; proper account must be taken of need. I certainly hope that, in implementing the

plan and particularly in looking at the balance of the transport commitments, there will be some acknowledgement of the need that exists in west central Scotland, especially in deprived areas such as Clydebank and those areas represented by the members round about me.

15:37

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate. I start by congratulating members of the Finance Committee and Des McNulty, the current convener, on their work over the period since the Parliament came into being in helping the Executive and the Parliament to improve the factual basis upon which we hold debates such as this. The draft budget this year improves our access to and understanding of what is going on, compared with previous budgets. That is very much to be welcomed, just as the publication of the plan is to be welcomed. It shows an appropriate and urgent focus on raising our game in relation to infrastructure in Scotland, and it enables us to debate on the basis of plans that the Executive has laid out. That is all very welcome indeed.

Before I get into the meat of the debate, however, I would like to talk to the Hibs supporter on the other side of the chamber for a moment. Unlike Mr Monteith, I am all too aware that the A90 does not stop at Aberdeen. It continues on through Peterhead to Fraserburgh. I am not the only member of Parliament who has constantly raised the need to dual the A90 north of Aberdeen. Mr Monteith's Conservative colleagues Nanette Milne and David Davidson have also called for that improvement, and I welcome that. For that matter, Nora Radcliffe also supports the dualling of that road, so it is a matter of cross-party agreement.

If Mr Monteith is going to lodge long, rambling amendments, he should at least try to get them right. Furthermore, when given the opportunity to show just a little humility he should, for once, take it.

**Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** That is the pot calling the kettle black.

**Stewart Stevenson:** I make no claims myself—no claims whatsoever.

There is not one dual carriageway north and east of a line from Elgin to Ellon. The Tories certainly did not help us on that score; perhaps the current Administration will.

I will welcome some specific measures in "Building a Better Scotland: Infrastructure Investment Plan: Investing in the Future of Scotland" shortly. However, I can never resist an invitation to take the opportunity to be a wee bit

tactical, so I invite Mr McCabe to consider the International Financial Reporting Interpretations Committee's deliberations. The committee's work is designed to ensure that countries across the globe apply similar standards, so that we can account for the activities of multinationals. Many of the new standards will apply to us from 1 January 2006. In particular—I have referred to this subject previously—IFRIC draft interpretations D12, D13 and D14 refer to how to deal with assets in a public-private partnership situation.

Kilmarnock prison, which was discussed earlier today, currently appears neither on the Executive's balance sheet nor on the balance sheet of Kilmarnock Prison Services Ltd. In fact, the company's 2000 accounts show that the prison was sold to the Home Office—it meant the Scottish Executive, but in either event it was wrong. There must be more clarity in PPP arrangements. One of the reasons that we have rather sterile debates on the subject is that we do not have possession of all the facts that are necessary to promote debate. I hope that the minister will consider the issue and continue the good work of developing the way in which figures are presented to us in the Parliament.

I will be parochial for a moment and welcome very much the confirmation, on page 33 of the document, of the £6.9 million for Chalmers hospital in Banff. I also welcome the fact that there will be money to extend broadband to every community in Scotland. However, I ask the minister to what extent that applies to individuals in Scotland who are part of communities that have broadband, but are technically at the end of infrastructure that is incapable of supporting it. I have constituents who are in that position. They would very much welcome hearing from the minister that they will have support.

The figure of £107 million is given for spending on information technology infrastructure for the health service over the next three years. That is welcome, but it is a huge distance back from the £8 billion that the English and Welsh health service is investing in a patient record system. One of my enduring concerns about NHS 24 is that, although it is a welcome way forward, it makes the health service less efficient if it does not have the infrastructure with which it could operate efficiently. The same is true for the arrangements for out-of-hours services. Because they have no access to patient records, they must waste time discovering what the health service more generally already knows. That £107 million figure must, when the money is available—I hope that the minister can tell us when that might be—rise dramatically.

I am not terribly convinced that capital funding for Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd is a good

investment, based on its track record so far. I hope that Oban airport remains with the private company that so effectively operates it.

I welcome the fact that there is a phase 2 in the estates review of the Scottish Prison Service. There must be new investment in the north-east of Scotland. Peterhead prison is generally acknowledged to be no longer fit for purpose.

I have covered a series of items in the document, but the one thing that is still missing is a statement of assets and liabilities. The document states:

“For accounting purposes, capital spending”

is something that is on the Government's balance sheet. It is time that we saw that balance sheet, saw what assets we have and saw whether they are working to our benefit or otherwise.

15:43

**Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** “Building a Better Scotland” is another of the worthy phrases that we get from the Executive that implies constant progress. Participles such as “working”, “building” and “saving”, which are so beloved of Executive spinners, usually mean precisely the opposite; so it is with “Building a Better Scotland” and the Executive's first infrastructure investment plan.

In his introduction to the plan, the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform states:

“We know that sustained investment in the physical fabric of Scotland will help us to create a prosperous Scotland where enterprise can flourish.”

If that is the case, why is enterprise failing so lamentably to flourish in Scotland? Why, after six years of this Executive, has there been no increase in entrepreneurial activity?

**Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab):** Will the member give way?

**Mr Brocklebank:** Perhaps a little later.

On business formation, why, out of 38 countries, is Scotland at the bottom of the league and Ireland very near the top?

On new businesses, why is the rate of start-ups in Scotland around half of that in London, and why, according to figures issued only last week, are business start-ups in Scotland down by another 3 per cent on last year? Why are corporate failures in Scotland rising, in sharp contrast with those in England? The number of firms going to the wall in Scotland rose by 14.2 per cent last year, but fell by 5.6 per cent south of the border.

Tom McCabe claims that growing Scotland's economy is the Executive's top priority, yet the

respected economist Peter Wood recently told the Finance Committee that while the framework for economic development states that public expenditure proposals are evaluated for their social, economic and environmental impacts,

"This does not, in itself, establish that economic development is receiving any particular degree of priority in decision-making since it is not known how economic"

developments "are being measured". In other words, how can Tom McCabe say that his vaunted investment in infrastructure is creating a Scotland where enterprise can flourish, when the Executive apparently has no means of measuring the situation?

On health care, Peter Wood stated:

"FEDS states that health care is important to economic development but there is, from available information, no way to establish readily to what degree the observed growth in health spending (up 55% in real terms between 1996 and 2005) is on services which will improve the health of working people."

Again, there is no means of measuring that.

On transport, Peter Wood noted:

"Executive spending ... grew in real terms by 66% between 1996 and 2005."

**Mr McCabe:** The member referred to there being no way of measuring our successes. Does he accept that the facts that life expectancy is increasing in Scotland and that we have the second-highest level of employment in Europe, second only to Denmark, are indicators that we are living in an increasingly successful country?

**Mr Brocklebank:** Those may be indicators of something, but not necessarily that the Executive's priorities are creating those results.

In his evidence to the Finance Committee, the Minister for Transport stated that appraisals of road projects tended to show greater economic gains than did appraisals of other transport projects. Despite that, there has been a marked shift away from road building in the transport programme. It is not only Scottish Conservatives who are highlighting an obvious absurdity, but one of the acknowledged leaders in his field, Peter Wood.

What is measurable is the gross capital expenditure in 1996, when the Conservatives were last in power, and that expenditure for last year. As Brian Monteith pointed out, the latest report on Scottish local government finance statistics shows that total capital expenditure has actually dropped in those eight years, from £1.058 billion to £1.033 billion per annum in real terms—it has actually gone down.

The real question, however, is not how much money is spent, but what value we are getting for that money. On health and education, despite spending more than virtually anywhere else in Europe, Scotland still lags behind.

I cannot pre-empt the forthcoming report of the Finance Committee on the cross-cutting expenditure review, which I think is due to be signed off next week, but judging by the external evidence heard by the committee and the critique provided by Peter Wood, which is already in the public domain, a mere 6 per cent of the Executive's £23 billion budget is spent on activities that are intended directly to promote economic development. Moreover, that item's share of the Scottish budget is falling instead of rising.

The hard fact is that, despite the minister's fine words about creating a prosperous Scotland where enterprise can flourish, there is absolutely no evidence that the overall pattern of spending on and investment in public services has been driven by economic development priorities. In transport, as we have seen, growth has been greater in less important economic activities than it has been in actual road improvement. On health, schools and housing, the Executive's strategy contributes even less to economic development.

Far from spending to help the economy, the Executive has contributed to ever longer waiting lists, more crimes and offences, and schools that do not meet even the Executive's standards. Does the minister really believe that that is building a better Scotland?

15:49

**Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab):** I am pleased to be able to contribute positively to this important debate. The Executive's commitment, at the time of the spending review in the autumn, to publish an infrastructure investment plan was important and welcome.

As the convener of the cross-party group on construction, I welcome the commitment that the Executive has made, as it will bring forward a much-needed, longer-term vision for that industry, as well as improved infrastructure planning. I believe that that is important for the people of Scotland—indeed, it is crucial to the construction sector. I welcome in particular the significant increase in infrastructure and investment funding, the improved co-ordination between the public and private sectors and the commitment to further improve the Executive's record on project delivery.

The cross-party group on construction recently produced a report, which is being considered by the Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning. We are pleased that he will be able to attend a meeting of the group at which the core

issues that we have identified will be discussed. I know that Tom McCabe is aware of the report.

We looked first at procurement and workload, and skills and training. I will take a few minutes to outline some of the core issues in the report as I believe that they are important to the debate. On procurement and workload, we looked at the barriers to better public sector procurement, co-ordination of public sector programmes and procurement criteria for the selection of contracts. The group recommends that there should be a common format for the co-ordination of public sector construction programmes, which matter I have discussed with Tom McCabe. It also recommends a common format for the production of long-term construction programmes among the Scottish public sector agencies.

The Scottish construction industry needs security of workload in order to provide best value to its clients, security of employment to its workforce and, importantly, so that it has the confidence to invest in training and equipment. The group would like to see a comprehensive public sector programme for Scotland, as that would allow demand to be matched with industry capacity. I welcome the minister's commitment to that agenda.

As the minister indicated, capacity is crucial. If we are to continue to build capacity within the sector so that outputs can be realised—and I hope that Ted Brocklebank notes my emphasis on the word “continue”—we must give the industry the information that it needs to meet the challenges it faces.

Skills and training are key to the success of our strategy and, indeed, to that of the construction industry. I welcome the commitment that the minister made to that agenda today. The cross-party group and the construction industry forum have been looking at this very important area. The core areas that the cross-party sub-group has raised include: the mode of entry into the industry at both craft and professional levels; the opportunity for a clear progression through the industry; and the link between national and vocational qualifications.

The cross-party group is very interested in college provision and standards throughout the country and in the current funding mechanisms to encourage training at all levels. We are concerned that traditional trades might die out because of a lack of funding for training in the collegiate sector.

We need to look at the Scottish Enterprise programmes that are designed to respond to employer demand, as activity levels are being constrained by that demand. We must look at and find ways to stimulate demand from employers to recruit more apprentices in order to address the

skills shortages. Work is also required to better promote the industry to young people, particularly those in the 14 to 16-year old age bracket. We need to make them aware of the opportunities that are available to them in the industry.

The issue of gender balance has been much rehearsed in the past few weeks within the industry. It is an important issue and was highlighted recently in an Equal Opportunities Commission report. The statistics, which I will not go into in depth, make difficult reading. Fewer than 4 per cent of members of the Institution of Civil Engineers in Scotland are female. Although we have worked hard and there has been an increase in the proportion of women at student level, female students still account for only 12 per cent of the civil engineering student membership. If we look at the same statistics for the Institution of Electrical Engineers and for electrical engineering student numbers, we see that the figures are 5 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. I think that all members would agree that the figures are not good enough.

I know that the minister will agree that the issue needs to be addressed. The cross-party group suggests that a national campaign should be developed to positively address the issue in partnership with the industry and with the support of the relevant industry bodies. The industry knows that it needs to address its image. It needs and wants to work with the Executive to look at the equal opportunities agenda. I hope that the minister will take up that challenge.

In conclusion, I congratulate the minister on his important statement. It rises to the challenge of delivering our objectives so that investment can have an effect on the ground—which is what is important—and can lead to the high-quality infrastructure that we all want.

The construction industry will work with the Executive to ensure that it continues to play its vital role in increasing and modernising our infrastructure, and in improving the physical fabric of the best small country in the world—Scotland.

15:55

**Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** As a former member of the Parliament's Finance Committee, I am pleased to take part in this important debate. Members will know that the committee took the stance that, in the budget documents, capital expenditure should be more clearly indicated. The committee also said that, in the budget rounds, increased resources should be directed towards capital investment. I am pleased that the Executive has reacted so positively to both those suggestions—suggestions that were consistent and, I hope, genuinely constructive.

The infrastructure investment plan is good on two grounds: first, it shows that the Executive listened to the Finance Committee's recommendations for clearer detailing of its capital expenditure; and secondly, it shows how committed this Executive is to investing in our core infrastructure across Scotland.

As Andrew Arbuckle and Marilyn Livingstone said, much of the focus is on delivery and the associated problems of ensuring effective and timely capital programmes. There is no easy answer to that.

There has been exhaustive coverage of one of Scotland's major capital programmes in recent years—this building. However, as we are embarking on what is probably the most comprehensive capital investment in a generation, it is right to consider planning and professional capacity in the construction and civil engineering sectors.

The planning reform process that is currently under way in the Executive is very important. I am pleased that the plan raises the issue of capacity in the construction and civil engineering sectors, as well as the need to ensure a streamlining of the planning process. In my constituency I have met, and attended meetings of, the Borders construction industry forum. The forum is a creature of the recognition that a major capital programme in the area required a response from the industry.

The transfer of housing stock from Scottish Borders Council to Scottish Borders Housing Association meant that the construction industry had to come together to allow the SBHA and Eildon Housing Association to communicate what would be expected of the industry and to begin to make linkages with training and employment issues that were affecting the area.

As the SBHA was being set up, it became apparent that a large supply of labour would be needed for a number of new local initiatives—such as the schools programme, health initiatives and a large amount of private building. If we take even just a quick look at the major investment that is taking place in the Borders, we can see that it is highly impressive. However, it will require a serious response to ensure delivery.

The Scottish Executive is providing nearly £9 million for Borders College to relocate within Galashiels and construct new teaching space, and to allow Heriot-Watt University to refurbish its existing space.

The Borders railway is a £150 million extensive infrastructure scheme. The more that I hear the Conservatives listing their infrastructure programmes, the more apparent is the absence of the Borders railway during each year of the 18

years of Conservative Government, when they rejected every approach from the local Liberal Democrat MP for assistance with the railway. Only with this Parliament and Executive are we seeing major progress.

Three new high schools will be constructed with a commitment from the Executive of £55 million. There is also health investment, with new build or extensions in Hawick, Galashiels and Kelso. Only this week, we heard the announcement of an 11 per cent increase in capital expenditure on health in the Borders.

The local council has a capital and prudential borrowing plan of £20 million for primary schools in the region. There has also been social housing investment of more than £5 million—which includes additional funding last year after a hard campaign for increased investment.

Scottish Water investment in the region is now at a record level. Yesterday, I was pleased to receive notification of work that is due to commence in Peebles, where there has been considerable development constraint.

Those are just the headlines, and just the public sector investment. The total is more than £250 million. That is not an aspirational figure; it is budgeted. If we add in the private sector investment—in Galashiels alone, there are new supermarkets and commercial developments of around £100 million, as well as zoned areas for new private housing of up to 5,000 units—we can see that capital investment over the next five years will put enormous pressure on the construction industry.

The Borders construction industry forum, as well as the national Scottish construction industry group and the Scottish construction forum, will look at how the procurement process can be modernised. They will also consider skills, training and the ability of the sector to absorb new levels of investment.

But what of the SNP amendment that we have been asked to consider? It calls for “other credible measures” to increase growth. That is rich; none of the economic or fiscal announcements that the nationalists have made recently—or, indeed, today—is credible. We should remind ourselves of what the SNP has said. This morning, it called for £1 billion more expenditure, but only a few days ago it said that it would reduce corporation tax and business rates revenue in Scotland by £900 million.

**Jim Mather:** Will the member give way?

**Jeremy Purvis:** I will, although Mr Mather should be aware that he did not take my intervention. At that time, I wanted to make the point that much of his speech had been devoted to

single markets, currency zones and unified and federal countries. However, he did not point out that they operate not under a system of fiscal autonomy, but under the system of fiscal federalism that I have been proposing. Perhaps in his intervention he will name one country among those that he mentioned that operates under a system of fiscal autonomy.

**Jim Mather:** Jeremy Purvis knows that the Catalans, the Basques and many others operate under such a system.

**Jeremy Purvis:** But that is fiscal federalism.

**Jim Mather:** The member has puffed up the spending plans. Can he tell me when the Executive will close either the economic growth gap or the life expectancy gap between Scotland and the rest of the UK?

**Jeremy Purvis:** Under this Scottish Executive, the investment of £250 million in the Borders is happening now. It does not depend on some bizarre theory about the use of all our oil revenues and is not some aspiration for the Scottish economy. We await with glee the SNP's credible policies. On 19 January, Christine Grahame said that we need to raise taxes, whereas Jim Mather has said that we need to cut taxes. However, members should not think that the SNP does not have a solution: only a few weeks ago, Alasdair Morgan said that we can do both. The SNP calls for credible policies, but none of its own policies is credible; it calls for economic growth, but none of its policies would deliver it.

16:02

**Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green):** In his opening speech, the minister said, as usual, that growing the economy was the Executive's top priority; as usual, I will take issue with that top priority of doing anything to achieve economic growth, irrespective of the negative consequences for future generations.

We have to move away from measuring gross domestic product, infrastructure and economic development purely in quantitative terms and towards thinking about quality of development. In the First Minister's remarks on the launch of the United Kingdom development strategy, I was struck by how right he was when he said that too many politicians of all parties find it easier to go for short-term gain, rather than long-term sustainability. I welcome that statement and his rejection of the idea that we should have economic growth at any cost.

However, I do not think that many of the infrastructure proposals in the Executive's plans measure up to his challenge or will deliver long-term sustainability. Instead, there is far too much

emphasis on business as usual and economic growth at any cost. As a result, I urge ministers to review the policy in the light of the more enlightened remarks that the First Minister made on Monday.

Like Stewart Stevenson, I think that it is good that we have this document and this opportunity to debate long-term infrastructural issues and questions. For example, we need to discuss transport and the question of how people will get around in Scotland in future. I really welcome aspects of the document, and I believe that it is testimony to the success of devolution and the Parliament's limited powers that, unlike in England and Wales, new railway lines and stations are being opened. I also welcome investment in the water infrastructure and in new schools and hospitals. However, in such a debate, we must discuss key questions such as whether we are making the most of the infrastructure investment, and how it is being provided.

Like many people, the Greens are becoming concerned about how PPP and PFI schemes are turning out in practice and, in particular, the fact that they effectively mortgage the future. Because they have been tied into long-term 20 or 30-year PFI contracts, future generations will not be able to decide how best to invest in infrastructure. Underlying that is new Labour's ideological obsession with the belief that the market knows best. I wish that the minister and his deputy had been at the talk that was given by Professor Allyson Pollock, who examined the way PPP and PFI schemes have been fiddled to make it appear as though they deliver best value. She is among the most renowned health economists and was talking about how such schemes work in practice. PPP and PFI do not deliver best value; they are ideological obsessions.

**Mr McCabe:** Mark Ballard suggests that the world started the day we created PPPs. It was never the case that we built public sector facilities by walking up to a contractor and handing over a case of money; we always borrowed money for public sector contracts and the public sector always had the burden of repaying that debt over a long time. Nothing has changed.

**Mark Ballard:** Ownership has changed. A PPP is a 30-year contract with a provider to provide a school or hospital. That is not the same as borrowing to build a school or hospital—there is a big difference. I am not denying that the new schools and hospitals will be built by the private sector, but we must consider how the contracts work in practice. In particular, we must consider other social enterprise and not-for-profit alternatives for building new infrastructure projects if we are to get the best from that infrastructure in the future.

I welcome the investment in new railways that is detailed in the infrastructure investment plan and I welcome the fact that stations are reopening in Scotland when that is not the case in England and Wales, but Andrew Arbuckle was right to point out that there is also record investment in new roads. It is profoundly disappointing that, when we could be spending money on public transport alternatives that would improve quality of life and be of environmental benefit, hundreds of millions of pounds are being spent on new roads that will have a negative impact on quality of life and sustainability in Scotland and will also have an opportunity cost.

**Mr Monteith:** I might be able to cheer Mark Ballard up. Figures show that in the last four years of the Conservative Government, 2.35 million square metres of trunk road were constructed or opened, compared with 0.57 million square metres in the first four years of the Labour Government. Clearly, the Labour Government is not performing as well as the Conservatives would like, but probably as well as Mark Ballard would like.

**Mark Ballard:** One of the concerns that I have about the new road schemes is that some of them, such as the M74 extension in Glasgow, are the most expensive urban options. The building of five miles of urban motorway on stilts will have a huge impact on the lifestyles of people in Glasgow.

There is much to welcome in the fact that we are discussing infrastructure investment, but I am disappointed that real opportunities for sustainable development have been missed in the infrastructure investment plan.

16:08

**Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** I was delighted to receive the compact disc of the infrastructure investment plan at the end of last month. I suppose that members might think that I was something of a sad character to be so pleased to see it. The reason is not only that I thought that it was of a singing duo of Tom and Tavish, but because time and again in conversation with people in the private or public sector, infrastructure investment is identified as a top priority and the most important measure for economic success. It is therefore to be welcomed that the Executive has produced a publication on that.

Jim Mather slightly missed the point of the debate, which is the essential contribution of infrastructure investment. We are talking not about fiscal autonomy—although he probably is—or population decline, but about how the public sector can invest in the country's future.

**Jim Mather:** I am dismayed that Elaine Murray might be saying that population decline is not an issue. Will she clarify that?

**Dr Murray:** I am not denying that population decline is an issue; I am pointing out that we are debating the important contribution of infrastructure investment.

There was a massive decline in public sector net investment from 5 per cent of GDP in 1963-64 to only 0.5 per cent in 1997-98. That is a tenfold decrease in the proportion of GDP that was allocated to public sector infrastructure investment over 34 years, during which time GDP almost doubled. Should I be surprised that the Tories were in power for 23 of those 34 years? Despite what is mentioned in Brian Monteith's excessively wordy amendment, we had an inadequate road system, crumbling school buildings, disastrous privatisation of the rail network and hospitals that were unfit for purpose. The Tory Government was clearly determined to clamp down on public expenditure.

**Mr Monteith:** Does the member recall from the history books that a war finished in 1945? Perhaps there was a great need for investment in infrastructure after that war, which would have required such things as roads and buildings to be the main focus of Government spending. Was not it the case that back in the 1960s the number of car owners was so low that investment in roads was smaller, but now needs to grow?

**Dr Murray:** I disagree. My recollection of the late 1990s is that there was a serious need for investment in school buildings and hospital buildings, but it did not happen. I am not convinced that the Tories have much affection for the public sector; my fears were reinforced by Ted Brocklebank's speech. He seems to doubt that health is important for economic development. Why, if that is the case, does the Federation of Small Businesses in Scotland identify health as one of the top priorities for economic success and keeping the workforce economically active? The Forum of Private Business in Scotland found in its latest survey that 78 per cent of respondents thought that banning smoking in public places was essential to success. They realise that health expenditure is important; I do not know why the Conservatives do not.

In saying that the public sector is too big, right-wing commentators do not seem to realise that investment in the public sector creates opportunities for the private sector, such as for companies that are subcontracted to build houses, improve roads and install central heating.

Marilyn Livingstone made an important point about capacity. During the quality and standards II programme, Scottish Water was initially unable to spend its borrowing consent because of lack of capacity. I know that that is now being rectified and I hope that we will learn something from those problems, because there needs to be a fair

amount of lead-in time for large-scale investments to ensure that the money gets out the door.

Mark Ballard made comments about PPP. I hope that school buildings would last a great deal longer than 30 years, but during the 30 years of the contracts, which Mark Ballard is so concerned about, the private sector investor takes the risk. What is different is that the local authority does not take the risk; the private sector investor does.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Dr Murray:** No. I am sorry. I will have to press on, because I am getting to the end of my time.

I am pleased that the plan mentions investment in transport infrastructure, affordable housing, water infrastructure and flood-defence mechanisms, all of which are important in Dumfries and Galloway and which I am glad to see have been flagged up.

How will decisions be taken to allocate the available funding? The document says that

"Effective investment requires arrangements for consultation with consumers, trade unions, professional and voluntary bodies and other stakeholders."

I presume that those stakeholders are local authorities, local enterprise companies and the private sector. On reading the document, I could not get a handle on the mechanisms for how that will be achieved, although it was promised that it would be outlined in chapter 3. Councils and enterprise companies are asking how the decisions will be made.

The document mentions community planning and the example of good practice that is the north-west resource centre in Dumfries. The information in the document is a wee bit out of date in stating that

"a funding package has been confirmed"

for the centre. The money has been spent; the centre is up and running and is entering phase 3. I know that some of the minister's predecessors got the opportunity to see that example of good practice in community planning and I hope that the current ministerial team will also have an opportunity at some point to see what is going on there.

I welcome this first ever infrastructure investment plan for Scotland and look forward to monitoring progress over the years.

16:14

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** In the debate, the SNP has noted the underinvestment of the past 30 years. We also note that many other small countries spend a

higher percentage of their GDP on public investment, so we have other measures against which to consider the Executive's plans.

We welcome the planned investment—totalling £513 million over the next three years—but we note the change in the Executive's targets regarding sustainability and innovation. As the First Minister said earlier this week, bringing about real change and developing Scotland more sustainably means building sustainable development into everything we do. I wonder how much of the infrastructure development plan reflects that sentiment and whether it is relevant in the context of the next few years. I warrant that the Environment and Rural Development Committee's report will suggest that there will have to be major changes in how we invest, particularly in relation to sustainability in housing and public transport. In the plan, the Executive tells us which elements it will spend on, but there may have to be a significant rejigging of those priorities.

I hope that Jeremy Purvis will note that Jim Mather talked about genuinely and incrementally increasing sustainable economic growth—the important point is that there be not just growth, but sustainable growth. Scotland is yet to have an Executive that takes that on board—the evidence that I have heard from ministers in various committees does not fill me with hope that they have done so.

**Jeremy Purvis:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Rob Gibson:** I am sorry, but I have to press on. I will be happy to take interventions later, but I must make progress.

On 8 March I received an answer from Nicol Stephen to a question about rail infrastructure investment on the Perth to Inverness, Aberdeen to Inverness and Inverness to Thurso and Wick lines from 1987 to 1997 and from 1998 to 2005. He said in his reply that the information that I requested is not held centrally. It seems to me that if the Executive is to have an infrastructure investment plan and to state which areas are to be developed, it must get such information. Surely the fact that the information is not available is an indication that the proposals for transport in the plan have not been thought out as clearly as they should be.

I am worried about the matter in relation to comparisons between Scotland and other European countries. Where structural funds have been spent in countries such as Spain, Portugal and Italy, rail investment has made up between 10 and 20 per cent of the total. In the Tory years there was virtually no investment in rail, but in the past five years there has been little rail investment in the north of Scotland. I am glad that the suburban railway problem has been dealt with, but



the longer routes, which include routes to the more remote parts of the south-west, the north-east and the north have yet to be addressed. The document ought also to address sustainability and the climate change imperatives, but it does not even mention them in outline. We need a change in the business case so that we can appraise railways in remote and sparsely populated areas appropriately. The Scottish transport appraisal guidance—or STAG—is fit for suburban railways and heavily populated areas, but Scotland is a country that has remote communities that can be reached only by crossing large areas of land. Some of those communities are quite large and need to be part of the action, but they will not be unless the investment is made.

Des McNulty talked about targeting deprived areas, but such areas include areas where populations are falling, such as the islands and the remote Highlands. On investment in ferries, I am at odds with the minister's sanguine approach to the question of whether we will get services that are fit for purpose. The Executive is frightened to go to Europe and say that the ferry services are essential services.

The question of state aid must be tackled. That issue arose recently when Ross Finnie spoke to farmers in Orkney about the movement of cattle from Orkney and Shetland to Wick. We are not putting those farmers at a competitive advantage over German, French, Dutch and Swedish farmers. The Executive must have the guts to go to Europe and fight for our remote areas, and it must make sure that the infrastructure plan—

**The Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform (Tavish Scott):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Rob Gibson:** I am sorry, but I do not have time to take an intervention now. I would be glad to take an intervention in other circumstances.

On housing, we have heard that perhaps 700,000 households suffer from fuel poverty in terms of the real measures of sustainability, climate change and warmth. That is nowhere near being addressed by what we have before us, and unless we start to deal with climate change in the next 20 years and build it into our programmes now, we will not give our citizens the best chance to compete in the future. We welcome the changes, but the plan has many blanks that need to be filled in.

16:20

**Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP):** I am glad that we are having the debate and I am pleased to have heard confirmation in the minister's opening speech that the Executive's policy is to transfer ownership of hospitals and 300

schools by 2013 to banks, big building companies or transnational corporations—depending on where the contracts end up. We are supposed to be discussing projects for public investment in public infrastructure, but the truth is that the outcome in the next 25, 30 and 40 years will be that the assets that provide public services are no longer public.

The Tories have lodged an epic amendment—they have broken new records for the number of words. Am I right to assume that an election is coming up and that the amendment presents the Tory roll of honour from the halcyon days when the Tories governed Scotland as a minority Government? If that is the case, I suggest that they examine their public relations. Do they really want to take responsibility for the Skye bridge? Are they serious?

**Murdo Fraser:** Yes.

**Frances Curran:** Is the Skye bridge a successful project?

**Murdo Fraser:** Yes.

**Frances Curran:** That is interesting. The view of whether that project was successful depends on where one stands. The Skye bridge was a trail-blazer of a PFI project—do members not agree? The company that built the bridge got a 100 per cent return on its outlay. Thatcher always went on about the fall in industry profitability and the need for profitability to increase, so I am sure the Tories would love to congratulate Skye Bridge Ltd. The bridge cost it £27 million and it received double that from tolls and from the Scottish Executive buying the bridge. Do the Tories really want to take responsibility for the Edinburgh royal infirmary? Is that providing the same value for money?

It is not just socialist members or Mark Ballard and the Greens who talk about value for money. A role reversal has taken place. We are talking about value for money from projects for taxpayers, whereas the Tories are strangely silent about it. PFIs are a more expensive way to deliver public sector assets, to build new public sector buildings and to undertake public sector projects. That is what the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants says. Dr Allyson Pollock, who was in Parliament just before Christmas and who has written extensively on the subject, estimates that using PFIs doubles the cost of providing public buildings. The Major Contractors Group, which represents building firms, expects its members to make three to 10 times more money from PFI contracts than they would from traditional contracts. Who do we suppose pays for that? The simple answer is that it is the taxpayer.

The plan says that a need has been identified for three new prisons. Unusually, I will give the

Executive a word of advice: do not use, for any of the new prisons, the consortium that built Altcourse prison in Liverpool, because that company broke even two and a half years into the 25-year contract. With 22 years to go, it is sitting there and raking in pure profit with no outlay. That is what PFI means for our public services. I am sure that the Tories would love to applaud the entrepreneurship of the company that built Altcourse prison as it rips off the taxpayer.

Mark Ballard was right to question the value of PFI. The minister says that contracts have always been awarded to the private sector. Of course they have, but the difference under PFI is in ownership. Not only have we awarded contracts to the private sector, we have transferred the assets to it. That revolution in public service assets was started by the Tories and has been continued by the Labour-Liberal Executive.

Is the minister saying that PFI is the only option? What would happen if, under best value, a council said to the Executive that it wanted to use a model other than PFI to build its schools or other developments? What would the Executive say to that? Would the council be allowed to borrow money, which would be cheaper? Would it be allowed to use a different form of public investment? It is not likely that a health board would say that it did not want to build a new hospital using PFI, because the boards are all stuffed with Labour placemen, but what would happen if one did? What would the minister say if a board told him that PFI would cost it double what it would otherwise pay and so did not represent value for money, and that it needed to represent the best interests of those whom it serves?

Why cannot we have an alternative means of investing in public assets? The real reason why is that most of what is spent on PFI projects is off balance sheet. We are not seeing where the money is, so that the Executive can meet the terms of the Maastricht treaty and the criteria that Gordon Brown has set for borrowing from the public purse. Let us have an answer to the question. To allow councils to borrow would represent value for money and is how we should invest in our public infrastructure for the next 30 years.

16:26

**Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab):** I do not often say this, but when I read the investment plan I got excited. It was not just because it came on a dinky little CD or even because Tom McCabe's face popped up on one of the first screens. It was because the document sets out what politics and government should be about, which is to deliver changes that bring about tangible improvements in people's

lives. It is about giving people the schools, hospitals and other health facilities that they want, giving them the affordable housing that they need and ensuring that they have the transport infrastructure that enables them to move about, not just to do their jobs and to contribute to economic growth—it is a pity that Mark Ballard has left the chamber—but so that they can fulfil their potential and have social well-being in their homes and communities.

As well as being excited when I read the document, I was proud. I was proud that a Labour-led Scottish Executive had taken forward such a comprehensive programme of investment and change, and I was proud that we are able to invest on this scale because of the effective stewardship of a Labour Government at United Kingdom level. I was also proud that the document did not stop at the bricks-and-mortar arguments about infrastructure, but set out the links between infrastructure development and the wider range of the Executive's social and economic policy objectives.

The document also raised questions for me and challenges for all of us. I will say more about those in a moment. However, before doing so, I need to comment on some of the speeches that have been made in this afternoon's debate. Many members touched on legitimate points of debate and concern, but the two primary Opposition speeches were, shall we say, interesting. I remind Jim Mather and the SNP that this session still has two years to run. He would do well to write a new speech to take him through those two years, because his current speech is not just wearing thin—it is wearing out. Its relevance to today's debate was limited.

**Jim Mather:** What I said is a fundamental truth that will not go away. I am sorry that Susan Deacon does not like it, but she should be prepared for it to come back time and again.

**Susan Deacon:** All Labour members are happy to engage in debate with the SNP on the kind of issues on which Jim Mather touched today. However, the public who are listening to the debate would like to know what the largest Opposition party in Parliament has to say on infrastructure. We listened carefully to Mr Mather's speech this afternoon, but we are still waiting to find out.

I turn to Brian Monteith's contribution. The world and Parliament would be poorer places without Brian Monteith. I do not know how many members have, like me, been following "Comic Relief Does Fame Academy", but every night I hope beyond hope that Adrian Edmondson will be brought back, not because he is a particularly good singer—his voice is incredibly ropery—but because his sheer entertainment value is immense. I have a similar

feeling about Mr Monteith. His performance today, as ever, brought a smile to all our faces—it is just a pity that his analysis and recollection of history was decidedly dodgy. However, I thank him for at least giving us a chuckle.

I will address some of the challenges that the plan sets out. There are genuine challenges in progressing infrastructure development on such a scale and with the ambitions that the Executive has set out. We all have to rise to those challenges. As MSPs, we have to be willing not just to welcome the new, but to dispense with the old. It is easy for us to attend official openings of new facilities, but it is altogether harder for us to address difficult decisions about getting rid of bricks and mortar that are no longer fit for purpose. We also have to ensure that we do not adopt only knee-jerk opposition to potentially controversial developments in our areas when there might be good social and economic imperatives for those developments.

We have to be willing not just to be populists. Much is said in the Executive's document about transport and addressing issues such as congestion. Over the past few months in Edinburgh, I have become well fed up with people saying that they will support congestion charging, but not the particular scheme that was proposed at this particular time. If people support something in principle, they should present substantive ideas about what they will do to make a difference in the future.

There is a responsibility for Parliament to progress infrastructure development. I firmly believe that we need to get better and faster at making decisions and that we have to think twice about some of the consultation, legislation and regulation that we engage in. I cite as a case in point, as I have before, the development of Edinburgh's tram system. I am not sure that we will add value to the decision-making progress, but we are certainly adding years.

The Executive must address some of the deep-rooted systemic issues in its decision-making process to ensure that infrastructure reaches people quickly. A meaningful overhaul of our planning system is long overdue. Genuine effective joint working—not just talking the talk, but walking the walk—between Government departments and different agencies is much needed. Dare I say that a tad less civil service involvement with some of the details of business plans for small capital projects or amendments to local development plans might be welcome in order to expedite the delivery process?

I genuinely applaud the plan—it is ambitious, wide-reaching and people will benefit from it. However, the challenge for us all is to ensure that we drive forward the change further and faster,

that we engage with the real issues and that we ensure that we make a real difference to the people of Scotland.

16:33

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

We have had some informative contributions this afternoon. Reflecting on the debate, I am struck by the fact that, once again, the genuine debate has been between the Executive and the Conservatives. Yet again we saw that trend, because the SNP was almost on a different planet. Again, the genuine opposition in the chamber has come from the Conservatives and I am sure that that position will be confirmed after the general election in a few weeks' time when we become Scotland's second party once again.

As we have come to expect, today's Executive motion boasts of record infrastructure investment. My experience on the ground is quite different. Looking at my constituency of Mid Scotland and Fife, I struggle to think of infrastructure projects that have been completed in the past eight years—the first two of which were under a Labour Government at Westminster followed by six years of the Scottish Executive. Because I was struggling, I asked Mr Arbuckle whether he could help me out by giving me a list of projects, but he was unable to help either. Perhaps he will give me a list later on.

**Mr Arbuckle:** Will Mr Fraser accept my offer to go round together and examine all the investments and improvements from the past six years? I warn him that it will be a long journey, not because my company is bad, but because there are so many examples to see. The only thing that I ask is that we take his car because I have to watch my travel expenses.

**Murdo Fraser:** I am grateful to Mr Arbuckle for his kind offer, which I would be delighted to accept. Of course, he will have to allow much more time for the trip, because I will have to show him all the Conservatives' achievements in the area during their 18 years in Government.

**Christine May:** Will the member give way?

**Murdo Fraser:** Many members referred to the length of the Conservative amendment, but as Brian Monteith acknowledged, it provides only a partial list, because we forgot to include many of our achievements. I take comfort from the fact that Stewart Stevenson was able to find only one mistake in our long list, because that confirms that we were not too far away from the truth. I assure him that if we had been re-elected in 1997, we would have carried on the dualling of the A90.

I will give some examples of the Conservatives' achievements in Mid Scotland and Fife, starting

with the health service: the construction of medicine for the elderly wards and the new day hospital at Perth royal infirmary in 1981; the new neonatal intensive care ward at Forth Park hospital in Kirkcaldy in 1982 and the midwife-led unit in that hospital in 1997; the refurbishment of Stirling royal infirmary; and Queen Margaret hospital in Dunfermline, which we commissioned and which opened in 1993. In contrast, during the past eight years, we have witnessed only the running down and closure of hospitals.

I will major on the failings of the past eight years in relation to transport, which Brian Monteith mentioned. In the final four years of the Conservative Government, 2.35 million square metres of trunk roads were constructed, compared with 0.57 million square metres in the first four years of the Labour Government. I make no apology for mentioning roads, because it is important to the business community that there should be an excellent road network, so that people can develop their businesses and send their goods to market, as Mr Brocklebank said.

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

**Murdo Fraser:** Not at the moment.

When Mr Brocklebank mentioned the matter, Tavish Scott seemed keen to acknowledge the Executive's shift away from roads spending—albeit from a sedentary position—even though the Executive constantly tells us that growing the economy is its top priority and we know that the business community wants spending on roads construction to be a priority. It is simply a disgrace that after eight years there has been no movement to upgrade the A8000, which serves many people in the north of Scotland and is the direct link on the trunk road network from the Forth road bridge to Edinburgh airport and the south.

**Tavish Scott:** For clarification, where does the A8000 appear in the Conservative amendment?

**Murdo Fraser:** Mr Scott well knows that the upgrading of the A8000 was in our plans in 1997. The moratorium that the Labour Party imposed when it came to power in 1997 prevented the upgrading from proceeding. Mr Scott's party has been in Government for six years but absolutely nothing has been done and I will take no lectures from him.

**Tavish Scott:** Where is the A8000 mentioned in the amendment?

**Murdo Fraser:** Where is the upgrading? The Executive has had six years to produce the dualling of the A8000, but there is no sign of that happening.

Under the Conservative Government, the M90 was completed, the A90 was dualled as far as Aberdeen, the A9 was dualled between Stirling

and Perth and sections of the A9 north of Perth were dualled. What a contrast—

**Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab):** Will the member give way?

**Murdo Fraser:** Not at the moment.

I struggle to think of any major roads projects that have been completed in the past eight years, although there is so much more to be done. It is an absolute nonsense that the A9, which is the main trunk road that serves Inverness, the capital of the Highlands and the fastest-growing city in Europe for many years, should still be single carriageway for large stretches. We all know about the A9's reputation for having a high accident rate. The Executive should commit itself to dualling the A9 all the way to Inverness.

There should also be investment in improving road safety on other stretches of our trunk roads. The accident rates at a number of junctions on the A9 between Stirling and Perth suggest that the junctions are substandard. Indeed, a recent Scottish Executive survey identified that improvements were required to almost all those junctions. It is about time that the Executive started to put its fine promises into practice and to ensure that money is spent on upgrading such junctions to make them safer for road users and local residents.

Despite all the bluster that we have heard from the Executive, even the dogs on the street know that the Executive has a woeful record on infrastructure investment. Capital expenditure in 1996-97, the last year of the Conservative Government, was £1.058 billion in real terms. The figure fell as low as £873 million in 2001 and in 2003-04 the figure was £1.033 billion, which was still below the level of capital spending at the end of the Conservative period.

When we consider the infrastructure improvements that Scotland needs, the record of the Executive is six wasted years. It is a dismal record, of which the country should be ashamed.

16:40

**Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP):** Many members from all parties have been asking for the capital elements of the budget to be separated out and an attempt on the part of the Executive to do that is welcome.

As one who has often criticised the Executive for producing glossy documents, I congratulate it on producing a CD this time, even if it is glossy too.

When the comrades are in power, they like to produce plans, or what they call plans. That is meant to send a message that they are in control, that they know where they are going and that they

have a strategic direction. Unfortunately, by and large, it is all window dressing. On my bookshelf, I still have an earlier example of the genre, which older members in the chamber might remember. It is the so-called “National Plan” that was produced in 1965 by the First Secretary and Secretary of State for Economic Affairs—such were the titles that were dreamed up when Harold Wilson did not quite know what to do with George Brown. The document runs to nearly 500 pages but it is not actually a plan; it is simply a recitation of facts and aspirations. The current version, which we are discussing today, will not take up as much space on the bookshelf, but it suffers from the same problems.

I looked up the word, “plan” in “The Chambers Dictionary”. The definition is:

“a thought-out arrangement for doing something”.

I think that that is the definition that most of us would use. However, not even the Government’s supporters could claim that that is what is contained in the document before us.

What we have is a list—and not a very readable one—of things that might or might not happen. Clearly, an edict has gone out to all the Executive’s departments, saying that they should write down everything that they can think of in relation to which they use the words “capital”, “infrastructure” or “investment” and the responses have been stapled together and called a plan. That is how we have ended up with a document that has little coherence and does not take us much further forward than the last budget document. Indeed, sometimes the document goes pretty wide of what can be thought of as infrastructure. On page 60, we are told about the Log-In-Café in Barrhead. I am sure that that is a useful and popular facility, as are the other initiatives that are listed in that section, but does it rate a mention in the national infrastructure plan? If members think that that is bad, they should look at page 13, on which we are told about energy efficient light bulbs, which I am sure that everyone would agree should clearly be part of the national infrastructure plan. All that the document does not tell us is how many Executive ministers it would take to change one of them.

**Des McNulty:** As we are talking about absurd commitments, would the member like to talk about Jim Mather’s bull-sharing scheme for crofters, Fergus Ewing’s proposal for reduced VAT for ski centres, which does not acknowledge the fact that we do not have that much snow anymore, and the proposal of his leader, Ms Sturgeon, for a Scottish foreign office? Are those the alternatives that the SNP wants to propose?

**Alasdair Morgan:** I do not think that we would call those elements of the national infrastructure plan, which is the point that I am trying to make.

The foreword to the plan says that our infrastructure has been damaged by “years of underinvestment and neglect”.

All of us, apart from the Tories, agree with that. However, there is no quantification of how much investment is required to remedy that neglect or any suggestion of how we will know when we have done so. I would have thought that we could have expected that.

The next sentence in the foreword says:

“Growing the economy is our top priority.”

It is nice to have that confirmed, but nowhere in the document is there any analysis of how the individual areas of investment will contribute to that aim. We are left to assume that, almost by definition, investment in roads, rail, education and so on contribute to the primary aim of growing the economy. Such investment is a good thing, certainly, but the Executive provides no explanation of why resources have been allocated in the way in which they have been and gives no evaluation whatever of the relative importance of various sorts of investment to growing the economy.

The same paragraph also tells us that only long-term funding will achieve the goal of growing the economy. As usual, the Executive has got everything the wrong way round. It is only if we grow the economy that we are going to have long-term funding for anything. It is understandable that the Executive should make that mistake, because it is an inevitable consequence of the hand-me-down method by which the Executive is funded by the Treasury in London. That has serious consequences for any long-term planning in Scotland, which I assume is what infrastructure investment must be.

The hard fact is that Executive ministers are in control of their budget only until 2007-08. By then, or even before then, hard times will be coming. Even this week, the IMF warned Gordon Brown that the UK’s fiscal position has deteriorated sharply over the past five years and suggested that now is the time to show restraint in current spending. Against that background, the Executive will have to answer the question of how it will fund sustained capital growth beyond the end of the next spending round. The dilemma is aptly demonstrated by the chart depicting road and rail infrastructure on page 29 of the document. I hope that the Greens were impressed by the CD version of the plan, which has all the rail projects in green and all the road projects in red. Of course, all the rail projects are to open lines that were closed by the same Labour Party.

The substantive point is that some of the more significant projects have timelines going into the

2010-11 budget year, and that is before projects are delayed as such projects almost inevitably are. I suggest that we should not count our chickens on the Edinburgh airport rail link, the Aberdeen western peripheral route or the A8 from Baillieston to Newhouse, because they are scheduled for 2011.

That is why Jim Mather spent so much time talking about why it is necessary to stimulate economic growth. We can fund the capital investment set out in the document only if we have a strong economy. The hard fact is that without control of our economic destiny, the document is not a plan; it is just a list of aspirations. Even worse, we are not likely to meet those aspirations unless Scotland gets control of her economy.

16:47

**The Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform (Tavish Scott):** I sometimes wonder whether some members, not least Mr Morgan, have read the Finance Committee's report. As Des McNulty and a number of others pointed out, one of the building blocks that the committee asked the Executive to consider was the construction and publication of a capital or infrastructure investment plan. We have just done that; we have published the infrastructure investment plan to underpin the Scottish economy and its growth. We want real step changes in how public services are delivered throughout Scotland. We want to deliver real improvements in every aspect of Scottish life. That is why there is the degree of detail and the range of portfolio in the document.

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Tavish Scott:** I want to make a bit of progress first.

We want to eliminate the dilapidated public buildings and facilities that were left by the Tories; we want to improve the provision of public services; and we will provide new, modernised and improved services for the people of Scotland. The plan shows that this Administration is determined to achieve a radical improvement in Scotland's infrastructure that will have a lasting effect on people, communities and businesses throughout the country. The plan is a first and it will be updated as a standing feature of our efficient Administration. It will improve the information that goes to the private sector, as it will be informed of likely future projects. We expect the commitments given to be two way, so there is a challenge to the private sector to respond with sufficient capacity and skills to achieve our ambitious infrastructure improvements throughout Scotland.

**Mike Rumbles:** Did the minister agree with Susan Deacon's earlier contribution for the Labour Party when she claimed the credit for the infrastructure investment plan for the Labour-led Executive and the Labour Government in London?

**Tavish Scott:** At First Minister's question time this morning, it struck me that we are in an election period and that there will be a ratcheting up of the rhetoric across the chamber.

I am very comfortable with a Liberal Democrat-Labour coalition that is delivering for Scotland. In this case, we are delivering a capital investment plan that is needed and which builds on the funding and investment that we have made. It will end the conflict between public and private sector delivery and recognise and use the best of both, celebrating successes as well as learning from mistakes. It will build the mixed-economy approach to funding. There will be conventional and partnership arrangements, PPP and a prudential regime, but the process will be managed. A current example of that mixed-economy approach is Glasgow City Council's use of the prudential regime to invest £25 million in its primary school estate.

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):** Although I welcome the principle of increased infrastructure investment and the publication of the infrastructure investment plan, my concerns about the PFI/PPP procurement process that the minister mentioned are reflected in the recent decision on the Skye bridge scheme. Will the minister reassure all of us who share such concerns that PFI/PPP procurement processes will be subjected to rigorous scrutiny before they are agreed to and that they will be monitored thereafter to ensure best value?

**Tavish Scott:** As members would expect of any Government, all the funding mechanisms that the Executive uses are subjected to the kind of review and scrutiny that have been asked for.

PPP has delivered 80 schools that either have been completed or on which work is significantly under way. Those will benefit some 64,000 pupils across Scotland. It has also delivered three new major hospitals, nine water projects, three further education colleges and many other projects. Some £3.1 billion of projects that will use that mechanism are in the pipeline. That represents significant progress on our desire to invest for the long term in Scotland's public estate.

I will pick up some points that were made during this afternoon's debate. Given that Mr Mather was previously a member of the Finance Committee, I hope that he will reflect on the importance that the committee placed on having a capital or infrastructure investment plan as a building block for growing the Scottish economy. It was disappointing that he made no mention of that.

When Mr Mather's party produces its position on fiscal policy, monetary policy, interest rates and which central bank it wants, then we will be able to have a debate on the economy. The SNP failed to state its position this Tuesday in Dundee and it failed to do so today here in Edinburgh. It is about time that it stated its position. We are more than happy to have the debate on the economy.

Entirely missing from Mr Mather's speech was any mention of the "Framework for Economic Development in Scotland". The five key drivers for economic development that are identified in that document include investment in the country's electronic and physical infrastructure.

What can one say about Mr Monteith's speech? We are all happy to reflect on the Conservative years and the Conservative achievements, which Mr Fraser was so keen to mention. We will reflect on achievements such as the poll tax, 3 million unemployed and 15 per cent interest rates. It is funny that those were not included in Brian Monteith's amendment. One can only wonder why.

**Mr Monteith:** Having seen the long list of achievements that the Conservatives delivered, the minister clearly wishes to steer off the subject of infrastructure. May I point out that, between 1979 and 1997, male employment in Scotland rose by 33 per cent and female employment in Scotland rose by 60 per cent? That is a singular achievement of which we should all be proud.

**Tavish Scott:** I seem to remember that the Tory charge on unemployment was that it was a price worth paying.

I want to deal with a number of points that members raised. Des McNulty highlighted the importance of water and sewerage investment. As he rightly pointed out, the Tory solution appears to be privatisation.

Housing investment is arguably one of the most important long-term investments that we can make in the fabric of Scotland. Between 2005 and 2008, we will invest 46 per cent more in housing, over and above the current record levels of spending. Over the three years, we will invest £1.2 billion in affordable housing, which was never a priority for the Conservatives.

Stewart Stevenson questioned the level of capital funding for Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. For many of us, HIAL is an important capital funding priority. If Stewart Stevenson wants to argue that it is a bad thing to spend £10 million on a runway extension for Sumburgh airport in my constituency, he and I will disagree.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Will the minister give way?

**Tavish Scott:** No, I will not give way.

Mr Brocklebank was keen to raise the issue of unemployment. He mentioned the current

difficulties as he saw them. I can only repeat that Scotland has the second-highest employment rate in the European Union. It is second only to that of Denmark.

**Mr Brocklebank:** How many real jobs?

**Tavish Scott:** From a sedentary position, Mr Brocklebank asks how many real jobs that represents. That shows the Tories' contempt for the jobs that have been created since this Government came to power.

On transport, this Government will make no apologies for moving away from the Conservatives' approach, which was solely about road building to the detriment of public transport, towards a balanced approach that involves investment in rail, bus services and other public transport options. Under our 10-year transport plan, we will invest £1.4 billion by the end of the current parliamentary session. I hope that even Mr Ballard and the Greens will accept that that is a sustainable investment in the future.

Mr Fraser asked me about the A8000. Work will start on that this year.

**Murdo Fraser:** Eight years on.

**Tavish Scott:** We will do it. They just planned it, but we will do it.

Rob Gibson raised a point about sustainability. There is a chapter on that, as I am sure he has read, in the document that we are discussing today, in "Building a Better Scotland" and in the spending review process. That theme is repeated throughout the investment plan and we shall build on that strongly in the coming years.

It was a delight to see Brian Monteith's amendment. It took us all back to student union debates and the length of amendments that I am sure he was proud of at that time. Usually we see such long amendments only from the Scottish Socialist Party, so there is yet another alliance across the chamber.

Brian Monteith's amendment states that the Executive

"has a poor record of spending",

but *The Herald* confirmed this morning that the Tories have no idea that they will do anything differently. They have abandoned their own Scottish James review before it is even started. They propose no efficiency savings in Scotland, and they have no plans and no thoughts on how to match this Administration's efficient government programme, yet the same amendment that criticises Government spending proposes more spending on roads and transport—really, just on roads—accompanied by tax cuts that would take away our ability to pay for those very same improvements.

There is a black hole at the heart of Tory finances, with massive spending promises and no money to pay for them. The English Tories have proposed £35 billion of cuts in England. The Scottish Tories claim that they will feed themselves off English cuts. One wonders how many English Tories know that Brian Monteith has not done any work in that area.

The SNP policy continues to be to tax and spend, and we have heard a little about that this afternoon. There is a £1 billion hole in the SNP's spending plans, simply to account for the announcements that SNP members have made this week, and there is no estimate of how long Mr Mather's trickle-down economics will take to work. That is not an isolated incident, of course. In December, SNP members told us that they would put a nationalised cap on council tax and, even this morning, Fiona Hyslop apparently announced another £18 million of local government spending on pre-school education. At the same time, the SNP proposes to cut hundreds of millions from local councils across Scotland. I think that most pre-school children would be able to work out that the SNP's sums just do not add up.

That sums up the choice before the chamber today. I saw in the papers on Tuesday that West Kilbride has become the unidentified flying object capital of Scotland—the top place for extra-terrestrial sightings, according to Ministry of Defence files. My message for stargazers everywhere is that, if they want to see black holes, they should just look at the Opposition front benches. The SNP and the Tories present us with two black holes, more spending and less tax. It does not add up. At least Alex Salmond got a laugh when he launched his manifesto by saying, "All it takes is imagination." I cannot imagine why members would support either of those parties today, but they should support our capital investment plan, as I support the motion.

## Business Motions

16:58

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S2M-2537, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a timetable for legislation.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee report to the Justice 2 Committee by 8 April 2005 on the Criminal Legal Aid (Fixed Payments) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2005.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S2M-2538, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a timetable for legislation.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that Stage 2 of the Transport (Scotland) Bill be completed by 24 May 2005.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** We are about 45 seconds short of 5 o'clock, so there will be a 45-second pause before decision time.



## Decision Time

17:00

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

There are 10 questions to be put as a result of today's business. In relation to this morning's debate on national health service dentistry, if the amendment in the name of Andy Kerr is agreed to, amendment S2M-2549.2, in the name of Nanette Milne, will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S2M-2549.1, in the name of Andy Kerr, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2549, in the name of Shona Robison, on NHS dentistry, 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)  
 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)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 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)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, 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

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)

Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 72, Against 47, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The amendment in the name of Nanette Milne therefore falls.

The second question is, that motion S2M-2549, in the name of Shona Robison, on NHS dentistry, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

#### 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)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 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)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, 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)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 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)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)

Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 73, Against 16, Abstentions 30.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Parliament recognises the need to tackle Scotland's poor oral health and improve access to NHS dental services; acknowledges the actions already taken by the Scottish Executive to improve oral health and to recruit and retain dental professionals in the NHS; recognises that further work needs to be undertaken to respond to the outcome of the consultations, Towards Better Oral Health in Children and Modernising NHS Dental Services in Scotland; notes that the Executive's response to the consultations, to be published very shortly, will include measures to address the Partnership Agreement commitments on workforce numbers, training and prevention including free dental checks and will identify the resources needed, and calls on NHS boards, higher education institutions, local authorities, the British Dental Association and the wider professions to engage positively with the Executive after publication to bring early and sustained benefits to the oral health of people in Scotland.

**The Presiding Officer:** The third question is, that amendment S2M-2547.1, in the name of Peter Peacock, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2547, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on early years education and child care, 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)  
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)  
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)  
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)  
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)  
Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

**AGAINST**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**ABSTENTIONS**

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 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)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 64, Against 32, Abstentions 23.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The fourth question is, that amendment S2M-2547.2, in the name of Bill Aitken, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2547, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on early years education and child care, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 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)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)

Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

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

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 16, Against 101, Abstentions 1.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The fifth question is, that amendment S2M-2547.3, in the name of Rosemary Byrne, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2547, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on early years education and child care, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)

Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 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)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 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)  
 McGregor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 40, Against 78, Abstentions 1.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The sixth question is, that motion S2M-2547, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on early years education and child care, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 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)  
 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)  
 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)  
 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)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)

Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 67, Against 0, Abstentions 52.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Parliament recognises the vital role of early years education and the importance of quality, accessible childcare in stimulating children's development and supporting working families in particular and the wider economy and society generally; supports the Scottish Executive's aim to provide more flexible and available childcare to all; acknowledges the significant successes already achieved through the Scottish Childcare Strategy, including making available free part-time pre-school education for every three and four-year-old, establishing a coherent regulatory framework under the Care Commission and expanding childcare provision across all sectors, and endorses the Executive's commitment to universal early education and childcare services with specific support to disadvantaged groups, including those for whom lack of childcare is a barrier to employment, education or training.

**The Presiding Officer:** The seventh question is, that amendment S2M-2554.1, in the name of Jim Mather, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2554, in the name of Tom McCabe, on the infrastructure investment plan, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**FOR**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**AGAINST**

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 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)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, 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)  
 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)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)

Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 26, Against 83, Abstentions 10.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The eighth question is, that amendment S2M-2554.2, in the name of Brian Monteith, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2554, in the name of Tom McCabe, on the infrastructure investment plan, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 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)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)



Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

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

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 15, Against 103, Abstentions 1.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The ninth and final question is, that motion S2M-2554, in the name of Tom McCabe, on the infrastructure investment plan, 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)  
 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)  
 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)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)

Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 65, Against 51, Abstentions 3.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament welcomes the record level of infrastructure investment, as set out in the first infrastructure plan for Scotland, *Building a Better Scotland: Infrastructure Investment Plan: Investing in the Future of Scotland*; acknowledges that the plan addresses the problems bequeathed by decades of underinvestment; recognises that the Scottish Executive is open to working across the public and private sectors in order to ensure that Scotland has the modern infrastructure that is necessary to support economic growth and secure an improved quality of life for the people of Scotland, and agrees that the infrastructure plan will deliver, for the long term, better public services, improved transport infrastructure, modernised colleges and universities, new hospitals, improved housing and new schools.

## Point of Order

17:10

**Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer, I seek your guidance on the length of amendments. I refer to amendment S2M-2554.2, in Brian Monteith's name, which reads like "War and Peace" and not like an amendment. Do the standing orders offer guidance on how to frame amendments and motions? A lot of motions and amendments are getting far too long.

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The point that the Conservatives were trying to make was in order.

## Scottish Mini-Olympics

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

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-2516, in the name of Robert Brown, on the Scottish mini-Olympics. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

#### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament notes Glasgow's poor health record, including high rates of coronary heart disease and stroke; welcomes initiatives to increase physical exercise, including the active school programme, the commitment to ensure two hours of physical education (PE) for schoolchildren every week and the new network of sports facilities across Scotland; believes that developing a competitive spirit in schools and sports clubs and encouraging young people to have a desire to win, whilst concentrating on self-improvement, is central to sporting endeavour; further believes that it is the role of government to provide opportunities for everyone to be physically active for life from a young age; considers that the Scottish Executive, sportscotland, local authorities and other interested organisations should promote sporting competition by establishing a biannual Scottish mini-Olympics for young people at school in which 32 teams, one from every local authority area, would compete against each other in various Olympic-style events, such as track and field and swimming; further considers that Scotland's towns and cities could bid for the right to host the Scottish mini-Olympics every two years, whilst allowing Glasgow to be the first host; further considers that local businesses and community leaders could back their local team at these mini-Olympics through local hero bursary schemes and general support, and believes that bringing back retired PE teachers could help in the training of young Scots in sport, particularly in the run-up to the proposed mini-Olympics.

17:12

**Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** A couple of months ago, Careers Scotland completed a significant piece of research. In essence, it identified that young people who had an aim in life—who had some idea of where they are going and who had set themselves goals—were likely to realise higher levels of attainment than young people of similar intelligence and abilities who had no such aim. To an extent, that is sheer common sense—we all instinctively recognise it to be true—but nevertheless the connection is important.

Most of us in the Parliament have made visits to schools and youth organisations and have met some inspirational young people. Equally, most of us have visited projects that try to build confidence and skills in young people who are in a state of drift. As a society, there is much at stake in our being able to realise the full potential of our young people; that is true for those young people and for our communities at large.

One subject—sport—motivates young people beyond all others. Last night's football results, the

performance of the goal-scoring hero of the moment, the deficiencies of the referee and the painful failures of the national teams are all the subject of agonised debate in playgrounds and on school buses and street corners. It is not just watching sport that motivates young people. Any morning, in the playground of the school next door to the Parliament, or in any school the length and breadth of the land, children are playing with balls and engaging with each other in a way that crosses divisions of colour, class or creed and which gets the blood stirring. Motivation in sport is not a million miles removed from motivation in enterprise, which is important to our national future.

My proposition to the chamber is that the potential of sport is possibly the greatest motivating force in Scotland. It gives young people the opportunity of physical exercise and offers them goals—in several senses of the word—and the energy to participate more fully in other activities.

I have a confession to make. When I was at school, sport and I were virtual strangers. Our gym teacher, who favoured a red Arnhem-type beret, sent us out on character-building cross-country runs where soggy gym shoes and muddy tracks through damp woods were the order of the day. I normally came second last. If it was not politically incorrect to say so, I would mention that I came only just ahead of the fat boy in the class.

The horror of my life was the dreadful business of attempting to pull myself up on the horizontal bar—a feat that, as far as I can recall, and I presume because of some physical deficiency, I was never able to perform. At university, I reached the dizzy height of being the second and unused substitute for the third and lowliest university basketball team. After that, I more or less retired from sport. I mention all that not as an exercise in self-humiliation but to make the point that the development of sport must offer a wide choice of options that can interest not just the high fliers in the popular team games, but the broad spectrum of youngsters with varied abilities.

Above all, sport provides role models for young people. Whether they be football or rugby stars, athletics champions, round-the-world yachtspersons or snowboarding champions, those gladiators of sport are admired and emulated by young people. I remember when, some years ago, the world bowling championships came to Glasgow. It was the talk of the steamie and on the television. Although bowling had been seen very much as a game for older men, it attracted a remarkable number of new, young enthusiasts.

The central idea in tonight's debate is that we should create a biennial Scottish mini-Olympics for young people at school, in which 32 teams—one

from every local authority area in Scotland—would compete against one another in a broad range of sports such as swimming, track events, running and team games. We can build on the national competitions that already take place in individual sports, but the Olympic idea would make it something more exciting. It has been done elsewhere. Australia, for example, attracts 1,400 young athletes to its biennial Australian youth Olympic festival—and Australia is hardly unknown in the world of adult sporting endeavour. I think that there is a connection there.

It will not surprise members to hear that I think it would be appropriate for Glasgow to be the first host city. Glasgow is Scotland's biggest city, but it is also the city with the worst concentrations of poor health, deprivation and underachievement. However, it is also a city with a great sporting heritage. It has three major football stadia—and others that belong to teams that a number of other people support—and a tradition of running big events. Glasgow would be the ideal place to start.

I believe that the mini-Olympics idea has great potential. Behind it lie many key themes—the importance of self-improvement; the building of confidence and skills; the encouragement of more physical exercise among young people; the contribution of good role models; and the need to involve the wider community.

The support of mums and dads provides a captive and enthusiastic, not to say highly partisan, crowd. Local businesses could support their local teams at the mini-Olympics through, for example, bursary schemes. There would need to be committed and professional support for the sporting aspects. Perhaps retired physical education teachers could provide a new and committed resource to help in the training of young Scots in sport; or perhaps we could harness enthusiastic young people at our universities and colleges. There is an example of that sort of thing at the University of Strathclyde, which has a summer event at Jordanhill for fourth-year pupils, giving them a range of interesting activities to do.

We have to speak with one voice. Last year in the United Kingdom, 807 applications for the development of playing fields were approved. No doubt, there were all sorts of good reasons for that in many cases. However, put together, the picture is not altogether one of state support for sport. We must not be tempted into selling off our family silver because big supermarket chains or housing developments offer a high price.

The import of too many overpaid football stars from abroad by our leading football teams is extraordinarily short-sighted and destructive of native talent. Let us look instead to remove the barriers that stop young people, from all our communities, from realising their sporting and individual potential.

Of course, there will be no vote at the end of this evening's debate and no formal decision will be taken. However, I hope that when Patricia Ferguson responds to the debate she will be prepared to commit the Scottish Executive to look seriously at this idea, which has already attracted wide cross-party support. I hope that the Executive will engage with local authorities, sportscotland and other interested groups and turn the idea into a worthwhile and visionary reality. I believe that it could work significant good for Scotland. I shall be very interested to hear the views and detailed suggestions of colleagues during the debate.

17:19

**Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green):** I am confused by the motion. Like Robert Brown, I was never very good at school sports. It was not that I was unenthusiastic; I just had to face the fact that I was not very good at them. The Olympic movement is all about sporting excellence and elite sporting achievement, whereas the active schools programme, which is mentioned in the motion and which I very much support, is about encouraging enthusiasm and participation in physical activity.

At this point, I must say that I attended an inspiring presentation on the active schools programme at last week's meeting of the cross-party group on sport. The programme is trying to build a base that will last a lifetime. There is a big difference between focusing on sports participation and focusing on sporting excellence. The mini-Olympics might well be worth while, but it will provide an elite competitive sporting opportunity for the few who are selected for the 32 teams instead of encouraging participation for all in sport and in what Robert Brown described as a wide range of options and a broad spectrum of activities. I would far prefer to support initiatives such as the active schools programme and encourage everyone's participation in sport, no matter whether their skill level is the same as mine or the same as the sporting heroes whom we will no doubt celebrate in the debate.

The money and resources that would be allocated to the mini-Olympics would inevitably be funnelled into training only a select group of young people for success. That is completely at odds with encouraging general physical activity, which is what we should be aiming towards. Only through having wider and more diverse opportunities will all children and young people be able to participate in a way that suits them. Of course, giving a broader base of active children and young people such diverse opportunities will enable us to spot and promote the most talented ones. However, I see a contradiction between some of the aspects that Robert Brown highlighted and his overall solution.

The active schools programme is doing a great job in encouraging people to volunteer and participate. However, it has not yet gone live in all 32 Scottish local authorities and I would like more effort to be made in that respect by the Scottish Executive and sportscotland, which I must say is doing a great job in promoting such initiatives instead of schemes such as the mini-Olympiad. Robert Brown was correct to say that competitions already exist for young people, but I worry that the mini-Olympiad would simply replicate a lot of that work.

As I have said, we should concentrate on encouraging sport for all and participation by everyone. We must also focus our attention on the kind of informal and semi-formal play spaces where on Sunday mornings I play football with my mates with a hangover and—I must admit—a very low level of excellence. We simply enjoy getting out there, being active and playing a bit of football. Instead of always focusing on excellence, elite sports and proposals such as the mini-Olympiad, we must open up opportunities by retaining those playing fields and supporting their use.

Although I agree with many of Robert Brown's points, I am unsure whether his prescription will lead to the wide choice of options and the broad spectrum of activities that he mentioned. Our message and ethos should be sport for all and active schools for everyone rather than for elite athletes alone.

17:23

**Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind):** I have to say that I was quite good at school sports. Indeed, I got my colours in three different sports—although I cannot remember now what they were.

Robert Brown is right to say that sportspeople can be role models. For example, I am absolutely certain that I would not be standing here today or have stayed on the straight path had it not been for Eleanor Gordon, who won a bronze medal for swimming at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics. Although I was a very wee girl at the time, I was a member of the same swimming club and have admired what she did all my life. I was a swimmer when I was young and, as swimming has kept me going through physical difficulties in my later life, I most certainly advocate sport for all and activity at a level that suits everyone.

I must take issue with Mark Ballard. It is not true to say that general activity is just as good as organised sport; they are two different concepts and the same people can take part in a wide range of physical activities. Nonetheless, I will address myself to the motion and not give him a lecture on that now, although I am an old PE teacher.

I have great sympathy with what Robert Brown intends and congratulate him on securing the

debate, but I take issue with some of the details of his proposal, just as Mark Ballard did. The motion puts the cart before the horse. Elsewhere, Robert Brown has referred to the fact that the number of PE teachers in Scotland will be increased by 400. I sincerely hope that that will happen, but if he can show me where those teachers are being trained right now I will be a bit more hopeful that his plan could be put into effect before today's schoolchildren are the age that I am now and are looking back fondly on the 2004 Olympics. The Executive has recognised that extra PE teachers are needed, but PE must become central to the curriculum; it must not be a fringe or a frill. The Executive will not achieve its desired levels of health improvement without PE—encompassing health education—being at the core of the timetable and infused throughout the school curriculum. Without that happening, the Executive will simply not hit its health targets.

We cannot glibly say that we will have mini-Olympics because we will have 400 more PE teachers, as we do not know for certain that we will have extra PE teachers. Robert Brown suggested bringing retired PE teachers out of retirement to coach. I advocated that for some time until a lot of them got in touch with me and said, "Right, you can do it, china." PE teachers have often—certainly in the past 10 years—been glad to retire because of discipline problems in school, so we cannot glibly accept that bringing them out of retirement is a good idea. It is a good idea, but a lot of work would have to go into working out how it could come about.

The mini-Olympics would depend on competition, as Mark Ballard pointed out. Competition in schools is patchy, because there is still a generation of teachers who think that competition is bad for the pupils. I happen not to share that belief. Part of school education should be about learning to win and lose with equal grace, but that idea has not been fashionable until very recently. We need a programme to change attitudes among classroom teachers and enable them to learn how to coach and train PE.

The mini-Olympics proposal could reinvent the wheel. We could use existing local authority structures and have the old type of county sports competition, for example. That is the way that I would start, because a mini-Olympics would create the wrong idea. It is a wee bit patronising and we need to have serious competition so that the kids feel that it is worth while.

I suggest that Robert Brown talk to me afterwards about the OneCity Trust in Edinburgh and its work in bringing business and local sports clubs together. I also suggest that he examine what James Gillespie's High School in Edinburgh is doing with pupil and teacher exchanges. The

particular exchange that I am thinking of is with South Africa. To tell children that they are going somewhere nice and warm with the school if they reach a certain standard in athletics is a better carrot to get them out training on a cold winter night than a mini-Olympics would be.

I am sorry that I cannot go on and on, because sport is my passion, but I thank Robert Brown for bringing the idea of a mini-Olympics to the Parliament's attention.

17:29

**Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I congratulate Robert Brown on securing the debate. We all agree that sport in schools has potential benefits for physical, mental and social well-being in our society as a whole. One of the key points about promoting sport and physical activity in schools is that, if we get people actively involved in physical pursuits—sport and otherwise—at a young age, they will, we hope, carry on that activity in later life and the health benefits that we generate in our young will continue as they get older.

I disagree with Mark Ballard's view that a mini-Olympics would be an elitist event, because the Olympic ideal is inclusion and participation, which I think any type of competition should involve. However, I understand where he is coming from in his concerns that a mini-Olympics might be portrayed as an elitist event.

**Mark Ballard:** Does the member acknowledge that only a tiny minority of Scotland's schoolchildren could ever hope to participate in the mini-Olympiad?

**Michael Matheson:** I understand what the member is saying, but I want to pursue the point, because the idea of a mini-Olympics is not new in Scotland. Last year, the SNP-led Falkirk Council introduced its mini-Olympics for schools in the area. Some 1,800 primary 7 school kids from across the district participated in the event at Grangemouth stadium, which included a range of events such as track and field, football and swimming. The event was highly successful and the children really enjoyed it. It was organised in conjunction with local and national businesses and the local authority. One of the things that I found particularly impressive was that the marshalling and refereeing was carried out by senior pupils from the high schools to which the primary 7 kids would move on after the summer holidays. I know that Falkirk Council is looking to roll out the event in the years to come. It was not elitist; it was very much about inclusion and participation.

The culture has existed for some time that we should try to remove competition from some of the sporting activities that take place in schools. I do

not think that that is necessarily healthy; I believe that competition has an important part to play, but it should not serve to exclude children who do not wish to participate in the competitive aspects of sport. We must strike a balance.

I am not necessarily convinced that we should have a biennial national mini-Olympics in Scotland. Much more important—Margo MacDonald touched on this—is engagement between community sports clubs and schools. It is unfortunate that in Scotland being a member of a sports club is fairly unusual, whereas in Scandinavian countries it is normal—on average, more than 70 per cent of Swedish kids are members of some kind of community sports club. It is important that kids be involved in community sports clubs because, once they move on from school, the clubs will give them the necessary expert advice and support if they want to compete at a higher level.

One of the main difficulties that people have is access to the right type of facilities. Members have highlighted before the problems that people encounter with public-private partnership schools. Falkirk's women's hockey team had to go to Linlithgow because its members could not afford to pay the charges to use the park at Graeme High School. We must ensure that, when we provide facilities, they are affordable to community sports clubs. I hope that when children get involved with those clubs at school, they will go on to be members and to participate in sports much more effectively. That is the approach that we should take. There is a role for competition, but it should not exclude kids who do not want to participate in competitive sports.

17:33

**Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con):** I am grateful to Robert Brown for bringing the debate to the chamber, because there are a number of serious issues involved. First, the motion highlights Glasgow's poor health record. There can be no doubt whatever that lack of physical activity is a major contributory factor in the incidence of coronary heart disease and stroke. Although I accept that there are other causes, such as over-smoking and over-drinking, lack of physical activity is a real problem. From that perspective, Robert Brown is totally correct to bring the issue to the Parliament, although I do not know whether the idea of a mini-Olympics is a runner in the longer term.

There were a number of inaccuracies in what Robert Brown said. First, he stated that when we pass school playgrounds, we see kids kicking a ball around. With respect, that is not what happens nowadays, certainly compared with the days when he and I were of an age to kick a ball around a

playground. Youngsters nowadays are less involved in physical activity, so any idea that can be advanced to encourage such activity is worth while. He also referred to the fact that there are three major football stadia in Glasgow. Mr Matheson, Ms Ferguson and I are all regular visitors to Firhill Park and we are wondering where the other two are.

Robert Brown was correct to underline the fact that one of the major problems with Scottish sport—and Scottish football in particular—has been the way in which some clubs have imported overpaid, glamorous stars from abroad. That approach has not worked and Partick Thistle has been resolute in resisting the temptation to take that route, which must hang to the wall for the moment.

There are serious issues to be addressed. Michael Matheson rightly highlighted the fact that a non-competitive culture has been introduced into many aspects of life in Scotland during the past 10 years or so. Frankly, I think that that is unfortunate. Of course, there are problems with over-competitiveness. Sectarianism is a problem and one aspect of football hooliganism is the tribalism that the win-at-all-costs philosophy brings about. I recognise those dangers, but in every game, and in every activity in life, some people will win and some will lose. Although we must always ensure that those who lose do not feel terribly bad about it, and although we must put support mechanisms in place—again, as a Partick Thistle supporter, I can empathise—there is nothing wrong with a degree of healthy competition, provided that it is not taken too seriously.

In this morning's debate on early-years education, I underlined my regret about the way in which things have become over-complicated in recent times, which has resulted in a reduction in voluntary sector input into all aspects of sport and education. Robert Brown's idea about retired PE teachers has some merits, but I suggest that if we encourage the voluntary sector more we will see the results that we are all anxious to achieve. It does not seem all that long ago that many people, including people in some of Scotland's poorest areas, ran football teams. Nowadays, that does not happen to the same extent. In the education system, teachers do not give up their time so willingly to take the school football team, rugby team or whatever on a Saturday morning. That is to be regretted.

I am not sure whether Robert Brown's ideas will work, but they are worth considering. I was amused at his all-his-yesterdays approach in the earlier part of his speech, but he can perhaps comfort himself with the fact that, although he went through a lot of grief during the terrible times in which he was at school and university, that may

at least have been character building. After all, he is a Liberal.

17:38

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** This debate has served a useful purpose in that members have made a number of helpful and constructive remarks. I take issue with Mark Ballard, who used a flawed approach that politicians tend to use, whereby they put up one thing against another when it is perfectly easy to have both. The idea that we must have either mass participation or a competition between teams from different councils is a load of rubbish. One leads to the other.

I think that Mark Ballard missed what seems to me to be the subtlety of Robert Brown's motion. Competition is a good thing and Robert Brown's proposal would create competition between councils. Councils, especially those that have failed dismally to promote sport in their areas, will not like their kids being massacred by all and sundry. They will pull their finger out—if that is a parliamentary expression—and improve their performance by giving their children more scope. Competition is good for those who can compete and mass participation is good for everyone. We can have both and one leads to the other.

We must have ambition for those who wish to progress. There are ways in which to encourage councils to improve their performance. For example, charges for using sports premises are often so high that kids cannot participate. Councils could reduce charges as part of developing their teams for the contest.

As for coaches, we can bring together PE teachers past and present who teach after school hours with club coaches to use school premises or other premises. The key to developing a sport and the young people is a good coach who knows something about the subject—not a fanatical parent who swears at the young people from the touchline, but someone who is serious and is reasonably knowledgeable about coaching.

We could also do more to develop really young coaches—young professionals who are still performing. There are one or two good schemes that encourage footballers to coach and to achieve Scottish vocational qualifications, for example. Some of the best coaches were not all that great as players. People can have a modest professional career then do really well in coaching. Developing clubs, coaches and the use of school facilities would greatly help everyone—the elite and the less elite—and Robert Brown's idea would encourage that.

More than one age group should perform. The motion does not say that, but different age groups

could be involved. The organisation to which Michael Matheson referred, with which I have had dealings, involves different age groups of performers. That allows for mass participation.

The matter is irrelevant in a sense, but we could build on the Glasgow special Olympics this summer and develop interest in that. That is a fruitful idea that we could develop.

**Margo MacDonald:** I want to ensure that members know that the BAA games that are based at Meadowbank in Edinburgh offer the sort of event that the motion proposes, so a prototype exists. What is interesting is the number of local authorities that do not enter a team. The games combine mass participation with genuine competition. They are a good prototype that I urge members to examine.

**Donald Gorrie:** I agree. I handed out medals at that good event a year or two ago. The idea in the motion is not totally new; Robert Brown is building on existing activities.

Above all, we must put sport on the top table politically. I have great hopes of the minister—I am not oozing up to her.

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** Why not?

**Donald Gorrie:** Well, why not? The minister has sufficient political clout to have sport taken seriously. Whether at the United Kingdom or the Scottish level, sport has not ranked with other major political issues such as education, health and transport, but it should.

People care about sport. As Robert Brown and others have said, it motivates young people especially. We can hit many buttons by developing sport more. I hope that those of us who are enthusiastic about sport—even if we disagree about some of the small print—can push the idea in the motion and other ideas to put sport higher up the political agenda, with some money and with moral and personal support.

17:43

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** I confess that I was good at sport. Perhaps there is a gender issue; the women who have contributed to the debate participated in sport at a reasonable level. I was a sprinter and I played netball. I was lucky enough to play on a sprung wooden floor, which meant that when, in later life, I won a Scottish universities cup medal for netball, I had a rather large spring for somebody who was small compared with her competitors.

I also played hockey. We have heard recently about the old racecourse in Ayr, where I played hockey. That is another playing field that is under threat because of a public-private partnership

expansion of a local school. I understand that—luckily—the old racecourse has had a reprieve. Government policy has a serious conflict with our aspiration to encourage more pupils to participate. On PPP, I was alarmed to hear in the recent debate on free school meals about schools where the dinner hall is doubling up as a gym hall. It takes time after lunch to clean up squished potato and so on—valuable time that could be used for PE. That issue must be addressed.

Some good points have been made in the debate. I want to reflect on the mini-Olympics concept, which is about participation. Michael Matheson gave a good example from Falkirk Council. An event involving 1,800 pupils is not elitist. For pupils to qualify for a Scotland-wide competition, provision would have to be made for them to compete in local areas. I am pleased that in my home town there is a cluster of schools that does that on a regular basis. It is also important that primary school pupils should mix with secondary school pupils.

We must ensure that we have the coaches and teachers who are needed. The minister may want to work with her Cabinet colleagues to ensure that we have those people in place. Unfortunately, in answer to a parliamentary question from my colleague Michael Matheson in February this year, Jim Wallace pointed out that the number of people who are graduating in PE went down in 2002-03, compared with the previous year. As Margo MacDonald said, there is a commitment to provide 400 PE teachers, but I am not sure where they are, where the capacity to train them is, and whether they will come through in time.

In Scotland, we send our pupils to school for longer than most other developed countries do, but we are ranked 27<sup>th</sup> out of 29 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries for the time that pupils spend on PE. That is very serious when combined with the concerns about health that were mentioned earlier. Healthy bodies mean healthy minds. PE brings respect for one's body and oneself—a point that has not been made in the debate, but which is very important, for hormonal teenagers in particular. We should capture that point, which tends to be lost in the debate about nutrition, health and fitness.

We should examine the shape of the school day. There are some interesting examples from overseas that we should consider. The French structure the school day to allow the sort of community participation in schools about which Michael Matheson spoke. We need to be creative and innovative, but we also need to ensure that we have the basics right. That means having the necessary playing fields, gym halls and teachers, and, as Donald Gorrie said, having the political will



and support to drive sport up the political agenda, to ensure that we can make a difference. That difference would be valuable—not just to the individuals concerned, but to society in general. I am pleased to have been able to participate in the debate.

17:48

**The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson):** Like other members who have spoken this evening, I congratulate Robert Brown on securing parliamentary time for us to have this debate.

The concept of a mini-Olympics is fairly novel. I note the example that Michael Matheson gave, but the idea of a Scotland-wide event is novel. However, I welcome any initiative that would promote interest and participation in sport and increase levels of physical activity among our young people. As Michael Matheson rightly pointed out, a mini-Olympics could provide opportunities for volunteering and encourage people who cannot compete to become informed spectators.

Recently I attended the Scottish final of the Norwich Union sports:hall programme in Dundee. The event involved girls and boys in under-13 and under-15 categories, representing teams from as far apart as Shetland and Dumfries and Galloway. The young people took part in events such as speed bounce, standing long jump and the vertical jump.

What impressed me most about the event was the enthusiasm of the young people who took part and the fact they were having great fun into the bargain. The initiative does not require expensive facilities or equipment; it demands only the imaginative use of facilities and a commitment to giving young people opportunities to express themselves and to test their skills in a variety of sports activities. It also offers opportunities for stimulating interest in sport, while providing a structure for developing skills through competition at regional, Scottish and UK level. What seemed like an ever-growing procession of young people who had taken part gained medals in the course of the day, about which they were very pleased, and the winning team went forward to the UK finals. I sincerely encourage Robert Brown and other colleagues with an interest in sport to investigate that model.

I fully accept that we need to offer a wide range of opportunities to young people if we are to improve health and fitness in Scotland, but we have to encourage participation so that we can then develop successful athletes.

Although I fully support the sentiments behind the motion, I admit to having some slight

reservations about the commitment of resources and staff time that would be required to plan, organise and stage such events, as well as the distraction that might be involved in a bidding process.

Opportunities for young people to engage competitively already exist. I mentioned the sports:hall initiative, but individual sports governing bodies also have their own regional and national events, and there are the Commonwealth youth games, where our young athletes are able to test themselves against their peers from around the Commonwealth. I pay tribute again to the members of the Scottish team who were so successful at Bendigo last December. They are tremendous ambassadors for our country and I am sure that their experience will stand them in good stead for their future sporting careers. I sincerely hope that a number of them will go on to represent their country at the Commonwealth games in Melbourne next year. Some of our young competitors played bowls, which was mentioned as a sport that might not be of interest to young people, but we did very well and won a number of medals in the bowls events.

Fundamentally, we must address the increasing problem of the sedentary lifestyle that is particularly prevalent among our young people. Improving physical activity levels brings health benefits that address the full range of serious health problems that we have in Scotland, including coronary heart disease, stroke and the rising epidemic of obesity. I have discussed that problem with my counterparts in Victoria, Australia, who are also working to address a problem that they only too readily recognise as being prevalent in their country, despite their reputation as a great sporting nation.

By encouraging more people to be more active more often, we hope to encourage participation levels and ultimately to produce more sports stars. However, that will take time and commitment, not just from young people, but from teachers, youth leaders, parents, sports clubs and national and local politicians.

Michael Matheson rightly mentioned an area that concerns me too—the need to form stronger links between schools and clubs, so that young people's participation in sport can lead to a lifetime commitment to their sport once they leave school.

The active schools programme is an important part of the strategy, but we must also commit to increasing the level and quality of physical education. Both Margo MacDonald and Fiona Hyslop mentioned our commitment to providing an additional 400 PE teachers to enable schools to deliver at least two hours of quality physical education every week for every school pupil. I advise Fiona Hyslop that the early indications are

quite good. In fact, the University of Strathclyde has increased its intake of PE students this year from nine to 27. Later this year, the University of Edinburgh expects to take on an additional 15 to 20 people, whom it will train in a similar fashion.

**Margo MacDonald:** Although I am extremely glad to hear those figures, I point out that in Edinburgh in particular there has been a tendency for people who opt for a PE degree to go into sports science rather than into teaching PE. The big requirement is to get people who can demonstrate sports and be active in schools, not sports scientists.

**Patricia Ferguson:** I sympathise entirely with and take on board Margo MacDonald's point. In the context of something that Margo MacDonald said in her speech, I was going to mention the fact that the University of Strathclyde, in conjunction with Glasgow City Council, is currently running a course for existing primary teachers to give them some PE training and allow them to become more skilled so that they can contribute to the life of their primary school. That is useful.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Does that mean that the target of 400 additional PE teachers might include existing primary school teachers who have PE expertise?

**Patricia Ferguson:** Our target is to have 400 PE teachers, but we are also considering as many innovative ways as possible of increasing the number of people in our schools who have some expertise and who can assist in the promotion of physical activity and PE in our schools. In that context, we should remember that, for many young women, dance offers a more attractive way of being physically active than does sport—despite the sporting achievements of Margo MacDonald and Fiona Hyslop when they were younger.

Securing a teaching base is only one change that we need to achieve. Most important, we need to ensure that there is adequate space for physical education in the school week, which touches on a point that Fiona Hyslop made. A curriculum review programme board has been established and will review existing arrangements and make recommendations.

It is essential that we instil positive, healthy attitudes to exercise in our young people when they are at an early age, which we hope will encourage them to be physically active throughout their life. Some young people might go on to become high achievers in sport, but participation matters first and foremost. Donald Gorrie was correct to identify the importance of coaching. Like me, he supports and encourages people who want to take part in the sports leaders programme.

As members said, competition is an integral part of sport. Competition exists in all walks of life and we should not shy away from allowing our young people to learn in and from a competitive environment. Winning and losing are part of life's tapestry and competitive sport is part of that process. Some people progress to a higher level in sport but many others do not, and they must not be made to feel that sport is focused only on competition. Taking part is the most important aspect. Nevertheless, we need to ensure that there are clear opportunities for people who have talent to develop their potential to the full.

Sportscotland is working with sports governing bodies to develop coaching and competitive structures, particularly in youth football, golf and rugby, which are leading the way in developing regional arrangements. I encourage all sports governing bodies to organise events to identify and develop the most talented people as part of their development plans.

I cannot let the debate end without paying tribute to the volunteers and others who organise and run events, who make an enormous contribution to sport at all levels. Their contribution is significant and their expertise makes Scotland an attractive location for major sporting events.

The debate has been wide ranging and I have not been able to touch on all the points that members made. However, I very much welcome the debate, not least because it has highlighted the varying views on competitive sport for young people. I am always interested in hearing about proposals that will improve participation in sport and, although I have reservations about the resource implications of establishing a Scottish mini-Olympics, I would be happy to discuss with Robert Brown how the proposal might be taken forward and how we might develop other ideas that would contribute to an aim that I think members of all parties share.

We must bear it in mind that there should be no artificial barriers to participation in a future mini-Olympics or any other event. Such events should contribute clearly to meeting the targets that are set out in the sport 21 strategy and each competitor should be given the support that they need to allow them to perform at their best.

*Meeting closed at 17:58.*

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