

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 22 September 2005

Session 2

£5.00

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2005.

Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to the Licensing Division,
Her Majesty's Stationery Office, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ
Fax 01603 723000, which is administering the copyright on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate
Body.

Produced and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by Astron.

CONTENTS

Thursday 22 September 2005

Debates

Col.

ECONOMIC POLICY	19331
<i>Motion moved—[Mark Ruskell].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Allan Wilson].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Jim Mather].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Murdo Fraser].</i>	
Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)	19331
The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson)	19334
Jim Mather (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)	19336
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	19338
Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)	19341
Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green)	19342
Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab)	19344
Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)	19345
Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP)	19347
Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)	19348
Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)	19349
John Scott (Ayr) (Con)	19350
Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP)	19352
Allan Wilson	19353
Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green)	19355
ASYLUM SEEKERS (CHILDREN)	19358
<i>Motion moved—[Robin Harper].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Robert Brown].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Christine Grahame].</i>	
Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green)	19358
The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Robert Brown)	19361
Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP)	19363
Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	19365
Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)	19367
Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab)	19369
Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP)	19370
Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)	19372
Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green)	19373
Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD)	19375
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con)	19376
Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)	19377
The Minister for Communities (Malcolm Chisholm)	19379
Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)	19380
QUESTION TIME	19384
FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME	19392
QUESTION TIME	19403
CULTURAL COMMISSION	19420
The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson)	19420
Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP)	19425
Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	19427
Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD)	19429
Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green)	19431
Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab)	19433
Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)	19435
Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)	19437
Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP)	19439
Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)	19441
Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	19443

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab).....	19444
Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP).....	19447
Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab).....	19449
Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD).....	19451
Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con).....	19453
Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP).....	19454
Patricia Ferguson	19457
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTIONS	19461
<i>Motions moved—[Ms Margaret Curran].</i>	
Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP)	19461
The Deputy Minister for Finance, Public Service Reform and Parliamentary Business (George Lyon)	19461
DECISION TIME	19463
SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE	19477
<i>Motion debated—[Marilyn Livingstone].</i>	
Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)	19477
Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con).....	19479
Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP)	19481
Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab).....	19482
Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)	19484
The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald)	19485

Oral Answers

Col.

QUESTION TIME	
SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE	19384
GENERAL QUESTIONS	19384
Disclosure (Single-card System)	19388
Driving Tuition (Pass Plus Scheme).....	19386
Faculty of Advocates	19391
Freight Facilities Grants (Highlands)	19390
Hoardings	19387
Ratho Adventure Centre	19384
Scottish Economy (Oil Prices)	19385
FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME	19392
Ageism.....	19401
Cabinet (Meetings)	19392
Child Protection	19399
Prime Minister (Meetings).....	19394
Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)	19397
Violence	19400
QUESTION TIME	
SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE	19403
ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT	19403
Agriculture (Sustainability).....	19407
Coastal Erosion	19410
Contaminated Land	19403
Crofting	19406
Environmental Awareness (Young People).....	19405
Environmental Protection (Firth of Forth)	19408
Scottish Water (Sewage Disposal).....	19404
Water Services (Domestic Properties)	19409
HEALTH AND COMMUNITY CARE	19411
Alzheimer's Disease (Drug Treatment)	19418
Cancer (Diagnosis and Treatment)	19412
Community Health Partnerships.....	19413
Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003	19418
Mental Health Strategy	19411
NHS 24	19414
Public Health (Funding)	19416

Scottish Parliament

Thursday 22 September 2005

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 09:15*]

Economic Policy

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Good morning. The first item of business is a debate on motion S2M-3321, in the name of Mark Ballard, on economic policy.

09:15

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): The motion cuts to the heart of the debate about the purpose of government. What is government for, to whom is it accountable and what should its top priority be? If we asked the average man or woman in the street, they would tell you that the Scottish Executive's priority should be to improve the quality of life of the people of Scotland. However, the Executive has selected as its top priority growing the economy, as measured by gross domestic product. That one-dimensional focus on an abstract economic indicator shows a lamentable lack of vision and ambition. The truth is that GDP tells us little. It is simply the growth measure of market activity in Scotland—the amount of cash that has changed hands. As the headline measure of economic progress, GDP does not stand up to much scrutiny. It fails in four key ways.

First, it simply aggregates the value of monetary transactions and is unable to differentiate between beneficial expenditure and spending that is harmful. If a business kept its balance sheet by entering all the figures in the same column, an auditor would probably not be impressed. However, on a national level, that is exactly what we do, and we place great importance on the total.

If somebody buys a car, therefore, GDP goes up. Every time the car is filled with fuel, GDP goes up. The more inefficient a car is, the more GDP benefits there are. If a car is involved in a nasty road accident following which several vehicles must be repaired, GDP goes up. If the owner of the car is prosecuted for dangerous driving and engages a lawyer, GDP goes up. If he is then sued by one of the other drivers, GDP goes up. A pattern is beginning to emerge.

Crime, divorce and pollution are all treated as economic gains. Perhaps that is why I cannot understand Murdo Fraser's amendment. He spoke passionately about the tragedy and the cost of road accidents in last night's members' business debate on the A9, but today he is supporting a

measure of economic growth that counts such accidents as a good thing.

Secondly, GDP is oblivious to the inequalities of wealth distribution. There may be more money sloshing around, but in whose pockets? Too often, GDP has risen while the gap between rich and poor has widened. Regional inequalities are also important. Scotland's economy is becoming more concentrated in the cities. Edinburgh and Glasgow are doing well, as is Inverness, but what about our rural areas? GDP is blind to the skewed distribution of wealth.

Thirdly, GDP champions all monetary transactions, but ignores many valuable services that take place outside the cash economy, in spite of the importance of such services to our communities and our society. Whether it is voluntary work with young people to help tackle the root causes of antisocial behaviour or work done to manage communal land in a crofting township, the Executive's chosen measure of success ignores such work and the enormous contribution of the voluntary sector to our society generally. That is very regrettable.

Fourthly, GDP treats the depletion of natural capital and resources as income. As we use our finite, irreplaceable oil reserves, it is vital that we account for their depletion. What would the auditors say if a business sold off its capital assets and treated the money raised as income? Likewise, if we exploit our fish stocks beyond their safe biological limits, we are depleting that natural capital.

Surely it is time for us all to accept that GDP is simply too crude a measure to meet the needs of a modern, sustainable economy in the 21st century. There have been signs recently that the political landscape is shifting. The First Minister now talks about

"economic growth, but not at any cost."

"The Framework for Economic Development In Scotland" has a vision:

"To raise the quality of life of the Scottish people through increasing economic opportunities for all on a socially and environmentally sustainable basis."

All of which begs the question: why do we hold GDP, an indicator that tells us nothing of social or environmental sustainability, in such high esteem?

It is not just us who have a problem with GDP as a measure of national progress. A Labour Party policy document on the environment spelled out that party's disquiet:

"For too long, economic and political success has been measured solely in terms of the rate of growth of economic activity. This is difficult to justify. Few people actually want a higher level of GDP for its own sake."

However, the Executive's amendment talks about sustainable economic growth, despite the fact that the Executive's prime focus on sustainable economic growth through GDP considers only the economic pillar of sustainable development; it does not consider the social or environmental pillars. If it were a stool, it would fall over.

Simon Kuznets, one of the economists who developed the concept of GDP, said:

"The welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income ... goals for 'more' growth should specify of what and for what."

When it comes to economic development, quality is every bit as important as quantity and quality, as we have seen, is something that GDP simply does not recognise.

It does not have to be this way. If we want a better measure of the direction that our economy and our society are heading in, we should seriously consider other measures, such as the index of sustainable economic welfare, which is being trialled in Wales. The ISEW takes into account social resources and environmental degradation and can differentiate between desirable and harmful economic activity. Obviously, we need to keep on measuring GDP, but let us replace it as the headline indicator and measure it alongside something that tells us about the social and environmental impacts of all the spending.

Ultimately, there does not need to be a conflict between a healthy economy and a healthy environment, in spite of what some people, such as Fergus Ewing, would have us believe. We do not have to make that choice. I would go further and say that a sustainable environment and strong social justice are absolute prerequisites for a stable, healthy economy. That is surely what the people of Scotland want and it is no more than they deserve. That is why we need to measure what matters.

I move,

That the Parliament notes that the top priority of the Scottish Executive, as stated in the current Partnership Agreement, is "growing the economy" but reminds the Executive that GDP, its preferred measure of economic growth, makes no distinction between beneficial and harmful economic activity, ignores many socially beneficial and highly desirable practices and treats the depletion of natural capital as income and is therefore a very poor indicator of economic development; agrees with the Labour Party Policy Commission on the Environment that "For too long, economic and political success has been measured solely in terms of the rate of growth of economic activity"; considers, therefore, that if Scotland is to enjoy economic development that does not compromise social justice and environmental sustainability it needs a more meaningful yardstick than simply measuring the monetary value of goods and services produced in Scotland; remains committed to assisting the positive economic development

of a healthy Scottish economy and considers that placing sustainability and national well-being at the heart of Executive policy will ultimately lead to a stronger, healthier and more innovative economic future for the people of Scotland, and urges the Executive to consider alternatives to GDP with a view to adopting a more suitable measure of national progress as its top priority.

09:22

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson): The powers of devolution have given us a fantastic opportunity to give Scotland a strong competitive edge in a growing international market. We are determined to make the most of Scotland's potential. That is why we made growing the economy our top priority. The First Minister reiterated that position in his recent statement on the legislative programme.

I agreed with much that Mark Ruskell said, but clearly not all. Our priority of growing the economy is not at the expense of sustainable development more generally.

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): In those circumstances, can the minister explain why GDP is the Executive's measure of progress, when GDP cannot account for sustainable development because it does not mention social or environmental impact or the distribution of wealth?

Allan Wilson: GDP is obviously an indicator of economic growth. As I am sure Mr Ballard is well aware, we have a number of other indicators that are used across a broad range to chart our progress towards sustainable development more generally.

Scotland has a small, open economy and the increasing globalisation of trade—global trade has grown twice as fast as world GDP over the past decade—means that the linkages between Scotland and the rest of the world have a critical influence on our economic performance. However, we do not wish to see increasing economic growth and international integration at the expense of sustainable development—the point that I just made.

We have an excellent business environment and a support framework that works for Scottish firms and inward investors. Our workforce is skilled and well educated; higher education participation is at a rate that other countries envy; and major investments have been made in transport and electronic infrastructure. That all translates into a positive economic performance. For example, the most recent GDP data, which are for the first quarter of 2005, showed growth over the year of 2.0 per cent, which is the highest for four years and is above our long-run annual average.

The Scottish labour market continues to perform strongly, with all the main indicators moving in the right direction. The trends have remained strong and consistent. Employment indicators and social indicators are as important as wider economic indicators in measuring the success of economic policy. For development to be sustainable, we have to close the opportunity gap and give economic and employment opportunities to all our fellow citizens, not just to those who currently benefit.

Jim Mather (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): The minister tells us that all the indicators are going in the right direction, but is that in absolute terms or in relative terms? There is still a relative gap between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom. When will that gap be closed? When will that indicator be positive?

Allan Wilson: As Jim Mather in particular will be aware, the trend is certainly moving in our direction. Overall growth in Scotland's economy this quarter last year was twice that of the UK as a whole. However, the longer-term issue is clearly to close the gap in the growth rate between the Scottish economy and the economy of the UK more generally. We can agree about that; it is the reason why—to answer the Greens' point—we make growing the economy our top priority. By closing that gap, we will create greater wealth, which will allow us better to distribute the employment and economic benefits that I spoke of earlier.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP) rose—

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will the minister take an intervention?

Allan Wilson: I will take the Tories.

Murdo Fraser: I am grateful. As we are bandying around statistics, will the minister tell us whether the Executive is satisfied that Scotland has fallen four places in the UK regional competitive index since 1997? We were fourth out of 12 regions of the UK in 1997; today we are eighth. Is that a record of success?

Allan Wilson: The member makes a fair point. Obviously, we would wish to be more successful than we are currently. However, to grow the economy over the year at 2 per cent—which is the highest for the four-year period that I referred to, and which is above our long-run annual average—demonstrates progress towards our objectives, as I am sure Murdo Fraser would agree. That is not to say that everything in the garden is rosy. I do not argue—and I have never argued—that it was.

However, Murdo Fraser knows that I emphasise the importance of employment. Unemployment was the scourge of the Scottish economy—dare I say it?—during the period of Conservative control.

Over the most recent period—May to July this year—unemployment is down. It is around its lowest level since quarterly records began in 1992. More and more Scots are being encouraged to participate in the labour market, and our economic activity rate is above that of the UK as a whole. Critically, employment is around its highest level since quarterly records began.

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): Will the minister give way?

The Presiding Officer: The minister is in his last minute.

Allan Wilson: The rate of employment is above that of the UK and is among the highest in the 25 European Union countries.

Life sciences are very important to the Scottish economy. In sectors such as life sciences, microelectronics, energy and renewable energy—to which we are committed—financial services and the creative industries more generally, Scotland is, I would argue, world class.

Our ambitions for Scotland are to provide all Scots with opportunities for good jobs, fulfilling careers and safe communities—safe communities are a vital part of the social progress that is part of sustainable development more generally—to fulfil all Scots' potential and to help them to achieve their ambitions. All of that must be achieved in an international economic environment, and sustainable development is at the heart of our economic development agenda.

I move amendment S2M-3321.4, to leave out from "notes" to end and insert:

"supports growing the economy as the top priority of the Scottish Executive; believes that economic growth must be sustainable; agrees with the Partnership Agreement commitment to assess economic development policies against their impact on sustainable development indicators; notes that the Framework for Economic Development in Scotland has made sustainable development the principal objective; welcomes the stronger emphasis on sustainability in the refresh of A Smart Successful Scotland; endorses the Executive's determination to drive forward its green jobs strategy, and endorses the Executive's commitment to sustainable development."

09:29

Jim Mather (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): In moving my amendment, I will accept the general thrust of the Scottish Green Party's motion. We have our own reservations about GDP. However, economic growth is the key to improving living standards and quality of life, and to neglect economic growth is to create more inequalities between Scotland and elsewhere, and inequalities within Scotland. Such inequalities still occur, and have been occurring for 30 years.

I agree that GDP is not an accurate reflection of performance, especially in a branch economy, which Scotland is becoming. GDP is subject to arbitrary adjustment and poor presentation. We have had the simple and painless recalibration of GDP, which, in essence, wrote off great chunks of our manufacturing and engineering without the bookkeeping that would be required in any company; we have had the indexation of GDP, showing both Scotland and the UK as equalling 100 in 2001 in order to mask the differences and iron out the disparities; and we have had an emphasis on GDP per capita, which further muddies the waters. When we get down to the last pensioner and one offshore oil rig, she might be a poor pensioner but her GDP per capita will be great.

Many of the measures that we actually need to measure performance are available—measures such as population and average life expectancy, and the personal family binary measure of whether our children are living and working in Scotland. However, we also have distortion and deception in the data. For example, labour participation and unemployment are calculated after ignoring 630,000 people in Scotland—20.5 per cent of our working-age population—and average incomes now discount people who work less than 18 hours a week. I hope that the Greens and others will join us in our repeated calls for an independent Scottish office of national statistics.

There is also distortion in the data on our natural resources. The McCrone report that was uncovered last week was optimistic, but it resulted in data—

Allan Wilson: Will the member take an intervention?

Jim Mather: I will make my point first.

The content and thrust of that report was repressed for 30 years and the value of our oil reserves was denied. The report was used as a basis for taking the wind from the SNP's sails—as the report says. It actually missed the target and took the wind from Scotland's sails for 30 years.

Allan Wilson: Jim Mather calls the employment data a distortion, but of the 630,000 people that he mentions, how many does he believe to be available for employment?

Jim Mather: I think that an accurate number is 188,000. That is the number of people who are stepping forward and saying that they would like to work. However, I would suggest that, in a different climate, and in a faster-growing Scotland, the number might be higher.

I want to go back to oil and talk about last week's spectacle in a green context. The McCrone report made it clear that oil has been used in

Scotland at a voracious and imprudent rate. Much of it was used to fund failure—policies that did not work in the 1970s, were subject to the false hope that they would work in the years between then and now, but have not worked. Those policies have caused great damage—viz the population, viz growth and viz the migration of people from Scotland.

Happily, we have a second golden chance. The reserves are there—there is at least as much as has already been taken out—and the price is solid and likely to rise. The technology is there to get every last drop of it out.

The key points are these: Scotland does not have nine lives; Scotland has worn a hair shirt for 30 years; Scotland does not need another self-denying ordinance; and Scotland needs a process that will grow our economy on a robust and solid base so that it converges with other economies. I am fed up with tired policies that result in the continuing widening of the gap. I see Jeremy Purvis smiling at the mention of the widening gap; does he think that it might just keep his party in power?

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): I am not smiling; I am laughing at Mr Mather.

Jim Mather: No more. I urge members to support the motion and the SNP amendment in my name.

I move amendment S2M-3321.1, to insert at end:

“as a pre-requisite for a new era in which, no matter how national wealth is measured, the Scottish Parliament should have legislative responsibility for the management of all our natural resources.”

09:34

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I welcome the opportunity to discuss the Scottish economy. The Greens highlight in their motion an issue that they have raised consistently over a long period—that GDP is not the best assessment of economic strength. On one level, the Greens are correct. We on the Conservative side of the chamber have never argued that quality of life is mainly dependent on having wealth.

The fact is that, under the Executive, the factors that are damaging the quality of life for so many Scots, such as the drug-fuelled violence in our communities, are chiefly non-economic. We now know that, on one measure, Scotland is the most violent country in the world. Family breakdown, school indiscipline and the centralisation of local health care services are other examples of such factors. That is why the Conservatives are developing concrete policies to tackle those issues

head on and to improve the quality of life for all Scots, especially those who live in vulnerable communities. However, I disagree with the Greens, in that I believe that such quality-of-life issues are inextricably linked to economic growth.

A strong and healthy economy is the necessary foundation for a good quality of life for all our citizens. A strong economy provides jobs, which reduce dependency and give people both the security to provide for themselves and their families and a sense of worth. A strong economy creates the wealth to pay for the quality public services that all of us—even the Greens—are in favour of. The GDP growth measure that the Greens deride is an extremely useful and important tool for assessing the extent to which Executive policies are helping or hindering the economy, on which our quality of life depends. It is unfortunate that, under the Executive's stewardship, Scottish GDP has consistently trailed behind that of the UK as a whole. As a result, it is hardly surprising that Scotland has fared so badly on several quality-of-life measurements.

Our amendment highlights the fact that growth in the Scottish economy in the first quarter of 2005 was 0 per cent, whereas growth in the UK economy in that period was 0.4 per cent. There is no doubt that it would suit the Executive for us to stop drawing attention to those figures; in fact, I am surprised that the Executive has not grasped with both hands the opportunity that the Greens have offered it to move away from the use of GDP, given that it has failed so dismally on that measure over the past six years. However, the Executive probably appreciates that it would lack credibility if it took that route.

Shiona Baird: The member condemns the Executive for its GDP results, but if he is wedded to the use of GDP and to improving it as the top priority, surely his approach would make no difference.

Murdo Fraser: I do not agree with that at all. As I will outline shortly, and as our amendment states, we believe that a change of Administration and the resulting change in Executive policies would deliver higher GDP growth. It is not a necessary function of the Scottish economy that our GDP growth must lag behind that of the rest of the UK. In spite of what the minister said, the gap between Scotland and elsewhere in the UK continues to grow.

Alex Neil: Will the member give way?

Murdo Fraser: If the member will forgive me, I will not give way at the moment, because I want to make some progress.

The latest evidence came from "The UK Competitiveness Index 2005", which was produced by the University of Sheffield and which

represents the most up-to-date, thorough and authoritative benchmarking of the competitiveness of the UK's regions and localities. It showed that whereas in 1997, under the Conservatives, Scotland was ranked fourth out of 12 regions in the UK, it is now ranked eighth out of 12—a fall of four places. What a testament to the Executive's track record.

Perhaps we should not be surprised at those outcomes when we consider the Executive's approach to our wealth creators. In spite of his attempts to cosy up to the business community at the recent business in the Parliament conference, Jack McConnell let the mask slip at last week's Labour group meeting, when he is alleged to have referred to business leaders Janette Anderson and Ian Graham as idiots. Perhaps some of the Labour members who are present would like to tell us whether that remark was made, because the First Minister's press officers are reluctant to confirm or deny whether the story is true. When the First Minister displays such contempt for our business community, is it any wonder that Scotland is not regarded as a good place in which to do business?

In Blackpool this week, the new Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning said that he wants business rates in Scotland to be reduced to below the level of those in England, to give us a competitive advantage. I am delighted at our new enterprise minister's conversion to Conservative policies. What a pity that, for the past six years, his predecessor and the Executive as a whole told us that we did not need such a reduction. It is clear that the Conservatives have won all the arguments on what is wrong with the economy and that the other parties are playing catch-up.

I do not think that the Greens have much to offer when it comes to turning around our economic underperformance. Measures such as increasing fuel tax will simply damage businesses, especially in rural areas.

Mr Ruskell: Will the member give way?

The Presiding Officer: The member is in his final 30 seconds.

Murdo Fraser: It is quite wrong to seek to disregard GDP growth as a measure of economic success, even though it might suit the Executive to do so.

The Conservatives are winning the arguments on what needs to be done to turn around our economic underperformance. People from other parties, including the new Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, are queuing up behind our manifesto proposals.

I move amendment S2M-3321.2, to leave out from first "GDP" to end and insert:

"the Scottish economy actually experienced zero growth in the first quarter of this year; believes that GDP growth is an extremely important measurement of quality of life because a strong economy is crucial to providing individual financial security and the necessary investment for quality public services; further believes that the Executive's stewardship of the economy has been detrimental to the quality of life of many Scots; notes that Scotland fell four places in the UK Regional Competitiveness Index between 1997 and 2005, and therefore calls on the Executive to take concrete action to reverse our economic under-performance by cutting red tape, privatising Scottish Water, increasing investment in roads and public transport and specifying a date for the proposed cut in business rates."

09:40

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): The debate has been useful, interesting and thought provoking. I listened to Mark Ruskell's speech with some interest, but I pose a question about the Greens' treatment of capital. Perhaps their representative can deal with that issue when they sum up. I can see where their argument is coming from when it comes to a financial resource such as oil, but I wonder how they would account for renewable energy and nuclear energy, for example. That is a worthwhile discussion.

Although the subject of today's debate is of interest to me, the minister, the Greens, Murdo Fraser, Jim Mather and all the other members of the Parliament, it would not set the heather alight in a pub in Lairg or at the Lairg sheep sales. I want to return to an argument that I have made in the past and will make again in the future, which is that the situation is not as bad as the Opposition makes out. Of course there is room for improvement but, when I look at my constituency, I see progress. However, there are two fronts on which we could do something impressive.

The first of those is renewable energy. Members will be aware that there are proposals for harnessing tidal energy between Jim Wallace's constituency of Orkney and the mainland of Caithness. Although the proposals are in their infancy, that is an exciting project. It has been said that, with its tidal flow, the Pentland firth could become the Saudi Arabia of renewable energy. That will take investment and scientific research, but if we get there, we will lead the world. That takes me to my second theme—my favourite—which is that at all times Scotland should play to its strengths rather than its weaknesses. We have renewable energy potential—we have the wind and the tide and we can do things with them.

Another of my favourite subjects, which I mentioned during a workshop at the business in the Parliament conference, is that although food production in Scotland is a strength that we play to, there is more that we could do in that regard. I am thinking of home-grown meat, in particular,

and home-grown fruit and vegetables and the issue of eating produce that is in season. As I said in a debate two weeks ago, it is a fact that Scottish beef is produced to a higher standard than the South American beef with which it competes. Schemes for care of the animals and quality control are in place at all levels. If we promote and sell such produce, we will do our farmers and producers a great service.

Mr Ruskell: The point that the member makes about local food economies and local distribution is important, but does he not realise that the more we export and import food, the more that adds to GDP? The vision that he is in favour of does not fit with a sustainable economy.

Mr Stone: Although I respect the worthiness of what Mr Ruskell says—he makes an interesting point—his argument is somewhat sterile. Crofters, farmers, businesspeople and others in my constituency know full well whether or not they are doing well. They do not need statistics, even though such data have a value. We must adopt a commonsense approach and keep an eye on the situation.

I will give the Parliament an example of useful work that has been done and which could lead to great things. In recent years, the Prince of Wales has taken up residence in the Castle of Mey every year. For a good year and a half, he has single-handedly spearheaded the Mey selections brand. I will not go into detail, but that has enabled quality beef and lamb and other quality Scottish produce bearing the prince's hallmark to get into supermarkets. That is a fantastic achievement and much can be done on that in the future.

To sum up, we should play to our strengths and remember what we are good at. This country has quality products, both in food and in tourism.

The Presiding Officer: This is a very short debate, so I must keep members to a tight four minutes.

09:44

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): The Executive has numerous indicators, so why is such a crude one the top priority for government? If government's purpose is to work on behalf of all the people and to protect the natural resources on which we all depend, and if sustainable development is the big goal, why is GDP growth still at the top of the pile in the partnership agreement?

Beneath GDP growth, there are lower priorities. In the summer, the Executive published its "Indicators of Sustainable Development for Scotland: Progress Report 2005." Out of 24 social, economic and environmental indicators, only six

showed some evidence of positive progress. In spite of the minister's optimism, indicator 13, which is on renewable energy, has moved in the wrong direction. The number of children in workless households and the number of families that are assessed as homeless have increased in recent years.

Many indicators—including the numbers of people who suffer from depression, asthma, obesity and so on—are not yet included in the set that the Executive uses. The Executive's health strategy acknowledges the ever-expanding health gap between the rich and the poor. People who live in deprived areas are more than twice as likely to have a long-term illness and their life expectancy is 15 years less than that of people who live in affluent areas. The Institute for Public Policy Research has shown that the top 10 per cent have increased their share of wealth from 47 per cent to 54 per cent since Labour came to power in the UK. It has also shown that women are more likely to live in poverty. The rich and the poor live in different worlds. Poverty and the health gaps remain a blight on our society.

So much for GDP. For those members who believe in market-only solutions and the trickle-down effect, I point out that the evidence is not on their side.

Jeremy Purvis: Perhaps the member will remind us whether it is Green party policy to renationalise Scottish Power, Scottish Gas, Scottish and Southern Energy plc, British Telecom in Scotland, First ScotRail and all the bus companies. Would that not give considerably more money to the shareholders of those companies and bankrupt the country at the same time?

Shiona Baird: Perhaps the member should have stayed a bit longer at the Lib Dem conference when it debated the Royal Mail and what should happen to it.

According to Cardiff University, people's overall sense of well-being has hardly improved at all since the depression of the 1930s, despite decades of GDP growth. The GDP measure does not encompass the depletion of natural capital or the effect of development on our natural resources. It cannot assess poverty or people's quality of life, nor can it measure the extent of Scotland's ecological footprint on the world. If everyone in the world lived as we do in Scotland, we would need two more planets to support everyone. That is our ecological footprint and it is why even the Executive recognises the need for a 60 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions—not the paltry 7.7 per cent since 1990 that was announced with such enthusiasm yesterday.

The Executive's amendment implies that the priority is sustainable development. Why does the Executive not just say clearly that the priority is environmentally and socially sustainable development rather than GDP growth? In measuring Scotland's environmental and social progress, why not consider some of the emerging alternatives, such as the index of sustainable economic welfare? When will the Scottish Executive start measuring and prioritising what really matters? We need a measure of environmental, social and economic development. With that, we can start to build a better Scotland.

09:48

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): Presiding Officer, before you vacate the chair you might be relieved to hear that I have no intention of following the front bench's lead and descending into a sterile exchange of economic statistics. This is the first Green party debate in which I have had the pleasure of participating, not because I am one of the chamber's shrinking violets but because it is rare for the Greens to have a debate on their own terms. It is in that spirit that I would like to respond.

First and foremost, the Green movement calls on us to recognise our very temporary stewardship of the earth's resources, and I for one have no doubt that history will look favourably on the Greens' role in pinpointing issues that demand—or should demand—humanity's attention. In listening to today's headlines at 6 am, which is not my usual hour, I was struck by the signs that the Green movement is asking some of the right questions. In Scotland it is highlighting the issue of asylum seekers and globally it is highlighting the issue of global warming on a day when the United States is preparing for only its fourth category 5 hurricane.

I am not suggesting—nor would the Greens suggest—that they have a monopoly on conscience in politics. After all, we can go back as far as Moses to find people who had compassion for the exile or to the time of Noah to find people who worked to care for the earth's resources. However, the special and distinctive role of those of us who enter public life is not simply to care or even to prophesy, although both of those have their place. It is to devote our time and energy to come up with the right policy prescriptions.

The motion quotes favourably from Labour Party policy. Who can disagree with that? It calls for better measures of well-being. Again, who can disagree? It calls for a more innovative economic future for Scotland. Who can disagree? I return to the special challenge of politics, which is to deliver on the visions of the people. Yes, we can applaud the Greens for their role in putting issues such as climate change and the measurement of well-

being on the agenda, but in conscience we cannot follow them to their policy prescriptions.

Last night, I did my Green colleagues the honour of reading their party's manifestos for the previous Scottish and general elections. Their policies include the nationalisation of all Scottish utilities, as we heard from Jeremy Purvis this morning; an end to public-private partnerships, which are helping to build 300 new schools in Scotland; and a range of new Scottish taxes including corporate, personal and land value taxes. Most critically—I invite the Greens to reflect on this—their policies include their misguided protectionism and opposition to international trade agreements. Not only do those agreements give the poor the chance of trade not aid, but two thirds of Scotland's income depends on international trade. We will not enhance our GDP or well-being by attacking the basis of two thirds of our income.

I genuinely congratulate the Greens on calling their first-ever economic debate and I welcome their role in consciousness raising. They add to the Parliament, but I encourage them to think more deeply about the deliverability of sustainability. Perhaps—I say this as someone who worked for the Labour Party in the 1980s—they should think about abandoning once and for all the knee-jerk policy posturing of the old hard left, which continues to pollute some policymaking on their side. Yes, the stakes have never been higher, but our responsibility is to do more than simply to plan for the future. We also have to be willing to build it.

09:53

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): I did Mark Ballard the honour of reading his motion last night, but I am afraid that I never got round to the Green party manifestos. However, I read the motion and listened to Mark Ruskell's speech with interest.

As Jim Mather said, the Scottish National Party, too, has reservations about the reliability of GDP as the sole indicator of a country's growth and well-being. We hear a lot about sustainable development, which surely includes human development, and the fact that it should underpin all Government initiatives both nationally and internationally. Although the United Nations' human development reports update the eight millennium development goals annually, only one of those goals relates directly to the economy and it is about strengthening partnerships between poor countries and rich countries.

I looked at what the European Commission has been saying. The Lisbon European Council developed a set of structural indicators that are designed to measure progress towards the European Union's goal, which is:

"to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion."

That is the key. When we are trying to grow a country and its economy, that growth should be about quality of life.

Even the United Kingdom Government has examined closely different measures of economic growth and well-being. The Sustainable Development Commission has welcomed the UK Government's commitment to deliver new indicators to measure the nation's well-being. The commission is right to say that we need a radically different approach to measuring economic progress, because environmental and social goals should be included and jobs should be safeguarded. Income and GDP should not be the sole components of a nation's happiness. We all know that good health, stable families, meaningful work, secure neighbourhoods and strong communities are all vital components of personal and collective well-being.

The UK Government Cabinet Office has examined a study on life satisfaction as an example of an indicator of sustainable development. That works on the concept that increases in GDP—the traditional indicator—do not necessarily lead to greater quality of life for citizens. The Executive's amendment says that growing the economy is a top priority. I suggest that the population's well-being should be the top priority. Such matters can be considered in tandem. In the report that the UK Cabinet Office has considered, economic growth—if measured as GDP—looks good and shows a steady rise from 1970 to 1997. However, the life satisfaction figures are static. People are not necessarily happier and do not feel a greater sense of well-being just because GDP happens to look good. I would like that to be taken on board and I would like the minister to say whether the Scottish Executive has tapped into what the UK is doing in that research.

Everyone knows that everyone in the SNP believes in independence for Scotland.

Allan Wilson: Half of SNP members do.

Linda Fabiani: I do—truly and deeply.

My vision is of a radical approach in our country. Independence would allow us to measure our country's growth not only purely in economic terms, but in how our people feel and the well-being of our citizens. I urge all members to consider that for Scotland and its people and to move forward accordingly.

09:57

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): I sincerely hope that the Green party will not take Wendy Alexander's advice—I am sure that it will not—to become just like the Labour Party. The difficulty in politics today in Britain and in Scotland is that too many parties are just like Labour. Elections have such low turnouts and disengagement from the political process is so large because the parties are all the same. They say the same things and they stand for the same policies. It is important that the Greens and the Scottish socialists continue to hold the standard high for those who believe in a different way to organise our lives and in a different social and economic approach that places human beings and not profit at the heart of our society.

It is interesting that, according to all the latest statistics, GDP, gross national product and national output—the measure can be described in different ways—are up. The figures are 0.7 per cent in some research and 1.7 per cent in other research. Industrial output has increased. The problem is that the inequality-of-wealth gap has also increased, so the increase in industrial production and output in no way tackles the gross and obscene levels of inequality that scar our nation.

In April this year, a report in the *BMJ* said that the difference in life expectancy between Britain's rich and poor has not been as unequal as it is today since Victorian times. It is 2005, but the gap in life expectancy between rich and poor is that of Victorian times. That is the reality of the free-market philosophy that all the political parties apart from the Greens and the socialists adopt and promote.

We have a job on our hands to tackle an economic system that means that the life expectancy of a male in Glasgow is 11 years less than that of a male in east Dorset. The life expectancy of a female in Glasgow is 8.4 years less than that of a female in east Dorset. The poorest 10 per cent in Britain receive just 3 per cent of the total income that is produced throughout the UK, whereas the wealthiest 10 per cent consume 28 per cent of all the wealth. That is the fundamental problem that we must attack. If we are to raise sustainably the quality of life of all our citizens, we must redistribute the wealth that we produce and we must base measurements of our society's outputs on matters such as life expectancy, infant mortality and the ability for citizens to engage fully in life and in what others take for granted.

In the four minutes that I had for my speech, I am heartened that Lord Browne of BP has just made another £40. In a society that is protected by the new Labour Tories, the old Tories and the

SNP, individuals such as Lord Browne earn £15,000 a day, when 1.5 million Scots earn less than £15,000 a year. That is the inequality that we must tackle and that is why debates such as this are vital to show the difference between the approach of other parties and those of the Greens and socialists. We want to put people first before profit; the rest just want to continue to worship profit.

10:02

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): The turnout that Tommy Sheridan should worry about is the plummeting support for the Scottish socialists. To be frank, the thrust of his speech shows that the Scottish socialists' intent is to strangle rather than produce economic growth.

Perhaps the Greens are more savable than that. I noticed the careful construction of their motion, which is a little more cautious than some of the statements that Mark Ballard has made in the *Edinburgh Evening News* and which his colleagues have made elsewhere. It is important to understand whether the Greens oppose economic growth or believe that economic growth should be constructed slightly differently. Do they believe that economic growth is vital to produce jobs and improvements in society or that it is too high a price to pay? That issue is not well addressed by debates about whether GDP is the right measure.

Mark Ballard and his colleagues may wish to know that the Finance Committee has tried to pin down the Executive to say whether GDP is the chosen measure. We have not succeeded in doing that, so the Greens might want to examine that in relation to their motion's veracity.

I disagree a wee bit with some of what Wendy Alexander said. Fairly substantial progress has been made on developing better management of the economy in the direction of sustainability. I highlight the green jobs strategy, to which the Labour amendment refers. That strategy has been broadly welcomed by many who are involved in progressing a green agenda in its broadest, non-political sense—most recently the Sustainable Development Commission—as a good example of what can be done by bending economic policy to deliver more sustainable jobs, better initiatives for matters such as recycling and waste management and a better focus on making the best of the new tasks that we must undertake to improve our performance on climate change, recycling and other measures. I am talking about practical steps that the Executive has taken to deliver meaningful progress that will benefit the whole of Scotland—urban Scotland and rural Scotland. Taking a Scotland-wide pragmatic approach is important.

It seems to me that there are two levels of debate. There is a catcalling debate in which people shout about the general, broad principles of achieving growth. The Greens do not have a sensible case at that level. My constituents require jobs, and they now have more jobs than they had in the past. We must ensure in our economic strategy that employment is maintained and improved. There is also the micro approach. In creating the kind of jobs and the type of strategy that we want, we must be more friendly towards, and aware of, the possibilities of wave power, alternative energy sources, solar energy and the other forms of technology that will be required and will result in increasing economic benefits for the future.

Those are the practical steps that we must take, but they must be linked not to a messianic approach that says that there must be no growth, but to the pragmatic delivery of economic growth. We know that delivery of growth is associated with a series of social benefits, such as health improvement, better education and better services and support for our young people. All those things depend on growth, but balance is needed in our drive to achieve that growth. We need to be aware of green issues and to progress the green agenda, but we should not be driven by the wrong green approach, which can sometimes be seen in the statements of Green politicians.

10:06

Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): When I first read the motion, I wondered why it was needed. The Liberal Democrats do not believe in total reliance on GDP. Our manifesto states:

"Gross Domestic Product as a measure on its own does not convey the full impact on the wealth and quality of life of economic activity and, in particular, ignores the environmental degradation caused by some activities. Government measures must address this."

The coalition has proposed policies that take in the wider picture because we recognise that. The minister and Des McNulty mentioned the green jobs strategy, renewable energy targets and recycling improvements. We have spent money on policies that cut into economic deprivation and social disparity. All those policies have been implemented without deflecting from improving GDP. There is not an either/or situation, but a GDP plus position.

Shiona Baird said that we need a measure, but I can see Scotland sinking under measures. I suggest that we have enough measures. Jim Mather may not wear a hair shirt—he referred to Scotland wearing a hair shirt for 30 years—but his general pessimism about the economy must mean that he wears a scratchy semmit at least.

Murdo Fraser, in speaking to his amendment, seemed to be totally obsessed with GDP, which reinforces the view that the Tories may claim to know the cost of everything, but they singularly fail to recognise the value of wider objectives.

I thank Jamie Stone—who is not in the chamber at the moment—for raising the debate from the abstract and discussing the practicalities relating to where the country is. By playing to its strengths, the country can raise its GDP and achieve wider objectives.

Like Wendy Alexander, I read the Greens' manifesto—I did so at 7 o'clock and assure members that it is equally scary at that time of day—which should carry a warning that it might damage the country's wealth. If the policies and statements in the manifesto were to be carried through, that would seriously knock the Scottish economy. I will refer to three of those policies; the manifesto states that there would be a rise in fuel tax

"to reflect the real cost of transporting goods",

that the Greens would phase out nuclear power stations at the earliest opportunity and that they would halt completely all major trunk road building in Scotland. What would such policies do other than knock the economy? Perhaps the Greens want to move away from using GDP because such policies would adversely affect it.

Mark Ballard: Does the member understand that, as we heard in the debate in the chamber yesterday afternoon, to tackle climate change we must change our transport policy away from a reliance on polluting fossil fuels and that we must reflect on the real cost of using fossil fuels? We must recognise that high fuel taxes and high fuel prices are here to stay and make the transition to sustainable transport.

Mr Arbuckle: Mark Ballard has one advantage over me—he was a member of the Parliament before I was. However, I have picked up the fact that the coalition has been investing in wider public transport initiatives, which is how we are progressing our transport policy. Those initiatives are part of our sustainable policies. We are having the debate because the Greens are frightened of GDP as a measure and they want a more woolly, greeny measure in place.

10:11

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): Once again, the debate is too short for the problems of Scotland's economic policies to be explored fully. We heard Mark Ruskell speak eloquently in support of the motion, but the Conservatives think that he rather misses the point about GDP. It is not unreasonable to argue—as Mark Ruskell has done—that economic activity and output are an

insufficient yardstick by which to measure our country's success or failure in its broadest sense. However, it is a fundamental yardstick, however crude, which is widely understood and allows comparisons with other countries and economies. Currently, those comparisons are less than flattering for Scotland, as the Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, Allan Wilson, has admitted.

We can all talk about add-ons that are desirable in themselves, such as sustainability and social justice—as Shiona Baird and Linda Fabiani did—but they are deliverable only after taxes have been gathered and a certain level of GDP has been attained. To put things simply, we must first create a strong economy that delivers a level of taxation that allows us to provide better public services for the Scottish people, but as Jim Mather said, we are not doing that. Indeed, our quality of life has been damaged by the lack of growth in the Scottish economy. That is a problem not of the Green party's making, but of the Scottish Executive's making.

Murdo Fraser alluded to the intolerable burden of business rates. The Conservatives have constantly drawn that matter to the Parliament's attention over the past five years. Business rates are about to be abolished by Jack McConnell, who opposed doing so, but we all want to know when that will happen. The tax has not only cost our business communities £838 million since it was imposed, but it has almost certainly discouraged many potential investors from locating and investing in Scotland. Businessmen are risk takers, but they like to be made welcome and to feel welcome in the communities in which they seek to invest. It is regrettable that Scotland is not perceived as welcoming at the moment. All other things being equal, businessmen will not knowingly put themselves at a disadvantage by locating in an area in which it is difficult to do business. Sadly, Scotland falls into that category.

It has been alleged that the First Minister regards our leading businessmen and entrepreneurs as idiots. That is unhelpful, to say the least. If he did not call them idiots, he should say so. In addition, water charges on businesses are now so high that I am aware of several businesses that are under severe pressure as a result. It is simply not reasonable for our aged and decrepit water and sewerage infrastructure to be rebuilt off the back of Scottish businesses, and the business community certainly resents that being done. In particular, it resents being overcharged by £44 million per year, which the Executive has recently admitted has happened. The poor quality of the water and sewerage infrastructure to which I refer also acts as a brake on business development.

Transport links in Scotland are poorer than in other areas. The Institute of Directors recently described our transport network as a “national disgrace” and a “major drag on business”. However, I must welcome the completion of the M77 upgrade and the dramatic impact that that will have on the Ayrshire economy—I am certain that it will have such an impact.

It is important that the Parliament supports business development in every way that it can. The Parliament must shake off the perception that it is not business friendly and, in that respect, actions speak louder than words. We must appreciate that wealth creation must precede wealth redistribution and foster a climate that welcomes and understands the business community and its needs. As a result, I urge members to support the Conservative amendment.

10:14

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): In recent times we have heard a great deal of the blood-curdling phrase, “Scotland is the best wee country in the world”. To a large extent, this debate is about how we judge whether Scotland is the best wee country in the world.

I find it difficult to believe that we are the best wee country in the world when we have the highest rate of violence in the developed world. I find it difficult to believe that we are the best wee country in the world when the Executive brags that 25 per cent of our children live in poverty and that one third of our pensioners live on or near the breadline, when 300,000 people in Scotland are, for one reason or another, economically inactive and when we have one of the lowest gross domestic product growth rates in the UK and in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. It beats me how anyone can look at those statistics and conclude that we are the best wee country in the world. It seems to me that it is not Janette Anderson and Ian Graham who are the idiots; it is those who see those statistics and describe Scotland as the best wee country in the world.

I accept the Greens' argument that GDP is not the only measure of success. As Linda Fabiani pointed out, the annual UN human development index, which takes many factors into account, is a very good measure of economic performance and social well-being. If the Greens and others consider the countries that are at the top of the UN human development index, they will see that the same countries are at the top of the league for GDP growth and GDP per head. Conversely, the countries at the bottom end of the UN human development index tend to have lowest growth and GDP per head.

That tells me that there is a strong correlation between GDP growth, with all its flaws, and general human well-being. It is no accident that the countries that are at the top of the GDP league and the human development index have several common features. The first common feature is high investment in their economies; on average they invest 20 per cent of their GDP in their economy in education, health, manufacturing and other services. Secondly, most of them strive for full employment. Thirdly, they have far fairer societies. Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Austria have 2 per cent child poverty, not 25 per cent. There is a definite correlation with GDP. I agree with the Greens' criticism of using GDP as the only measure, but it is an indicator or proxy for social as well as economic well-being.

I have no time to develop my argument, but I will say this: had we access to the oil in the same way as Alberta and other places do, we would be top of the league instead of bottom. We could then say that we were one of the best—one of the best—wee countries in the world.

10:19

Allan Wilson: I would like to take the route that was set for the debate by my colleague—

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): He has forgotten his name.

Allan Wilson: Des McNulty. Des McNulty. I repeat it for anyone who failed to grasp the significance of what I said. Growing the economy is not just about statistical indicators going in the right direction. As Des McNulty said, it is about real people, jobs, businesses and ensuring that our actions in the chamber enable future generations to enjoy the best possible quality of life. Des McNulty articulated that today.

I do not disagree with what Alex Neil said about GDP as an indicator. It is easy to argue, as Mark Ruskell did, that GDP alone is not a comprehensive measure of a nation's prosperity because it does not measure the environmental and social changes that are associated with production. However, as Alex Neil said, no one has yet developed a better indicator that is universally accepted as the new standard. GDP is an internationally recognised measure and a GDP figure is produced by all OECD member countries. It therefore allows the level of activity of Scotland's economy to be compared with other developed countries.

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): Does the minister agree that knowing whether the well-being and welfare of our poorest people is increasing is more important than simply comparing ourselves with another country in the world?

Allan Wilson: I do; that is a point that others have made. In fact, from the Greens' perspective, I would have thought that it would be worrying that the point was made by Tommy Sheridan on their behalf. Economic growth is central to delivery of public services and social justice. That is the real dividing line between us. The Greens believe in environmental protection and environmental justice, but their policies on economic growth would lead us into an economic wilderness that would deny us the social justice and public services that we seek. Tommy Sheridan made that point and Des McNulty answered it. If the Greens want to go in the same direction as Tommy Sheridan's socialist party in popular opinion, they should follow his advice. If they do, that is where they will end up.

Tommy Sheridan: I invite the minister to confirm that it is not just the Greens and the SSP that support nationalisation of the railway network: the Labour Party does, too.

Allan Wilson: I believe in a mixed economy. There is a place for public sector ownership of our utilities in certain circumstances. I supported the revision of clause 4 of the Labour Party constitution because I do not believe that all the means of production, control, distribution and exchange should be in the public sector. I believe that that is one of the reasons why Tommy Sheridan is no longer in the Labour Party.

Wendy Alexander deprecated the fact that we had not got down to discussing sustainable development more generally, and that we had got into a sterile debate on statistics. I blame my Opposition colleagues for that. Every time I get up and try to debate the economy, I am confronted with one statistic or another that has usually been plucked from a small European country that the Opposition likes to compare us with while ignoring all the other statistics that are relevant to that country.

The Greens did that again today, so I remind them of my advice to them. They picked one sustainable development indicator—renewable energy—and pointed out that it was going in the wrong direction. However, it is doing so because the proportion of renewable energy that we sourced from hydropower in the year in question had reduced because there had been a reduction in precipitation during that year. In other words, there had been less rain and snow. Hydroelectricity generation fluctuates in direct proportion to the prevalence of snow or rain in our climate. Although I can do a lot in this chamber and Alex Neil might claim that independence is the solution to all our problems, not even he could claim that the Government can influence the amount of precipitation in our climate.

Our trend for energy generation is on target to allow us to fulfil our objective of providing 18 per cent of energy from renewable sources by 2010 and to meet our ambitious target of providing 40 per cent from renewable sources by 2020. Members must look at the overall picture rather than pick out individual statistics to suit their arguments.

10:25

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): I am pleased to be able to close this interesting debate, which is the first Green party debate on the economic future of Scotland. What more important thing can the Parliament do than hold the Executive to account on its top priority of increasing GDP, and on why it chose that as the top priority?

There has been wide recognition that GDP is a poor measure for assessing how well Scotland is doing. Murdo Fraser acknowledged much of the truth of the opening remarks of my colleague, Mark Ruskell, and Jim Mather highlighted some important things that GDP does not measure. Jamie Stone went so far as to say that crofters in his constituency need no statistics to know how well how they are doing and Tommy Sheridan issued an excellent clarion call on the need for Government priorities that put people before profit.

The debate has been filled with interesting tangents. I agree completely with Jim Mather on the need for an office for national statistics because if discussion of GDP or any other statistic is not to be futile, we need a firm basis for calculation of statistics.

Along with the rest of my Green colleagues, I was struck by Wendy Alexander's biblical analogies, which reminded us of our long history of care for other humans and care for the environment. Like her, I was a member of the Labour Party in the 1980s because I wanted to make a real difference to people's lives, to improve the lives of the many and to improve the environment; unlike her, I have stayed true to that vision.

Ms Alexander: Will the member take an intervention?

Mark Ballard: Wendy Alexander's second point—she will probably want to intervene again after I say this—was that trade is always good. However, like GDP, raw trade figures are purely a measure of cash flow, but do not tell us much about whether what is happening is positive or negative. The assumption that trade is always good is based on a purely economic vision of society that does not include the wider social and environmental impacts of trade. Rather than say that trade is good or trade is bad, we need to support positive trade. We need fair trade, not unfair trade.

Ms Alexander: The policy position of the Green party is that trade is bad. Given that two thirds of this nation's wealth is dependent on trade with other nations, should not the Greens move forward and learn the lesson that trade rather than aid is, as all of history shows, the way in which peoples of all countries prosper?

Mark Ballard: We want fair trade, not unfair trade. We do not want the World Trade Organisation, which biases world trade in favour of rich countries and multinationals. I support fair trade; I will always oppose unfair trade.

Jamie Stone asked me to clarify in my summing up the difference between renewable energy generation and energy generation that is based on finite resources such as uranium or fossil fuels. The difference is clear: the latter depletes our natural capital, such as our declining stock of oil in the North sea, whereas the former does not. However, that key recognition is not included in measurements of GDP.

Andrew Arbuckle explained that his party's policy is quite similar to that of our motion, as his party has strong criticisms of GDP. However, when such policies are applied to Scotland or come from the Scottish Green Party, it seems that the Liberal Democrats think that they are woolly nonsense. That is a classic example of how the Liberal Democrats tell one story south of the border but, when they are actually in power, all their policies go out of the window.

Unfortunately, we heard some of the same old attacks that are repeated whenever we question whether GDP should be the number 1 priority. A classic example was given by Des McNulty, who said that the Greens are against growth. I remind Parliament that it is not how big it is, but what we do with it that matters. As Mark Ruskell argued, the key is to discuss the quality of economic development, not merely the quantity. It makes no sense to want growth for its own sake, so we should quantify what growth we want. It would be as daft to say—as the Scottish Executive does—that we are always for growth as it would be to argue that we are always against growth. We should measure the things that matter, such as progress and positive development, rather than simply GDP.

A slightly more sophisticated argument was advanced by, among others, Murdo Fraser and Allan Wilson. They said that growth is necessary for providing the job opportunities that will help the poor out of poverty and for producing the revenue to pay for environmental protection. However, that assumes that there is no contradiction between growth and the other objectives. We should remember that GDP does not take account of natural capital depletion, rising levels of poverty, income inequality or regional disparities.

Mark Ruskell pointed out in his opening speech that GDP increases can be obtained from activities that impose much larger environmental costs than any revenue benefits that they might produce. Members need only ask any community that has been blighted by opencast mining whether the limited number of jobs are worth the noise, pollution and disruption. Des McNulty mentioned the Executive's green jobs strategy. That is all very well, but where is its ungreen jobs strategy? Where is the Executive's strategy for dealing with jobs in the polluting industries that have a negative total impact on Scotland?

It is possible for GDP increases to increase regional disparities. For example, we can have overheating in Edinburgh or Inverness to the detriment of the rest of the country. Such overheating is not measured by GDP, but it can lead to wider social problems and affect housing costs and transport infrastructure. GDP tells us nothing about that. It is also possible to achieve GDP increases that serve to widen economic disparities. As Shiona Baird pointed out, GDP increases can mean that the rich get richer while the poor stay poor. As we have seen in Louisiana, the USA's relatively high level of GDP hides a huge array of income disparities.

Let us measure what matters. We should use some of the sophisticated new tools that are available for measuring how society is doing. Like Wales, we should investigate indexes of sustainable welfare. If we want a strong economy, a strong society and a healthy environment, we must measure what matters and end our obsession with GDP.

Asylum Seekers (Children)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-3323, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on children of asylum seekers.

10:33

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): Today, we bring the debate about children of asylum seekers to the attention of Parliament. This is an appeal to all members to express their concern about how children in Scotland are being treated by the United Kingdom Government. We welcome this morning's news that the First Minister will at last stand up to the Home Office. What he said had a remarkably serendipitous congruence with the subject of today's debate.

Members from almost all parties—Labour, the Scottish National Party, the Scottish Liberal Democrats, the Scottish Socialist Party, the Scottish Green Party—as well as the independents have recently signed motions in the names of Patrick Harvie and Bill Butler on the scandalous treatment of children during their removal and deportation from Scotland. I am happy to acknowledge that the SNP and Executive amendments are very much in the spirit of our motion.

Today's debate raises the issue of how we treat children, which should be a matter of concern to us all. What treatment of children we tolerate is an ethical issue that transcends party-political boundaries. The welfare of children in this country is too precious an issue to be left simply to party politics. However, political will is required, so the Scottish Parliament must take a stand and voice its concern.

Dawn raids by large numbers of immigration officers and police in body armour seem to be becoming standard practice during removal of vulnerable families with children. Immigration officers in bullet-proof vests waken children in their beds. Parents are handcuffed in front of their children and families are removed by van, on long journeys to detention centres that are prisons in everything but name. That is a traumatic experience.

In the recent case of the Vucaj family from Drumchapel, it was reported that 16 immigration officers kicked in the family's front door at 6 o'clock in the morning and that the children's father was handcuffed in front of them. It was also reported that a family member under the age of 18—a child under the terms of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child—was handcuffed. Eye-witnesses said that the children were still in their pyjamas as they left. How can we

begin to imagine the fear and distress that that caused the Vucaj family?

Outwith politics, people in civic society have brought the matter to the attention of politicians in the Scottish Parliament and elsewhere. Kathleen Marshall, Scotland's commissioner for children and young people, has described such practices as terrorising vulnerable families and has called their treatment "inhumane". Scottish children are voicing concern about and taking action against deportations. Hundreds of pupils from Drumchapel High School—some of whom are present today, with support from their teachers—have organised petitions opposing the deportation of their classmates and school friends. What must it be like to go to school one day to find that one's friend has just disappeared? Teachers have described the impact of that as being almost as serious as the impact of a bereavement in the school community. From public bodies to children's organisations and school friends, there is recognition that scandalous immigration practices are causing trauma and distress, and that they blatantly disregard children's rights.

When Scottish society expresses such profound concern, it is right to expect the Scottish Parliament to do likewise. It is right that we should debate this issue in Parliament today. Parties across the political spectrum take different positions on the UK asylum and immigration policy. The Greens regard the present system as a disgrace.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): Does Robin Harper agree that the intervention of the schoolchildren in Drumchapel has shamed political leaders in Scotland and that those children have shown much more compassion than the people in positions of power?

Robin Harper: It is entirely wonderful that the children in Drumchapel took the actions that they did. I am certain that, as Tommy Sheridan says, those actions have had the desired effect—at least, the beginnings of the desired effect.

Clearly, as a result of UK policy, more and more families are being subjected to inhumane treatment. In that policy, there is little focus on the rights and needs of children and it is nowhere near being consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We recognise that in the devolved context the Scottish Executive has no direct responsibility for operation of the asylum and immigration system. However, it has responsibility for the welfare of children, for schools and for working with the UK Government to report on compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In its amendment, the Executive clearly acknowledges those three responsibilities.

The matter that we bring to Parliament today is undoubtedly related to the welfare of children in Scotland, so exactly when does the Scottish Executive acknowledge responsibility? When does its responsibility towards vulnerable children end? Is it when the asylum decision is made? Is it when there is a knock on the door at dawn? Is it when the door is kicked in? Is it when the handcuffs are on? Is it when children are being dragged from their home in their pyjamas? At what stage does the Executive hand over the welfare of those children to the UK Government? Does it believe that it is handing it over to people who respect the children's rights and their own responsibilities under the UNCRC? At some stage in the process, the Executive clearly hands over responsibility to the UK Government. When is that?

The Scottish Parliament has a responsibility here. The Executive has made it clear in its legislative programme that one of its future priorities

"is the need to protect the most vulnerable in our society."—[*Official Report*, 7 September 2005; c 18882.]

The First Minister placed children at the top of the programme and made a commitment to

"ensure that no child is left behind or held back"—[*Official Report*, 6 September 2005; c 18773.]

All children in Scotland deserve that commitment from the First Minister. We should not and surely cannot pick and choose which vulnerable children to protect. I urge the Executive to pull out all the stops to ensure that we provide full and proper protection for all vulnerable children living in Scotland, especially the vulnerable children of asylum seekers.

I move,

That the Parliament acknowledges the trauma experienced by the children of asylum seekers when families are removed for deportation and the impact this has on school communities; believes that practices such as those reportedly used against the Vucaj family in Glasgow, including dawn raids, handcuffing of children and the removal of children by large groups of officers in uniform and body armour, are unnecessary and cause fear and distress to the children concerned; affirms its support for the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which states that governments should protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence; recognises that, while the Scottish Executive has no direct responsibility for the operation of the asylum and immigration system, it is responsible for the welfare of children, for schools and for working with the UK Government to report on compliance with the UNCRC; commends the First Minister for his aspiration "to ensure that no child is left behind or held back", and calls on him to give the greatest possible urgency to realising that aspiration for the most vulnerable children in Scotland who include those facing detention and removal.

10:40

The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Robert Brown): I am very pleased that in this important debate there is an Executive amendment that can be supported with considerable enthusiasm by both Liberal Democrat and Labour back-bench colleagues. It is a mark of the growing maturity of the Parliament that we are able to debate issues of this nature, which are very much on the reserved-devolved divide, and to do so in a confident and responsible manner. Colleagues will be aware, given my previous convenership of the Scottish Parliament cross-party group on human rights, that the issue is very close to my heart.

As Robin Harper suggested, no cause is more central to the vision of the Scottish Executive and Parliament than the creation of opportunity for our children and young people to fulfil their potential in life. Day by day on our television screens, we see graphic pictures of horror and suffering from around the world, many involving children. Many members took part in the make poverty history march through Edinburgh on 2 July. Some of us, including me, have demonstrated at Dungavel. Our motivation stemmed in large part from natural and proper concerns for children—children who, with a different throw of life's dice, could have been our own children. Those children have been caught up in issues over which they have no control and which are often caused by catastrophic world conflicts that lead to huge movements of people around the globe.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): I, too, welcome the initiative that the Executive has taken in lodging its amendment. However, I plead for additional lobbying of the Home Secretary regarding the possibility that children of Iraqis are to be sent back with their families to Iraq at a time when the websites of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights say that Iraq is an unsafe country. Can we keep them here until the country has become safe?

Robert Brown: I will come to that point in due course.

It is entirely right that we debate the highly emotive issues of immigration and asylum, and that we do so against the background of the framework of human rights that is provided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and of international treaties on refugees. However, let us be clear about the context legally, constitutionally and democratically.

Parliament and the Scottish Executive have clear responsibilities under the terms of the Scotland Act 1998. We have responsibility for provision of services to dispersed asylum seekers

and to refugees, and for their integration into our society. We are responsible for ensuring that asylum seekers' stay in Scotland is as beneficial as possible to them and to communities and that, where their cases are successful, they can move into employment and fully participate in Scottish life. There is general recognition that the Scottish Executive has done that with great success and sensitivity. Our one Scotland ethos is working. It is clear that the children of asylum seekers have integrated exceptionally well during their time in Scotland, and we should be proud of that. It is not just a positive experience for the asylum seekers, but an enriching one for the other children in the schools that asylum seekers' children attend, and for their teachers.

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): Will the minister give way?

Robert Brown: I am sorry, but I cannot take any more interventions because of the limited time that is available to me.

We have commissioned research, which is due for completion in 2006, to examine the experiences of the children of asylum seekers in our schools and to identify examples of good practice to be shared among education authorities. Recently, we produced an education guide for asylum seekers and refugees, which is available in all community languages and informs them of what to expect on arrival, how to prepare and where support and assistance can be obtained. Such initiatives are within the Scottish Executive's responsibilities and are a good example of what we can do to ensure that asylum seekers' children have the best possible experience in schools in Scotland. Robin Harper was right to talk about the views of classmates at Drumchapel High School in that context.

However, the responsibility for immigration and asylum policy, and for any changes which should be made, lies clearly with Westminster. This is not a legal or constitutional quibble: it is a basic issue of accountability and democracy. United Kingdom ministers are responsible for and accountable for the policies and official actions in the area. Scottish ministers are not, and it makes a travesty of the home-rule settlement that was approved so overwhelmingly by the Scottish people in the referendum of 1997 to try to suggest otherwise. That does not mean that the Executive is gagged on matters of asylum and immigration, particularly where children are affected. There is on-going dialogue with the Home Office at official and ministerial levels, which we must keep open and uninhibited and which works to the benefit of those who are affected. There is a responsibility on everyone involved—particularly the Home Office, which determines and runs the system—to lessen the effects of decisions on children.

Equally, I believe that throughout this Parliament there is a belief that, in the vast majority of cases, failed asylum seeker families do not pose either a security threat or a serious risk of flight. Many of us have serious concerns about reports of the way in which some removals are carried out. I cannot comment on individual cases, but I am determined that in every case that involves children we will ensure that the Home Office works closely with services for children and young people prior to removal of the family. We will convey the concerns that are expressed in today's debate to the responsible ministers in London.

Tommy Sheridan: Will the minister give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, but the minister is winding up.

Robert Brown: The Executive amendment is intended to be one around which Parliament can unite: it is practical, helpful and focuses not on tendentious or headline-seeking rhetoric, but on areas in which the Scottish Parliament and the Executive have a legitimate interest and can expect to make a difference. I very much hope, in the spirit that Robin Harper moved the motion, that the Parliament will support the Executive amendment.

I move amendment S2M-3323.2, to leave out from "believes" to end and insert:

"affirms its support for the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which states that governments should protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence; recognises that, while the Scottish Executive has no direct responsibility for the operation of the immigration and asylum system, it is responsible for the welfare of children, for schools, and for working with the UK Government to report on compliance with the UNCRC; commends the substantial work done in Scotland to ensure the effective education and inclusion of the children of asylum seekers; believes that, in the vast majority of cases, failed asylum seeker families do not pose either a security threat or a serious risk of flight; calls on Scottish ministers to give the greatest possible urgency to realising their aspirations for the most vulnerable children in Scotland, including those facing detention and removal, and urges them to continue discussions with the Home Office with a view to agreement that the Home Office will work closely with services for children and young people before the removal of any family and to convey to the Home Office the widespread concerns about practices such as so-called 'dawn raids', handcuffing of children, and the removal of children by large groups of officers in uniform and body armour."

10:46

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I will speak to the SNP amendment, but also in support of the motion.

I note the terms of the Executive's amendment and have heard what the Executive has said on the matter—it is ridiculous. The Parliament has been debating the issue for years and it would be

ridiculous to go overboard about a last-minute Jack fix-it. These people have been suffering for years. The issue has been debated over and over in the chamber and it is ridiculous to expect Parliament, in the words of the amendment, to welcome the Executive acting with "the greatest possible urgency". What has been happening for all these years? The Executive's amendment urges ministers to continue discussions on a protocol. Come on—let us get into the real world and what has been happening to families day in, day out in Scotland and elsewhere, which Robin Harper graphically described. The Executive's amendment is a fix-it that is too late.

The motion raises two issues that require to be addressed. The first is the morality of the deportation of asylum seekers in the first place when their application fails under a very harsh UK regime that makes dubious decisions about whether people will be penalised or victimised for their political views when they return. The second issue is that the regime distinguishes between asylum seekers and economic refugees. That is done in a country that has had more people go abroad as economic migrants than any other in the world: more than 5 million people of Scots descent are elsewhere. This is a different nation with different priorities and a different history.

How does that regime square with Jack McConnell's speech to the Parliament on the fresh talent initiative? He said:

"By 2009, Scotland's population will fall below the symbolic 5 million level. By 2027, there could be ... a quarter of a million fewer people of working age in Scotland. ... Population decline is serious."—[*Official Report*, 25 February 2004; c 5940.]

These people have children who are at school here, would go on to university here and would work here. They are the very people whom we need. I cannot see how the current regime squares with the First Minister's so-called obligation to the fresh talent initiative.

Robin Harper referred to the treatment of asylum seekers. Issues have arisen previously. The commissioner for children and young people stamps her feet and shouts. She is a wonderful woman, but she is toothless on the issue. She has no powers to do anything, although she has asked for such powers. I ask the Parliament to re-examine the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2003 to investigate what powers we could give to that wonderful person who is trying to champion the rights of children.

The same situation occurs with respect to the role of the reporter to the children's panel. My amendment refers both to the commissioner for children and young people and to the reporter to the children's panel. I have had a lot of

communication about the matter because, through the freedom of information legislation, I found out about a case in which six children had been deported from Scotland while they were subject to an investigation by the reporter to the children's panel. When I asked ministers how that had happened, there was confusion all round. I received letters from Peter Peacock and Malcolm Chisholm. I also received answers from Wendy Alexander and from the First Minister, but nobody could explain to me why children who were under investigation by the reporter to the children's panel were deported before the investigations had been concluded. Those children had been subject to reservations under various sections of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, which took into account the fact that they were

"likely ... to suffer unnecessarily; or ... be impaired seriously in ... health or development, due to a lack of parental care"

or were

"likely to become, a member of the same household as a person in respect of whom an offence"

has been committed. The offence that is referred to is sexual offences against the children. Those children were sent back with the same people while the case was under investigation. What did the ministers here know about that? Nothing, because London paid no attention to the jurisdiction of the reporter to the children's panel and it pays no attention to what the commissioner for children and young people says. It will also pay no attention to the Executive's wishy-washy amendment.

I move amendment S2M-3323.1, to insert at end:

"and, separately, calls on the UK Government to give due regard to the different child protection measures in Scotland, in particular the remit of the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the jurisdiction of the Reporter to the Children's Panel."

10:50

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I have chosen not to speak about details of the experiences of the families mentioned in the Green party's motion; instead, I will keep to the general issues.

We will support the Executive's amendment as we feel that it addresses the real problems that are faced by asylum seekers and their families in Scotland. We will look for action in the fullness of time, not only promises.

We support the condemnation of

"so-called 'dawn raids', handcuffing of children, and the removal of children by large groups of officers in uniform and body armour."

Although that approach may be appropriate for other police operations, it certainly cannot be

justified when, as Robert Brown has said, there is no security threat or serious risk of absconding. Although immigration is reserved to the Westminster Government, we in this Parliament should fully embrace and accept our responsibilities towards children and families in Scotland in respect of child protection, welfare and education.

It is surely a matter of concern that the recent report by HM chief inspector of prisons expressed disappointment that the previous recommendation that there should be independent assessments of the welfare of children at Dungavel had not been implemented. The report was based on an unannounced inspection of Dungavel in December last year. Although the report commends some progress at the centre, it highlights the need for urgent remedial action on health care. It may be more difficult to provide appropriate educational provision for all children, particularly those who stay for a short period, but the provision of health care and vaccine protection is essential.

Robert Brown: It might be of interest to Mary Scanlon and to the Parliament to know that the Home Office policy since December 2004, subsequent to that inspection, has been that families should not normally be detained at Dungavel for more than 72 hours. Welfare assessment protocols are in place with South Lanarkshire Council for any child who may be detained for longer than 21 days. On 15 September 2005, there were no children detained at Dungavel, as was the case when I visited Dungavel in the spring.

Mary Scanlon: I thank the minister for that interesting information.

For educational provision, the extent and appropriateness of addressing a child's unique needs must depend on the length of detention. The inspection report states:

"The learning provision for children was deficient and required urgent attention."

Perhaps events have overtaken the report, but it is worth quoting because action was not taken as recommended.

The report also recommended that there should be

"an effective system for assessing and recording children's educational achievements, and for exchanging information with schools."

I hope that action will be taken.

I highlight the need for child protection training and enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks for staff who are in contact with children at Dungavel. I seek an assurance from the minister that appropriate action has been taken.

The fact that families stay so long in centres such as Dungavel is indicative of the chaos that the current Government has created within our immigration system. Instead of offering a safe haven to those who are most in need, the current system appears to have increased illegality. Desperate individuals have been forced into the hands of people smugglers and, when they reach Britain, they are open to exploitation in the underground economy. However, as the real and responsible Opposition party in the chamber, we welcome the Executive's response and the action that it has today stated it will take. We will support the Executive's amendment.

10:55

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): In the debate on asylum seekers in the Parliament in September 2003, my friend Robert Brown said:

"This is an important parliamentary occasion in which what we say in the chamber can enhance or diminish the Scottish Parliament."—[*Official Report*, 11 September 2003, c 1591.]

I hope that many members will agree that Robert Brown's motion that day, which allowed parties to coalesce around it, should be commended, as should his approach to the subject. The way in which the Parliament responds to sensitive, complex and emotive ethical and moral issues always presents a test for us.

In an island country with no internal controls on movement across the border between Scotland and England, it is sensible that immigration and asylum matters are reserved to the UK Government. It is not the job of the Scottish Parliament to review the asylum and immigration policy of the UK Government, but we have a constitutional right to debate and speak up for Scotland. The context in which I will express my views and those of my Liberal Democrat colleagues is one in which far too many people are detained unnecessarily and for far too long in removal centres. There are many alternatives to detention, including the use of tagging or voice recognition and the requirement to report daily to a police station.

Although I support the Executive's amendment, which strikes the correct balance between establishing principles and recognising the work of the devolved Government, and although progress has been made this year on detention centres, I hold to the view that, where children are detained without limit of time at Dungavel or at Harmondsworth, Oakington and Tinsley immigration removal centres in England, they are held in contravention of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by the UK Government but from which it has a reservation on immigration matters.

The convention decreed that

"childhood is entitled to special care and assistance"

and that the child

"should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding".

Article 3 of the convention states:

"the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration."

In the past, as Robert Brown said, the Executive parties lodged separate motions and amendments on subjects like this. I am pleased that the Executive's position today is more robust. It is explicit in setting out our international obligations and representing the basic tenets of the Liberal Democrat approach.

Linda Fabiani: Will the member give way?

Jeremy Purvis: I hope that the member will forgive me, but I have only four minutes. Our time is limited this morning.

Liberal Democrats across the United Kingdom have argued consistently that children should not be held in removal centres that are designed only for adults, as those centres are inappropriate for children. We have reports from HM chief inspector of prisons for England and Wales, HM inspectorate of probation and HM chief inspector of prisons for Scotland. Only last month, we had a savage report on the holding centres at Dover, Gatwick and London city, which stated that those centres were inadequate. We have supported the use of other measures when families are removed from the United Kingdom. However, it is insufficient as much as it is ineffectual in ensuring that the rights of children are protected that the Home Office's current practices are continuing.

Within the broad framework of the commitments that were made in the partnership agreement to aid the integration of refugees, services in devolved areas such as language training, community integration, health care and education are provided. Inevitably, when those services are effective and children are integrated into the community—as can be argued in the case of the Vucaj family—it is harder for a family when a judgment is made that they should return to their home country. At each step of the way, it is incumbent on all Government agencies to approach asylum and immigration controls in a humane way and to have more accurate and reliable information. Equally, it is incumbent on the immigration service and the Home Office to recognise the deep concerns of the Scottish Parliament on the issue.

The issue is not an easy one; it is not a black-and-white one that can be solved straight away. Currently, nearly 6,000 asylum seekers are living

in Glasgow. The issue is not a small one nor is it easy to address. The Executive's amendment, around which I hope the Parliament will coalesce, sends out the right signals from the Parliament that the interests of the child are at the centre of all our policies.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Dr Elaine Murray. I apologise for not calling you earlier, Dr Murray. You have four minutes.

10:59

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer; your apology is accepted. I am also grateful to "Good Morning Scotland" for advising me this morning of the Executive's policy on the issue. I was pleased to hear it. When I read through the Green party motion, I did not find a great deal in it with which I could disagree. I, too, was shocked to hear the report on the way in which the Vucaj family were removed from their home in Glasgow—a move that involved an 18-year-old young man being handcuffed as if he were a violent criminal and his 13-year-old sister being removed in her pyjamas.

As soon as I became aware of it, I signed Bill Butler's motion on the subject. I also congratulate the schoolchildren who supported the family in the way that they did. If the reports are correct—and there has been no real denial—the officials who carried out the operation did not act in accordance with the statement on the removal of failed asylum seekers that a Home Office spokesperson made, which I found on the BBC website. The statement said:

"This is always done in the most sensitive way possible, treating those being removed with courtesy and dignity."

Clearly, that did not happen in this case and the failure to do so should be investigated. Advice and guidance should be issued on how to deal appropriately with families whose asylum application has been refused.

However, we need to acknowledge that most people in this country believe in controlled immigration and asylum policies. I get far more representations from constituents who think, mistakenly, that we are too soft on asylum and immigration than I do from people who are concerned that we are too tough. Unfortunately, asylum seekers are often exposed to prejudice and racism. Often, that is fuelled by inaccurate reporting in the section of the press that tends to be of the more conservative disposition. If the UK does not have an open-doors policy—for which, as I said, there is little support in this country—we have to find a suitable mechanism to deal with cases where asylum is refused.

We also have to recognise that, as some asylum seekers have been in this country for many years, the circumstances in their country of origin may have changed and may now be safe. However, the memories of the asylum seekers will be of the country as it was when they left. They may need reassurance—perhaps from the consulate of their country of origin—that things have changed. They may also need some form of assistance and counselling.

Linda Fabiani: Will the member give way?

Dr Murray: I am sorry, but I do not have much time. I would give way if I could.

Four and a half years ago, I removed my children from their school in Prestwick to a school down in Dumfries. My two younger children were distraught beyond my expectations about having to leave their school friends and move 60 miles away from their home. Imagine the situation of the child of an asylum seeker who may have been in Scotland for many years. They will have been educated in this country and have little memory of the schooling and other aspects of the country from which they came. They will also have become used to speaking in English with their school friends, yet they will be sent back to a country where they do not speak the language. They will probably never see their Scottish friends again and may completely lose contact with them. People in those circumstances need to be treated with understanding, sensitivity, compassion and support and not with handcuffs or body armour.

On "Good Morning Scotland", Patrick Harvie asked when the UK Government takes responsibility, as did Robin Harper in the chamber. The Government takes responsibility at the time at which the asylum application is refused. I believe that Scottish Executive agencies have an important role to play in supporting those families as they prepare for their return to their country of origin. We need to focus on the ways in which we can help and support those families. We do not accept that people should be thrown out of the country as if they are criminals.

11:03

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): The tone of the debate was set by Robin Harper who, in an eloquent speech, spoke about the fundamentals of the subject. The fundamental aspect of the debate is about the fundamental values that define our society and transcend religion and party politics, which those of us in the fortunate and privileged position of having been elected to the chamber have a duty to uphold.

At the moment, it is de rigueur to be critical of the United States of America. Indeed, I have taken part in debates in which I have criticised the

actions of the US Government. However, one has only to look at the constitution of the United States to realise that its founding fathers got many things right. One of the things that they got right is that some matters are self-evidently true. Some values are simply self-evident; they transcend moral codes—whether the one on the tablets that Moses brought down or others—and are self-evident to mankind. Some things are simply right and other things are simply wrong.

We live in a democracy and civic society through which the rule of law permeates. In a just society, what is important is how we treat not just the powerful and the rich but the weak and the powerless. Fundamentally, the debate is about the values of our society. It is about how we wish to define ourselves and how we wish to be seen by others. Frankly, I think that the situation is shameful. I do not wish to go into immigration policy or the particular circumstances in detail—they have been enunciated much more eloquently by others—but what took place and is taking place in Glasgow is shameful.

The Executive's position is untenable. I was happy to march with Robert Brown under the banner "Not in our name" when we were opposing what was self-evidently wrong—a war in Iraq without backing from the United Nations. What is happening to asylum-seeking families should not take place in our name. The fact that what is happening is fundamentally morally wrong and against the creeds and codes of all in society has not changed; the only thing that has changed is that Robert Brown is now in ministerial office. He is trying to defend the indefensible, rather than standing up and saying that it is fundamentally wrong and refusing to accept it.

We welcome the Executive's shift to saying that it will take action, but when will it do so? When ministers are successful in an election and are elected to office, they are given responsibility, which brings with it rights and obligations.

Robert Brown: Does Mr MacAskill accept that the UK Government is accountable and has a democratic mandate in this area? It holds the keys to the various institutions. Should Kenny MacAskill not address his concerns to the UK Government, rather than pursue this excessive constitutional matter?

Mr MacAskill: No. I stand four-square behind Kathleen Marshall. Some things are self-evidently wrong. Even Dr Murray touched on that. The situation is simply untenable. To seek to justify or support such things is unsustainable. Ministers are given an opportunity when they are elected to power. They have a duty to stand up and act. The Executive's position is to pass the buck and say, "It's nothing to do with us," but that is fundamentally unacceptable. Ministers have it

within their power not to go down that route, but they choose to do so.

We need the Executive to stand up for the fundamental values that have been enunciated by political parties, the churches and the children's commissioner, and to represent what we believe is fundamentally right about our society. We do not need the Executive's limp-wristed, hand-wringing position that it will do its best and will go once more cap in hand to London to say, "Please don't do this." What is happening is fundamentally wrong and should not be happening.

Robert Brown marched under the banner "Not in our name", but he should now be taking action on something that is fundamentally wrong and goes against the tenets of our society. He is in power. He must act.

11:07

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): I congratulate Green party members on calling this debate, which is timely and important. The motion is thoughtful and couched in the language of practical politics, for which they deserve the chamber's thanks.

I welcome the young people in the gallery from Drumchapel High School in my constituency. Their efforts on behalf of their friends Nimet and Saida Vucaj and the Vucaj family have been exemplary. Those new and indigenous young Scots who have organised a petition that has already attracted hundreds of signatures—as they did successfully in March on behalf of the Murselaj family—are fine examples of the philosophy behind the Scottish Executive's one Scotland, many cultures campaign. My earnest hope, which I am sure is shared by every member, is that their efforts, along with those of school staff, the churches, Positive Action in Housing and hundreds of ordinary Scots, will prove successful and the Vucaj family will be returned to their home here in Scotland. I accept that the decision lies with the Home Office, but I hope that at the very least the decision is made to grant a stay of removal pending a full case review.

As a Glasgow city councillor, I was party to the decision to welcome asylum-seeker families and offer them refuge in my city. That was the correct decision to make and I am proud that my city took it. In the years since, the Executive has had, in co-operation with council colleagues, a good record in accommodating asylum seekers, assisting them in the process of integration and ensuring that they have the facilities and resources that they require. I congratulate the Executive on investing more than £2 million in integration projects and language classes; on persuading the Scottish Legal Aid Board to offer expert advice and

representation to asylum seekers; on establishing the Scottish refugee integration forum; on introducing measures to integrate asylum seekers' children in schools; and on trebling core funding for the Scottish Refugee Council. Those practical measures assist and positively welcome to our country new Scots and those who seek to become new Scots, and we can take some small pride in them.

However, none of us can be proud of the way in which the Vucaj family—and before them the Murselaj family—were forcibly evicted from their home in Scotstoun in a dawn raid on 13 September by a 16-strong immigration snatch squad. None of us can be proud of an episode in which an 18-year-old boy is handcuffed by one of those officers and the youngest child is removed in her pyjamas. Such a procedure is utterly unacceptable and must be ended, which is why I am heartened and encouraged by the minister's amendment, which urges the Executive to liaise with its Westminster ministerial counterparts to agree a protocol to deal in a much more sensitive and civilised way with the children of asylum-seeking families who are facing detention and removal. I am also encouraged that discussions will take place to end practices such as dawn raids and the handcuffing and removal of children by large groups of officers in body armour.

I ask the minister also to consider opening up a dialogue with our partners in Westminster to explore the possibility of allowing children from asylum-seeker families who have already been in full-time education for a number of years at the very least to complete their education before a final decision is taken by the Home Office.

The Green motion and the SNP amendment contain nothing with which I disagree. I hope that the SNP will revise the position that it enunciated this morning. We have an opportunity. The Executive's amendment—and I mean this sincerely—is stronger and more proactive than the motion. It includes everything in the Green motion and also calls for action. I hope that members on all sides will consider supporting the Executive's amendment at decision time, so that the Parliament of Scotland can speak with one voice.

Asylum seekers and their families are an asset, not a liability. They are our friends, not our enemies. They are our brothers and sisters.

11:12

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green): I bring to the chamber's attention the plight of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people, which is so often overlooked. Just over 100 children and young people are unaccompanied asylum seekers in Scotland. They

are usually brought to Scotland by an agent, such as a friend of the family. Their pre-flight experiences are horrific. Their family members may have been persecuted and killed. They will probably have lived through the trauma of war. They may even have been persecuted themselves.

Imagine, please, young people and children arriving in our country whose parents have been persecuted or killed in war. What happens? Their hope of safety and sanctuary is not fulfilled. They can be faced with a lack of suitable accommodation. Many of them are forced to stay in homeless accommodation or are housed in some of the worst hostels and hotels for months on end. In that accommodation, they may not have access to cooking facilities and so have to live off takeaway junk food from the pitiful amount of money they have each week to spend on food. They are isolated, because of a lack of social support and social activities specifically designed to meet their needs. As with other asylum-seeking children and young people, racism is a major problem. Such experiences are all compounded by the fact that they may have no support from parents or guardians.

Unaccompanied asylum seekers have variable access to services. Unlike children of asylum-seeking families, unaccompanied asylum seekers are not supported by the national asylum support service. Children's organisations have said that the care that unaccompanied children and young people receive continues to be a lottery and is often inadequate. Many receive only basic services and are not provided with leaving-care support by local authorities.

A European Union directive from 2003 requires the appointment of independent representatives or guardians for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The Home Office has consulted on that directive's implementation, but there is concern that Scotland has not been adequately included in the process. In his representations to the UK Government, the minister must ensure that unaccompanied children are appointed an independent guardian to advise, support and protect them in legal proceedings. He must ensure that such children have access to independent advice and advocacy. It is shocking that unaccompanied child asylum seekers are basically left to fend for themselves. The welfare of those children is paramount. Whether we have one child or 100 children in that situation, they require protection and support. I hope that the minister will press the issues urgently.

The Executive's amendment is all very well, but it does not go far enough; it does not acknowledge that what has happened in Drumchapel is unacceptable and unnecessary. Like Bill Butler, I,

too, welcome to the gallery the young people from Drumchapel who have shone a light on the issue and led the support for the family concerned. I ask members to congratulate them. *[Applause.]* I accept Christine Grahame's amendment, but I support the Green party's motion.

11:16

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): I congratulate the Green party on its well-expressed motion, which deals with an important subject. I do not always congratulate the Executive, but I do so now. Its response to the motion shows growing maturity and its amendment is constructive. Most of the speeches have been constructive, too, although I have been trying to seek an analogy for Christine Grahame's speech. I recently re-read "Tam O'Shanter", and I had the thought that Christine Grahame's contribution to consensus was similar to the Cutty-sark's contribution to the tail of Meg, Tam O'Shanter's horse—she ripped it off. There is a place for Opposition—Kenny MacAskill expressed the SNP's view fairly—but a strident and wrecking approach is not helpful.

Tommy Sheridan: Does Donald Gorrie agree that, if the forced removals this year were the first such removals, the Executive's amendment would have some potency, but the fact that the forced removals have been going on for several years makes the Executive's contribution far too little, far too late?

Donald Gorrie: There is a saying about taking pleasure in a sinner who repenteth. Tommy Sheridan's view is that the Executive is a bit late to the ball, but at least it has got to the ball and is kicking it in the right direction, for which it should take credit.

With all honesty, the Scottish Labour Party deserves a great deal of credit on the issue, because it is difficult for it to criticise the Westminster Government, which is run by the Labour Party, on the details of its treatment of asylum seekers or on the whole policy. The Executive's amendment is critical of some aspects of the London Government's policy, which shows growing maturity and is to be welcomed. The matter shows that a devolved structure can work. There are problems in such a structure, as Kenny MacAskill set out, but if the London Government instructs the police legitimately—but in our view wrongly—to act in a certain fashion, they have to do that. We cannot stop them and tell them to act differently; instead, we must try to persuade the people who make the decisions behind the scenes.

Margo MacDonald: Will the member take an intervention?

Donald Gorrie: I am sorry, but I must continue.

A devolved system has difficulties—there is a down side and an up side. We must work behind the scenes, which is what the ministers are doing. They have made progress on the situation at Dungavel, as Robert Brown said. The issue is a strong one and, although I am not a strong protester and would not progress very well in Tommy Sheridan's party, I have been to Dungavel with Robert Brown and others and found the situation there to be awful. However, we have secured improvement.

The Greens deserve great credit, the Conservatives have a constructive point of view and the SNP has legitimately made its point of view, but the best thing would be for the Parliament to unite around the Executive's constructive amendment and for the ministers to work hard behind the scenes to persuade Labour ministers in London that they have got the matter wrong.

11:20

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): I agree with Bill Butler and Donald Gorrie that the Executive amendment should be supported. I should state my interest in the matter, as a former resident in Dungavel, under a somewhat different regime.

In examining deportation, we must focus clearly on which issues are devolved and which are not. It is significant that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education has been involved in an inspection at Dungavel, although it was called to do that as an expert, on the invitation of HM inspectorate of prisons for England and Wales. It should be open to the minister to request that HMIE and the Social Work Inspection Agency should be involved whenever appropriate and that their recommendations should be most carefully considered. I say that because, under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995—which I took through the House of Commons—the interests of the child are paramount. I know of no law to the effect that children in Dungavel do not come under the general umbrella of that act, so it is entirely possible that it applies to them. If that assumption is correct, it follows that local authority social services could have an involvement in the matter.

The five key principles of the 1995 act are clear: first, each child has a right to be treated as an individual; second, each child who can form a view on matters that affect him or her has the right to express those views if he or she so wishes; third, parents should normally be responsible for the upbringing of their children and should share that responsibility; fourth, each child has the right to protection from all forms of abuse, neglect or exploitation; and fifth, any intervention by a public authority in the life of a child should be properly

justified and should be supported by services from all relevant agencies working in collaboration.

HM inspectorate of prisons for England and Wales published a report in March that expressed disappointment that one of its previous recommendations had not been implemented because of the Home Office immigration and nationality directorate's lack of engagement with the proposal. The recommendation was that independent assessments should be carried out of the welfare of children who are held in Dungavel, and fed into decisions about appropriate care for them. The March report's main recommendations were, first, that

"There should be proper and humane management of the movement of detainees, particularly those with children, who should not be subject to unnecessary and lengthy journeys";

second, that

"Agreed procedures for the detention of children, at sufficiently senior level, recording full consideration of all factors, should be adhered to";

and third, that

"The detention of children should be exceptional and for the shortest possible period."

I am bound to say that the delay in dealing with applications in the first place bears a major responsibility for the fact that we are having the debate at all. It is extremely important that children's issues are addressed with sensitivity. I hope that the Home Office is prepared to listen to our experts in the education and social work inspectorates, the recommendations of which are well founded. The Home Office must be reminded of the key point, which is that, whatever the parents may or may not have done to cause them to be in Dungavel or in reception centres, children are there through no fault of their own.

11:24

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): I am grateful to the Greens for having the debate, which is yet another debate among the many that we have had in six years about what is being done in our name to asylum seekers and their children in this country. We must keep the issue at the top of the agenda, because it has been ratcheted up and the situation is getting worse. Robin Harper spoke eloquently and at length about the Vucaj family's case, which again brought the issue to the public attention. However, such situations have been happening for years, over and over again.

It is all very well for the minister to tell us that the Executive is doing wonderful stuff with asylum-seeker children who live here while their cases are being heard and their appeals are going through, but it can only be wrong to let those children live as part of our society and then send them away

years later. The children may even no longer remember the place to which they are being sent, either because of their age or because they have managed to block out the horror of what their life was before they came to our country.

All of a sudden we hear talk about what the wonderful Executive is going to do. Last night I received a parliamentary answer—printed today—about that. It is the usual mealy-mouthed stuff:

"Responsibility for immigration and asylum ... rests with the Home Office ... The Executive is in regular dialogue ... on a wide range of issues."—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 22 September 2005; S2W-19063.]

This morning, we wake up and discover that, while that parliamentary answer was coming to me, Jack McConnell and whoever else was sitting with journalists, trying to bail themselves out of the situation that they have got themselves into by allowing such things to happen to children in our country.

Robert Brown can say all he likes about the constitutional agreement and how that is what people voted for back in 1997, but that was before children were being dragged kicking, screaming and terrified from their beds in the middle of the night. I believe that if the Executive went to the people now and asked whether they thought that it was acceptable that that was going on, and told them that the Executive could do nothing about it, people would vote very differently for who was governing their country.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton mentioned the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. I have been asking for years what the Executive has been doing to ensure that the Home Office complies with the terms of the 1995 act. The answer that I get is: "It's the Home Office's responsibility. It's nothing to do with us." I do not believe that for a minute. The law that applies in this country under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 applies to every child in this country. Is the Executive really saying that there is a little piece of Scotland—wherever an asylum-seeker family happens to be—that is not Scotland and over which the Executive therefore has no jurisdiction? If that is the case, the Executive had better think again about what kind of Government it is running.

Many have gone on about Christine Grahame and her decision to abstain from voting on the Executive amendment. I completely agree with her on abstaining, because the Executive has been abstaining for years from any responsibility. Let us consider what the Executive is saying in the amendment. It is saying that it will

"continue discussions ... with a view to agreement that the Home Office will work closely with services for children and young people before ... removal".

What is that? That is nothing. That is no more than the Executive trying to dig itself out of the hole that

it has been put in by the strength of public opinion on the issue. I will tell the Executive what it should do: it should take a stand. It should say to the ministers in the Home Office, and all ministers at Westminster: "It's not happening here. We're not doing it." The Executive should use the Vucaj family as the benchmark and tell the ministers: "They're not going anywhere. They're staying here, because they are part of our country. They are the fresh talent that we are looking for."

11:28

The Minister for Communities (Malcolm Chisholm): I start by congratulating the Green party on introducing today's debate and I join Robin Harper and Bill Butler in paying tribute to the students from Drumchapel High School—I was pleased to speak to them before the debate. We should all congratulate them and wish them success in their campaign. We were all moved by what they told us and they have been a great force for good on this issue. Schools are at the heart of preparing young people to live in a multicultural and inclusive society. Having asylum-seeker children attend our schools is a positive experience not just for asylum seekers but for all the children in that school.

Linda Fabiani: Will the minister give way?

Christine Grahame *rose*—

Malcolm Chisholm: In a moment.

The positive and harmonious relations in Drumchapel and elsewhere are a standing rebuke to the scandalous negative images of asylum seekers that are so prevalent in the media and elsewhere and that are so damaging to asylum seekers and refugees, to ethnic minority communities more generally and to the vigorous anti-racist policy that we are determined to pursue, all the more urgently after the appalling increase in race-hate crimes over the summer.

I give way to whichever member it was.

Linda Fabiani: The twins here.

Does the minister think that it is a positive experience for the children in Drumchapel to have their friends dragged away from them and to be unable to see them any more? I have had e-mails from some of those youngsters, who cannot understand why that is happening. Is that a positive impression of Government in our country?

Malcolm Chisholm: It is absolutely appalling. I referred to the positive and harmonious relations between asylum seekers and others in the school, if that was the starting point for the intervention.

We are determined to send out positive messages about asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland. However, that is not enough, which is

why we are determined to pursue practical action. We must recognise the realities of the split between reserved and devolved powers in this area, and, having spoken out openly against the voucher system when I had responsibility for those matters as Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care, I will not take lectures from the SNP about challenging Westminster. The SNP and others must recognise the realities of what we can do and those issues about which we can only express our views and make representations. I refer the SNP and others to the key words in the amendment, which are that we will "continue discussions". I have already discussed this and other matters with the immigration minister, Tony McNulty. I have already conveyed to the Home Office the widespread concerns, but I will reinforce those following the views eloquently expressed in the debate. In practical terms, I will discuss this with a view to an agreement that the Home Office will work closely with services for children and young people. That is the practical objective around this specific issue. Within the powers that we have, we are willing to engage with the Westminster Government.

However, over and above that, we have our own widespread responsibilities to asylum seekers and refugees, which is why two or three years ago we formed the Scottish refugee integration forum and we had a wide-ranging action plan, which we are implementing and monitoring on an on-going basis; £9 million is being spent on that. There are far too many projects to mention, many of which work with young people. Operation reclaim in Sighthill in Glasgow, for example, provides asylum seekers and indigenous Scottish children with a safe environment in which to play sport and form friendships. Many other projects and initiatives are being funded, for example the frontline housing advisory service, which is run by Positive Action in Housing. I mention Positive Action in Housing because of the major role that it has played in this area in general and in the Vucaj family campaign in particular.

I shall be chairing a reconvened Scottish refugee integration forum very soon and will be updating the action plan. We are taking strong action in devolved areas. We are sending out and will continue to send out positive messages about asylum seekers as part of our anti-racist work. We shall also engage constructively with the Westminster Government.

11:33

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I begin by reading to members:

"My name is Jamie. I am 18 years old and Elvis Vucaj is a really close friend of mine. It scares me that one day, me, Elvis and my mates can be out having fun—enjoying life.

Then the next I am writing this, in the hope that someone realises the mistake they have made and allows this family to return to their home.

I remember the first time I met Elvis and Nimet. It was on a trip with our school. We went to Edinburgh castle. Both brothers were shadows of who they are now. Both have grown up a lot and become more confident in what they are doing. For what? I spoke to Elvis and Nimet on the phone the other day. They are not the happy, excited guys I knew a few weeks ago—they sound exhausted, tired and scared.

I told them not to give up, because I won't—Scotland deserves them and I miss them. I don't want to lose them."

I hope that members on all sides will agree that that is more powerful than any speech about devolved and reserved competencies.

Earlier this month, the commissioner for children and young people called for a "public outcry" against what she described as

"terrorising children of failed asylum seekers"

and the "inhumane" treatment of "wee, quiet families". Jamie has added his voice to that outcry. As we have heard, other people in Bill Butler's constituency, people from Drumchapel High School and the community around it—a community from which those children have been wrenched—have added their voices. The United Reform Church, the Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church have added their voices.

Is there any sphere of life in which this situation would be acceptable? We have seen behaviour that falls short of what we expect in a civilised society. I am pleased that, after today's debate, we will be able to say that the Parliament did not remain silent. We have added our voices to the necessary outcry about the harm that is being inflicted on children and their families in Scotland. What matters next is that action is taken. We want to give the fullest possible emphasis to our devolved responsibilities for child welfare.

I am sorry that I will not have time to mention everyone who spoke, but I want to thank some members in particular.

Robert Brown said that we are discussing an issue on the border between devolved and reserved institutions and he was right to say that we should have the confidence to debate it. However, it is not only the issue but the children themselves who are being sent across the border. Asylum policy is the UK's responsibility, but if removals are being carried out in a manner that we do not think meets our standards of welfare, our responsibility does not evaporate.

Christine Grahame said that what is being done is too little, too late, that we have heard the Executive's words before and that we need action. I agree, but I am glad that the Executive has gone further than it has in the past. It is more important now to continue to press ministers on the what,

when and how of the commitments that they have made today than it is to lament what was not done in the past.

Mary Scanlon focused on the practices used and acknowledged that they are unnecessary. I hope that Mary Scanlon will consider supporting the Green motion, which specifically says that the practices are unnecessary. She also mentioned the education of the children of asylum seekers. Surely we all acknowledge that the Vucaj children were getting their education in Drumchapel High School and that they should go back there.

Jeremy Purvis applauded Robert Brown's constructive approach in previous debates. I hope that members will agree that the Greens have taken a similarly constructive approach. He mentioned the robustness of the Executive's position. He is quite right to say so, but I say again that we must press the Executive on the detail of what it will do, when it will do it and how it will do it.

Other members—some of whom did not get the opportunity to speak—entered the chamber hoping that they would be able to support the Executive's amendment but, I am sorry to say, feel less able to do so having heard the debate. We must hear concrete commitments to action rather than caveats about UK responsibilities. However, I share Bill Butler's hope that today's debate will lead to stronger action.

Donald Gorrie spoke of this Parliament's growing maturity. He is right to mention that, but the Vucaj children and others cannot wait long for us to find our maturity. The experiences that they have gone through have meant that they have had to grow up fast and so must we.

I thank the Executive and the SNP for lodging amendments that are in keeping with the spirit in which we brought this debate to the chamber. We understand that this is not an issue that should divide us on party lines. Of course, the parties have different positions on asylum policy. Too often, UK ministers use words such as "robust" and "control" when they are talking about asylum policy. I want ministers who are responsible for asylum to use words such as "compassion" and "welcome".

The Executive has gone further than it has before. It begins to raise its voice more strongly. I am sorry that I cannot support its amendment but that is only because it deletes that part of the motion that states specifically that the practices that are listed are unnecessary. It is important that the message that we send today is that the behaviour that we have witnessed is unnecessary and must stop.

However, if the Executive's amendment is agreed to, I appeal to all parties to support the amended motion. The Greens will certainly do so.

More important than the precise form of words that we agree in a motion is the fact that our voices will have been added to the outcry. That is how it should be, but it must not satisfy us. The words of MSPs or of our motions will mean little if the dawn raids continue, if children continue to arrive at school to find their friends simply gone, or if the UK Government's policy does not change. Our words will also mean little if the Vucaj family are not returned to the community that has become their home.

The Executive has an opportunity to make clear its intention to act. We want it to say what it is going to do. We want it to come back to the Parliament to say when it has done it and what the results were. If the UK Government continues to remove these children from our country, we owe it to the children not to remove them from our consciences.

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

General Questions

11:40

Ratho Adventure Centre

1. Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive how it will support bids from Ratho adventure centre to stage international climbing events, including an event to coincide with the London 2012 Olympic games. (S2O-7603)

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson): EventScotland is our national events organisation charged with delivering our major events strategy, which aims to make Scotland one of the world's foremost event destinations by 2015. Any bid to stage an international climbing event at Ratho adventure centre would be considered by EventScotland.

Margaret Smith: I thank the minister for her ongoing interest in the future of this world-class facility. Will she confirm that the Scottish Executive is ready to give support to the City of Edinburgh Council's welcome plans to acquire the centre, given the important role that it might play in relation to not only climbing but other sports? Will she comment on the possibility of climbing being added as a Commonwealth games sport as part of the 2014 bid?

Patricia Ferguson: The Executive watches with interest the progress that the City of Edinburgh Council is making in its bid to acquire Ratho adventure centre and we are in close liaison with it. Any further comment from me would be premature at this time. However, I point out to the member that climbing is not an Olympic or Commonwealth games sport, so the likelihood of having it included in either of those major events is probably not good.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): In any further talks that take place, will the minister bear in mind the fact that the Ratho adventure centre is a national resource of great significance? It is an unusual place with exceptional facilities.

Patricia Ferguson: I am well aware of the points that Lord James Douglas-Hamilton makes and have no problem with him reiterating them for the benefit of the chamber. In fact, it was just that set of circumstances that encouraged me, having been approached by Margaret Smith, to convene a meeting of all those with a possible interest in

the centre almost a year ago, and I am watching the on-going talks with a great deal of interest.

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I remind the minister that there is an excellent climbing centre at Kinlochleven, which was built on the site of the old aluminium smelter. I hope that the minister will consider the fact that it would be a good location for any international climbing events that might take place, either during the Olympic games or at some other time.

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): That was just inside the limits of the question.

Patricia Ferguson: I repeat that climbing will probably not be an event in the Olympic or Commonwealth games—I can say that with some confidence. However, EventScotland would be happy to discuss any bid by the Kinlochleven centre in relation to any event that might take place in the future. It is our intention that our major events strategy should cover the entire country, which is why I have been pleased to support events such as the UCI mountain-biking event that took place in Fort William a couple of weeks ago.

Scottish Economy (Oil Prices)

2. Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with Her Majesty's Government on the impact of high oil prices on the Scottish economy. (S2O-7583)

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Nicol Stephen): The Scottish Executive is in regular contact with the United Kingdom Government on a range of issues, including the impact of oil price increases.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): I thank the minister for that detailed reply.

Will the minister pursue with the Government in London the impact of high oil prices on the rural economy in Scotland and on poorer motorists and the need to have a countervailing reduction in either fuel duty or VAT? Is it not about time that the minister showed his Labour colleagues the same leadership on this issue as he has shown on business rates?

Nicol Stephen: As Mr Neil knows, it was announced in the budget that, due to sustained volatility in the world oil market and the now significantly higher price of oil per barrel, the normal inflation-based increase in main duty rates would be postponed until 1 September. In July, the Treasury announced that that would not go ahead and the matter would be reviewed in the United Kingdom Government's pre-budget report, which will be published before the end of the year. Therefore, certain steps have been taken by the UK Government.

I agree with Alex Neil that it is important that continuing representations are made, especially on behalf of rural and island communities in Scotland and on behalf of the road haulage industry. I have received direct representations from the industry about the seriousness of the situation that it faces. It is entirely appropriate that I, as the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, and the whole Executive, on behalf of industries and communities across Scotland, make strong representations on the issue to Her Majesty's Government.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Given that the modelling exercise on the Scottish economy that was undertaken 30 years ago showed, as we now know from the report that Dr Gavin McCrone wrote for the Government of the day, that the potential windfall from taxes on petroleum revenue at about \$20 a barrel was more or less eeksie-peeksie with or without independent sovereignty—and therefore taxation rights over oil—does the minister agree that it might make sense for a similar modelling exercise to be undertaken now, when the price is \$67 a barrel, to show what options might be open to us?

Nicol Stephen: I would far rather deal with the issues of today than with those of 30 years ago. The arguments were put and lost by the Scottish National Party back in the 1970s. There is a windfall to the Government as a result of the current high cost of a barrel of oil—everyone is aware of that. I envisage representations being made to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on just such issues, and I hope that the Treasury and the chancellor will, ultimately, reach sensible decisions on those issues when further announcements are made.

Driving Tuition (Pass Plus Scheme)

3. Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it supports the pass plus scheme and whether it plans to assist in the development and funding of this scheme throughout Scotland. (S2O-7598)

The Minister for Transport and Telecommunications (Tavish Scott): The Executive welcomes pass plus as a scheme that enables new drivers to gain additional experience and positive driving skills. The scheme is administered by the Driving Standards Agency, which chairs a board that promotes the scheme throughout Great Britain.

Mr Arbuckle: Recent responses from the councils in Mid Scotland and Fife show a patchy picture of uptake of the scheme. Some councils are enthusiastic supporters, whereas others are lukewarm about it. In the light of that situation, might the Executive implement a more co-ordinated approach throughout Scotland?

Tavish Scott: I would be happy to look into the points that Mr Arbuckle raises, but I do not believe that it is the responsibility of the Executive to tell Scottish local authorities what to do in that regard. It is important that they come to their own views on the appropriateness of the scheme in their areas.

Nevertheless, I take his point about how effective pass plus can be in addressing the issue of young driver safety, in particular. The Executive also funds the Scottish road safety campaign for the development of key road safety education initiatives and publicity messages. One of the objectives of that driver behaviour strategy is the reduction of young driver casualties.

The Presiding Officer: Question 4 has not been lodged.

Hoardings

5. Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it can take in respect of hoardings that are allegedly mobile which are placed without planning permission in off-road locations. (S2O-7582)

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Johann Lamont): Under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (Scotland) Regulations 1984, a planning authority may issue a discontinuance notice in respect of the use of a site for the display of an advertisement. That includes vehicles that are used exclusively or principally for displaying advertisements.

Alasdair Morgan: The hard fact is that the system does not seem to be working. Anyone who has travelled around Scotland recently will have noticed an increasing proliferation of such hoardings, many of which are placed there by large commercial organisations. If what the minister says is the case, local authorities are not taking advantage of their powers. Will the minister communicate with them to tell them that the hoardings are a menace that needs to be stopped?

Johann Lamont: I hope that Alasdair Morgan will do the same in his own area if there are issues with such hoardings. The matter should be addressed with local authorities, and I am happy to raise it in the on-going conversations that we have with them on the whole question of planning. The devil will be in the detail. Our planning commitments are to strengthen enforcement and to respond to local communities' concerns about the planning process. Therefore, I am happy to pursue the points that Alasdair Morgan has raised.

Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the minister tell us why previous transport ministers have not allowed signage on the A90 trunk road north and south of Stonehaven that could highlight facilities and attractions such

as the harbour and the outdoor swimming pool, thereby assisting the local economy, while, at the same time, these unlicensed containers are scattered all around the area? Will the minister endeavour to have the Minister for Transport and Telecommunications review the situation?

Johann Lamont: Although I have an extremely good grasp of my own brief, I am not sure that I have a good grasp of the briefs of the Minister for Transport and Telecommunications and ex-transport ministers. I would prefer to respond to the member in writing, having been able to reflect on the points that he has made.

There are powers in the regulations to deal with such advertising hoardings where they have an impact on communities and amenity, and the matter is one for dialogue with planning authorities. In certain circumstances, it is also possible for signage to be put up; it is for the individual planning authority to define whether such signage is a hazard. If a hoarding distracts drivers, the regulations can address the matter.

If the member corresponds with me, I will do my best to respond in detail to the points that he has raised.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Is the minister aware of the cyclical event that takes place every four years, whereby fields sprout Conservative party hoardings and lamp posts sprout SNP hoardings? Notwithstanding the fact that fields are voting Conservative, lamp posts are voting SNP and people are voting Lib Dem, will the minister consider that aspect of the issue?

Johann Lamont: I always thought that the advertising industry took the view that advertising had to produce results; however, self-evidently, those hoardings have not produced the results that were expected of them. As responsible political parties, we make our case in any way that we can. The lamp posts may do one thing but I am sure that, when Labour makes its case to the electorate in Cathcart and elsewhere, the people will do another: they will respond not just by noticing the posters, but by voting Labour.

The Presiding Officer: Question 6 has not been lodged.

Disclosure (Single-card System)

7. Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will consider basing the disclosure system on a single-card system whereby each person's card would remain valid for a given period and through any changes in the person's role. (S2O-7599)

The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Robert Brown): A new vetting and barring system that is based on

recommendations from Sir Michael Bichard is currently under consideration, including options for a facility for the on-going updating of information and for appropriate organisations to be able to check an individual's current status. That could mean that an individual's initial enhanced disclosure check to allow them to work with children or vulnerable adults would remain valid unless new information resulted in a change in their status. That would remove the need for multiple checks for different roles.

Donald Gorrie: I am not quite sure whether the minister's answer was yes.

It seems totally sensible that, just as someone passes their driving test once and does not have to pass it again every time they get a new car, somebody who has given good service to a youth organisation, who has been properly checked and who has got the certificate should be able to carry on—perhaps having their status reviewed every three years, or however often it might be. The business of people having to reapply every time they get a different or additional job is madness. Surely, the minister—who is an excellent and intelligent gentleman—can do something about it.

Robert Brown: I was trying to make the point that the issue has United Kingdom implications. There are issues about information emerging from England, Wales and Northern Ireland that should also be available on the Scottish system. It is important that new information is made available to organisations; otherwise, children could be put at greater risk of harm. Therefore, although I do not rule out the issuing of a card such as the one that Donald Gorrie suggests, we must consider the system in the wider context, to try to get something that will avoid multiple applications being made. That is the key point.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I ask the minister again to consider having automatic, mandatory review of enhanced disclosure certificates every three years or so. Currently, if someone with such a certificate remained in situ for 10 years, the certificate would not be reviewed, although their circumstances may have changed and they may not be entitled to the certificate.

Robert Brown: I remind Christine Grahame that we are in the middle stage of introducing more comprehensive regimes. On the introduction of the disclosures themselves, we have still to look at past disclosures and to implement that part of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003. As I tried to indicate, Sir Michael Bichard's recommendations must be brought on board to ensure that we have a workable system that does the trick across the board and is reasonably non-bureaucratic and effective in protecting children.

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): I am not unsympathetic to the idea of a single card, but I am anxious to know from the minister how offences that might be committed while a card is valid would be dealt with and how organisations could be made aware of such offences. Further, what steps is the Executive taking to help to clear the current backlog at Volunteer Development Scotland, where applications are sitting for up to six weeks at a time?

Robert Brown: On the second point, I have had concerns about the central registered bodies' processing, but they are in fact on target to have processed applications within eight working days of receipt by the end of the month—I think that they are currently about a week behind that. It is perhaps worth saying that the number of applications received between 2004 and 2005 went up from 7,461 to 12,514, so there has been a major issue of disclosures. I ask members to bear with the Executive on the final stage of the process, because we must take on board the wider implications, which are being considered in the context of Sir Michael Bichard's recommendations.

Freight Facilities Grants (Highlands)

8. Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how successful freight facilities grants are in the Highlands, in the light of the decision by Wm Morrison Supermarkets plc not to continue Safeway Ltd's practice of supplying stores throughout the Highlands by rail. (S2O-7626)

The Minister for Transport and Telecommunications (Tavish Scott): Freight facilities grants can be successful in the Highlands. As a result of the Safeway FFG contract, almost 5 million lorry miles were removed from Scotland's roads between 1999 and 2005. I am disappointed that, following its takeover of Safeway, Wm Morrison has decided to stop supplying its Highlands stores by rail.

Maureen Macmillan: The members' business debate yesterday dealt with congestion on the A9. What further incentives can be given to businesses such as Morrison's and Tesco to encourage them to transfer their loads from road to rail? I also bring to the minister's attention the fact that Morrison's withdrawal from the FFG contract could mean the loss of railway jobs in Inverness, particularly for the signalmen on the night shift.

Tavish Scott: Those are fair points. In the context of the debate on the A9, it is important that we make further progress on moving freight from road to rail, not just with the supermarket companies that Maureen Macmillan highlighted but with other business users who can see both

the environmental and cost benefits of a modal shift in freight transport. The Executive is currently monitoring the situation in the Highlands and Islands and we are working with businesses there where we can. We are also considering a number of innovative ideas to achieve objectives that meet environmental and cost criteria.

Faculty of Advocates

9. Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it is aware of any problems in the recruitment and retention of lawyers by the Faculty of Advocates. (S2O-7600)

The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry): No. This is a matter entirely for the Faculty of Advocates, but we are not aware of any such problems.

Mike Pringle: I do not know whether the minister is aware that a number of advocates have recently refused to do work and that the dean of the Faculty of Advocates has backed that position. I think that the situation is a result of changes in how the Scottish Legal Aid Board allocates resources. If the situation continues, my concern is that we might find ourselves in the same situation as we have found ourselves with dentists who have gone private. We might find that advocates start to refuse to do criminal cases, which would clearly be a serious problem for the courts. I hope that the Executive will discuss and address the concerns within the Faculty of Advocates.

Hugh Henry: Mike Pringle's question raises a broader issue. There have been significant improvements since the introduction of the Bonomy reforms, but I know that those reforms have caused concern to some members of the Faculty of Advocates. Our main responsibility is to make the courts system more efficient and to try to ensure that public money is properly and effectively used. With the Bonomy reforms, we are seeing that happen.

However, there was an increase of £3.7 million in total payments to advocates or counsel and to solicitor-advocates from the legal aid fund in 2003-04. If Mike Pringle wishes, I could go on and give him more details about the significant increases that there have been to advocates and solicitor-advocates. Those increases have been 33 per cent compared with increases to solicitors of 4 per cent, in terms of the money going to support cases.

I would regret any consequences such as the ones that Mike Pringle suggests, but the improvements as a result of the Bonomy reforms are to be commended.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Cabinet (Meetings)

1. Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Executive's Cabinet. (S2F-1819)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Cabinet next week will, among other things, receive a progress report following this morning's debate on the children of asylum seekers. I join other colleagues in welcoming the pupils from Glasgow who were with us for that debate and who have an immediate concern in its content. I give them an absolute assurance that, while we believe in a fair, consistent and firm immigration system, which has to include deportation and removal in some cases, we also believe that it is very important, given our child welfare and education responsibilities here in Scotland, that such a system is handled appropriately. That is why we want to have a protocol with the Home Office that involves Scottish education services and social services before decisions on the implementation of any orders for removal.

Nicola Sturgeon: I congratulate the pupils from Glasgow, who have shamed the Scottish Executive into taking a stance.

When the First Minister outlined his legislative programme two weeks ago, he said, in relation to crime and disorder, that

"there is no excuse for non-action".—[*Official Report*, 6 September 2005; c 18774.]

Does he stand by that statement?

The First Minister: Of course. That is why we have the biggest programme of reforms in our criminal justice system that Scotland has seen for generations. It is also why, in the first two years of this session of Parliament, we have seen reforms of the High Court, reforms in the management of offenders, the introduction of antisocial behaviour measures—which were fought tooth and nail by the Scottish National Party—and a whole range of other measures. We now see reforms of the lower courts, which will release police time, and we see reforms in sentencing and in the powers of the police, which will ensure that all our agencies can act more effectively and will enable us to reduce crime and to tackle those responsible for crime much more effectively in future.

Nicola Sturgeon: I remind the First Minister, because he seems to have forgotten, that the SNP voted for the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill. I can give him the *Official Report* later.

Is the First Minister aware of figures that were released to me under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 showing that in 1999, across Strathclyde and Lothian and Borders—Scotland's two biggest police force areas—1,100 people breached their bail conditions? By 2004, that figure had risen to 3,600—a threefold increase. Why has he taken so long to act to deal with what is a blatant and growing disregard for the law?

The First Minister: I have two points. First, we have heard statistics from Ms Sturgeon in the chamber before that have proven to be very unreliable afterwards, so it would be wrong to comment on those ones.

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): Oh, come on! That is pathetic.

The First Minister: However, it is absolutely right to comment on the importance of bail and remand—and no amount of shouting from Mr Swinney will take away from that fact.

It is important that we act on bail and remand, which is why, in the next few days, a comprehensive programme will be announced by the Minister for Justice. That will ensure not only a tightening of the availability of bail in Scotland, but a far more effective system of monitoring people who are out on bail, the conditions that have to apply and what happens to those who breach their conditions.

Nicola Sturgeon: I hope that the First Minister is not doubting the veracity of the police figures, which show a clear picture. It is all very well for him to promise action in future, but we are not talking about a recent problem. Does he realise that the number of people who breach bail conditions has risen sharply every year since 1999? Is he aware that, six months ago, the Sentencing Commission for Scotland warned of

“the risks to public safety and good order when bail conditions are flouted”?

The commission went on to describe a “failing system” in which

“sanctions for breaches of bail are not always applied.”

Is it not the case that the problem is not new—it has been six years in the making—and that the reason why it has got so out of control is that the Executive and the First Minister have turned a blind eye for far too long?

The First Minister: That is all a bit much, coming from the Scottish National Party, which was probably opposed to the setting up of the Sentencing Commission in the first place.

Of course we recognised that there was a problem. That is why the Sentencing Commission was established and given the job of dealing with the issue as its first priority. That is why, when the

commission's report came in, we did not just accept it, but considered whether additional measures would be required. We have a package of measures and I hope that, when those measures are introduced, Ms Sturgeon will be big enough and brave enough to welcome and support them, because that is what the people of Scotland expect. They want us to look to the future rather than to the past, as the SNP always seems to want to do. They want the Parliament to act in their interests, to take the right decisions for the future and to ensure that we have a safer Scotland as a result.

Nicola Sturgeon: The Sentencing Commission was the SNP's idea in the first place. The First Minister can peddle inaccuracies about the SNP for as long as he likes, but it will not detract from the truth, which is that on crime, as on so many other issues, the Executive talks a good game, but delivers very little. When will he stop promising action at some time in the future and start delivering on crime for the people of this country?

The First Minister: Let me give a few facts on the crime situation over the past few years. Scotland has record numbers of police officers and a record clear-up rate of crimes. A number of additional measures are coming in, such as the antisocial behaviour laws, which the SNP fought tooth and nail. The SNP was dragged in to voting for those laws at the end of the process, but it was strongly against them in the beginning.

What is more, the SNP condemned one of the most significant measures that the Parliament has taken over the past two years—the contracting out of the prisoner escort service, which released police time and got 350 more police officers back on the beat, doing the work that they signed up to do. The SNP was against that measure then and is against it today; it still condemns the Minister for Justice, even though that is one of the most effective things that we have done to help local communities and to get police back on the beat.

Prime Minister (Meetings)

2. David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister and what issues will be discussed. (S2F-1820)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I am looking forward to meeting the Prime Minister in Brighton next week and to hearing his conference speech.

David McLetchie: We will all be going to the seaside shortly.

I want to pursue with the First Minister similar issues to those that Ms Sturgeon raised. He will probably be aware of the conviction last week of a man who committed two rapes in Orkney, the

second of which occurred while the accused was out on bail and after a condition banning him from staying in Orkney had been overturned on the ground that it breached his human rights, which left him free to commit another rape.

I do not think that the First Minister has turned a blind eye to the issue. In his statement on the legislative programme, he talked about toughening up the granting of bail and imposing more conditions on those prisoners who are granted bail. I give him credit for that, but can he guarantee that the new conditions of which he speaks will not suffer the same fate as the condition that applied in the case in Orkney and fall foul of the European convention on human rights?

The First Minister: I thank Mr McLetchie for the constructive way in which he put his question. Although it would obviously be remiss of me to comment on an individual case, it is important to talk about the generality of the policy and the actions that we propose to take.

We propose to take action to ensure that the conditions under which bail is available are far clearer and more consistently applied in Scottish courts. We want to ensure that the activities of those prisoners who are out on bail are supervised far more effectively, so that conditions that have been applied are properly implemented. We also propose to take action to ensure that those who breach bail conditions are tackled far more effectively and quickly than in the past.

We will outline that package of measures to the Parliament in the next few days. All three measures are important. They form an integrated package and all of them will have been properly scrutinised to ensure that they are compliant with the law in other respects in advance of the announcement.

David McLetchie: Many of us are sceptical that a measure such as electronic tagging will necessarily have the effect of preventing people from committing serious sexual offences such as were committed in the Orkney case. I put it to the First Minister that the only effective way of protecting the public in such situations is to ensure that those who are charged with serious offences of that nature and have previous convictions are remanded in jail. Does he agree that we should return to the system that we used to have in Scotland, whereby there is a presumption against bail for certain categories of crime, such as murder, and a presumption against bail when the accused has a previous conviction for other serious crimes, such as rape?

The First Minister: Mr McLetchie makes a serious point. It is important that the law in Scotland is far clearer on the point and that it is

more consistently applied across our courts. We intend to introduce a package of measures, as proposed by the Sentencing Commission and considered by the Cabinet during the summer months, among which will be provisions to deal with the specific issue. We will announce those measures to the Parliament next week.

David McLetchie: I point out to the First Minister that, about five years ago, our law on bail was changed to bring it into line with the European convention on human rights. That change is preventing us from denying bail to certain categories of accused persons. Does he agree that we need to do more than simply tinker at the edges of the issue and that we have to get to the heart of the matter, which requires a review of the operation and application of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the co-operation of Her Majesty's Government?

The First Minister: First, it is important to reiterate that individual decisions about bail are, as they should be, the responsibility of the judge who is presiding in the court. That important principle is, of course, an integral part of our Scots law. At the same time, it is important that we have absolute clarity in the guidance, both in legislation and in other ways, to those who are responsible in our courts. We intend to do that.

We do not intend to tinker at the edges. We intend to ensure that there is a full package of reforms, not just in legislation, but in the way in which the courts, the police and other authorities implement and scrutinise bail conditions, to ensure that those who breach their bail conditions are properly dealt with. That package of measures will be announced to the Parliament next week. I hope that both Mr McLetchie and Ms Sturgeon will feel able to welcome it constructively.

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): There will be one important constituency supplementary.

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): The First Minister will be aware of the sentencing of a man yesterday for rape in Glenrothes. He was on the sex offenders register, he had a previous conviction for rape and he had been assessed as being at high risk of reoffending. Moreover, he had previously failed to comply with a supervision order. In spite of that, he was able to be housed where he could commit his most recent crime. Will the proposals that will be presented to the Parliament next week contain measures to improve the operation of the register and protect our communities from the actions committed by such individuals?

The First Minister: The proposals that will be announced next week by the Minister for Justice will refer specifically to bail and remand. Again, I

do not want to comment on an individual case, but my understanding is that that case was not affected by bail and remand and that Christine May's question is about the sex offenders register and the management of sex offenders more generally.

We are, of course, also considering a report from the committee that was chaired by Professor George Irving on the management of sex offenders in Scotland and the operation of the register. The Minister for Justice will announce our response to that report in early October. That response will not only include reference to the issues about the register that have been raised by Christine May, Paul Martin and others in the chamber in recent months, but will deal with the need for a national policy on the accommodation of sex offenders when they are in the community and not in custody. The issue has arisen in many constituencies and a national policy is needed to clarify how local authorities and others should deal with it. That should go alongside the national audit that has taken place of all serious and high-risk offenders.

Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)

3. Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland and what issues he intends to discuss. (S2F-1825)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I look forward to sharing a platform with the Secretary of State for Scotland on Sunday night in Brighton, when I am sure that we will discuss issues that are directly relevant to the delegates who want to ask us questions about the week ahead.

Robin Harper: The First Minister will be well aware of this morning's debate in which we discussed the appalling treatment that was meted out to the Vucaj family when 16 people dressed in flak jackets smashed down their front door, burst into their house, seized the family, handcuffed the parents and dragged the parents and the children—still in their pyjamas—off to a van in which they took them away to England. Will he condemn that treatment here and now?

The First Minister: Robin Harper will know my position on not responding entirely to reports of what has happened in individual cases. However, the policy position should be clear. I congratulate Patrick Harvie and the Green party on constructively organising this morning's debate in a way that allowed other parties to come together with a positive policy in the Parliament on the issue.

When I met young students from Castlemilk High School and St Margaret Mary's Secondary School in Castlemilk on 27 June, they raised the

issue with me very eloquently. They made the sensible and sane point that the young people under 16 who are affected by such removals also include those who remain in a school and have befriended the youngsters being removed in difficult circumstances.

Of course individual cases should be taken up by members of Parliament and should be properly reviewed—if that is what should happen—but it is important that we in the Parliament have a policy that education and social services should be involved in advance of any removal that involves a family with children who are under 16. That is in the best interests of those children and their peers in the local community, in which some of the children may have lived for up to five years.

Robin Harper: From the tenor of this morning's debate, I am sure that all members welcome the Executive's commitment to convey to the Home Office our serious concerns about what has happened in Scotland. Will the First Minister assure us that he will convey those concerns in the strongest terms to the Home Office? Does he agree that if he does not press the issues with the utmost force and does not—behind closed doors—condemn to the Home Office what has happened, we must entertain the possibility that we might not get far? If that happens, what will he do?

The First Minister: I have made it clear that we should seek to establish a protocol with the Home Office on the issue. That should be achievable if we advance our arguments responsibly and ensure that those arguments are within our devolved responsibilities, which is exactly what we will do.

I recognise absolutely that people wish to make points about individual cases. Representatives in such situations should make those points forcefully. At the same time, we must recognise that some situations could be dangerous for those who are involved in implementing removals and deportations, which must be an element of any immigration system.

We must take a responsible approach. An immigration system must exist and its application must be firm, fair and consistent. At some time, that system will involve removals and deportations. However, with our education and child welfare responsibilities in Scotland, we want to ensure that any youngsters under 16 who are affected because they are in a family that may be removed or because they are back here and have befriended such youngsters are properly looked after in Scotland's interests. We will seek to achieve that and we will keep the Parliament informed of our progress.

Child Protection

4. Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what safeguards are in place to ensure that suspected sex offenders cannot work with children or young people in sports-related and other environments. (S2F-1822)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): The Parliament passed the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003, which makes it an offence to employ an individual to work with children if he or she is disqualified from doing so. All organisations that recruit people to work with children can apply for an enhanced disclosure certificate from Disclosure Scotland, which will provide details of any convictions, state whether the person is on the sex offenders register or has been disqualified from working with children and give any other relevant information that is held by the police, including information on suspected sex offences.

Michael McMahon: Is the First Minister aware of the recent report by the Independent Football Commission, which reveals that young people have been vulnerable to abuse ranging from bullying by coaches and overaggressive parents to grooming by paedophiles who target them after seeing their pictures in match programmes or by masquerading as talent scouts? Is he also aware that the report indicates that teenage girls who work for contract caterers in football stadiums and other sports stadiums are often subject to inappropriate behaviour? The Scottish Executive has rightly taken the action that he has mentioned to protect our young people, but will he assure members that the measures that have been taken so far will cover the issues that the IFC has raised in its report?

The First Minister: I have not seen the report to which Michael McMahon refers and would certainly welcome receiving a copy of it. I am sure that the ministers who are most directly involved with the issue will be keen to take up the points that the report makes in advance of our announcements in response to Professor Irving's report on the management of sex offenders and related issues. The two matters may be entirely separate, but there may be a relationship between them that would allow us better to inform the recommendations and proposals that we will put to the Parliament. As I say, I am keen to see a copy of the report. The issues that have been raised by people who have been affected are serious and we want to ensure that the package of measures that we are bringing forward will deal with everyone who might be affected.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Notwithstanding the First Minister's detailed reply on sex offenders and the proposals for bail, will he ensure that the bail

reforms clearly recognise people's human rights—which should not be blithely brushed aside—and the fundamental view that a suspect is not an offender until they are found guilty by a court of law, which is a foundation stone of our justice system in Scotland?

The First Minister: The points that Jeremy Purvis makes are valid. It is important that, in seeking to change the law and to improve the implementation of systems relating to sex offenders or to bail and remand, we put public safety at the core of our actions and decisions and achieve the right balance between the rights of those who are accused in any circumstances and the rights of victims who have been affected by people who have committed serious crimes. In making our proposals, I assure Jeremy Purvis and other members who have many concerns from different perspectives that we will seek to achieve such a balance, with public safety always to the fore in our decisions.

Violence

5. Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister what steps the Scottish Executive will take to address the issues arising from a United Nations report that designates Scotland as the developed world's most violent country. (S2F-1834)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I do not believe that Scotland is the most violent country in the developed world, but I believe that the nation is dealing with the historical legacy of a booze-and-blade culture that affects too many of our communities. We are acting to deal with that culture through a variety of measures, which include tough new laws to tackle knife crime in the police bill, which will be published before the October recess; gun ownership restrictions, including additional restrictions on air-guns, which we hope that we and the Home Office will announce soon; stronger sentences for violent offences; and action to deal with the underlying causes of violence, such as alcoholism, sectarianism and a number of other social problems in Scotland that have contributed to that culture for far too long.

Phil Gallie: With respect to knife crime, the First Minister could, through statutory instrument, have increased sentences under the Carrying of Knives etc (Scotland) Act 1993, which I introduced at Westminster.

Does the First Minister agree that the UN report does not sit well with the slogan that Scotland is the best wee country in the world? Should he not take the issues raised in the report very seriously? Does he agree that we require implementation of action, not talk of action? He would do well to start by ending the situation in which violent criminals

are recycled through our courts and prisons through early release. Will he take early steps on that?

The First Minister: I remind Mr Gallie that automatic early release was introduced by the Conservative Government in a 1993 act; his Westminster Conservative colleagues were responsible for the introduction of that system into Scots law. I reassure the chamber that the coalition Government is absolutely determined to ensure that that policy is ended in Scotland so that we can have a reasonable and responsible system of sentencing and sentence implementation and so that people in Scotland will understand that, when we say that the sentence fits the crime, we mean it, unlike the previous Conservative Government.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): Does the First Minister agree that there is a well-established link between violent crime and excess alcohol consumption? If he accepts that there is such a link, does he also accept that it is the Executive's duty to do as it is doing with tobacco and to try to reduce the overall consumption of alcohol across Scotland, not just in targeting binge drinking, but in recognising that alcohol is a very dangerous legal drug?

The First Minister: I confirm that we are determined to continue to act on the problems of alcoholism, alcohol abuse and alcohol overuse in Scotland. Perhaps the party conference season is not a great time to be talking about such matters, but they are serious problems in Scotland and they have been serious problems for far too long. We have to ensure that we have better licensing laws in Scotland and that we change our culture, particularly among our younger people.

I was particularly pleased to be able to visit a Co-operative store in a certain Glasgow constituency yesterday afternoon in which, as in all that company's branches, there is a strict policy of limiting the sale of alcohol only to people who are over 21, not just 18. Other shops and off-licences could consider that policy and support their staff in implementing it. The responsibility for such matters goes far beyond Government, but we will take our responsibilities seriously and lead the way.

Ageism

6. John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Executive's position is in respect of ageism. (S2F-1821)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): It is important that we all stop thinking of older people as a burden and start thinking about how they can, and do, contribute positively to Scotland. With

encouragement and support, older Scots can help to strengthen our communities and to give younger Scots a better start in life.

John Swinburne: The First Minister can be justifiably proud of the Executive's record on unemployment, which stands at around 4 per cent. Because of ageism, however, in the five years prior to retirement, 40 per cent of men and 41 per cent of women find themselves unemployed and thrown on the economic scrap heap. What plans does he have to remedy that situation?

The First Minister: I have two things to say about that. First, when we talk about the skills that are needed and the learning that is required by our economy and by Scottish society more generally, it is important that we ensure that the process of lifelong learning is not limited to those under 40, 50 or 60 but that it is genuinely lifelong and gives people a chance to replenish their skills and to readjust to new working environments so that they can work until retirement age.

Secondly, in the 21st century, we miss another point if we only concentrate on that. Many older Scots could make a positive contribution not just to our economy—although that is the case—but to our society through helping younger people to read, getting involved in voluntary activity in the community, supporting families and supporting those younger generations who might not have role models or older people who can be there for them.

I think that we need to turn on its head the approach that we have sometimes had to improving services. Although that approach has all been good and beneficial, we need now to think about what positive contribution from older people we can encourage and support. That is the next big challenge. I am sure that John Swinburne will want to work with us on that.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I remind the First Minister that media reports suggest that each month there are around 35 cases of elderly abuse, which is possibly the most ruthless example of age discrimination. What programmes are in place to end that horror?

The First Minister: Off the top of my head, I am not sure exactly what programmes exist, but I know that a considerable amount of work is going on to deal with the abuse of the elderly. That work includes monitoring as well as action to tackle the problem. I will ensure that the appropriate minister writes to Christine Grahame with a full answer as soon as possible.

12:30

Meeting suspended until 14:15.

14:15

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Environment and Rural Development

Contaminated Land

1. Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has any plans to review the regime governing contaminated land. (S2O-7606)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): The Scottish Executive has recently consulted on proposed changes to the regime relating to contaminated land as a source of pollution of the water environment; we are also planning to consult shortly on amendments to extend the regime to cover radioactively contaminated land.

Miss Goldie: I thank the minister for her response, although it affords only partial comfort.

The minister will be aware that redevelopment of farming and industrial sites in Scotland is becoming widespread, and that the current regime places no obligation on the Scottish Executive, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency or local authorities to investigate suspected contamination. I ask her whether that is desirable. For example, at the Royal Ordnance factory site in Bishopton all parties, including the site owners, are genuinely ignorant as to whether contamination is present. Is it acceptable that I have had to submit a requisition under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to the Ministry of Defence in London to find out?

Rhona Brankin: I am aware that the issue causes concern to the local community. I have answered questions and corresponded with the member before on the matter.

I understand that the owners of the site, BAE Systems plc, have no immediate plans to submit a planning application. However, if a planning application is submitted, it will be a matter for the local authority in its role as local planning authority to ensure that remediation is in force through compliance with planning conditions. If, however, no planning application is made, it is up to the local authority as the primary regulator under the contaminated land regime to determine what action is necessary to deal with the site.

Trish Godman (West Renfrewshire) (Lab): The Royal Ordnance factory at Bishopton is in my constituency, and I hear the minister's guarantee

that every square yard will be properly decontaminated if and when that procedure starts.

Although in the first instance this is a matter for the local authority, does the minister agree that all interested parties, including local people, should be consulted? Does she agree that it is important that the written and spoken language of any consultation does not use jargon but is understandable to those who have legitimate concerns over such a proposal?

Rhona Brankin: Yes. I repeat that I am conscious of the concerns that have been expressed to Trish Godman and Annabel Goldie about this issue. I would hope that consultation on any planning application—should one be forthcoming—would be in accessible language. It is hugely important that local people are involved in the planning process; that is why we are legislating on that important matter. In view of the level of concern surrounding contaminated land, the involvement of local people in this instance is particularly important.

Scottish Water (Sewage Disposal)

2. Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it is satisfied that Scottish Water has a plan in place to dispose safely and lawfully of sewage that will not be pelletised and burned at Longannet power station after 28 December 2005. (S2O-7644)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): The processes used to handle, treat and dispose of sewage sludge are operational matters for Scottish Water and, where relevant, its public-private partnership and private finance initiative contractors. It is for Scottish Water and its contractors to treat and/or dispose of sludge in line with the relevant regulations and for the Scottish Environment Protection Agency to enforce those regulations. Scottish Water is preparing a sludge strategy and has commissioned consultants to work on it. The strategy will include a strategic environmental assessment.

Chris Ballance: Scottish Water has problems treating the sludge that it has to deal with at present. The closure of Longannet to sludge from the end of this year will double the amount of sludge that Scottish Water has to deal with. Scottish Water, by its own estimates, will not have the necessary resources to do so before 2010-2014. What is the minister's plan?

Rhona Brankin: I do not intend to comment on the Longannet case, given that there is still the possibility of an appeal. However, I note that the sludge at Longannet comes from works operated under a PPP contract. The point of PPP contracts is that the contractor assumes a risk, and he is

entitled to make his arrangements within the law to deal with that risk. An appeal is still outstanding; whether to pursue it is a matter for ScottishPower. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume both that ScottishPower wishes to meet its regulatory and contractual obligations and that SEPA will enforce the environmental regulations. ScottishPower is discussing with SEPA and my officials the new regulatory situation that will exist after 28 December.

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): The minister will be aware that it was a decision by SEPA that led to a halt on pelletised sewage sludge from Daldowie being burnt at Longannet. Can the minister assure me that discussions with SEPA are continuing in an effort to resolve the issue of what to do with the sludge? What assistance can the Scottish Executive give to Scottish Water and ScottishPower to ensure that what was an environmentally sound process at Longannet can be resumed?

Rhona Brankin: I can assure Scott Barrie that discussions with SEPA, ScottishPower and my officials are on-going. We clearly need to seek to resolve this troubling situation.

Environmental Awareness (Young People)

3. Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to encourage young people to be environmentally aware. (S2O-7639)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): The school curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for young people to learn about the environment and their role in protecting it. For example, in primary schools, environmental studies provide a focus for content and context. In secondary schools, there is specific input in subject areas such as biology and geography.

Irene Oldfather: Does the minister agree that the best way to encourage young people is to ensure that the home, the school and the local community all work in partnership to raise awareness of issues such as littering? Does she believe that schools such as Lawthorn Primary School in my constituency, which has obtained green flag status, demonstrate the way forward in dealing with such important community problems in partnership?

Rhona Brankin: Yes, I agree. I congratulate Lawthorn Primary School in Irene Oldfather's constituency on achieving green flag status under the eco-schools initiative in Scotland. Scotland is leading Europe in the percentage of schools that are involved in the eco-schools programme. At present, more than 2,000 schools in Scotland are now eco-schools.

Litter and wider issues around waste are hugely important. Our success in persuading schools to become eco-schools demonstrates the concern of education authorities, teachers, pupils and parents about litter. Litter is an important issue, and it should be treated as such.

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): I add my praise for the eco-schools programme—I wish that all schools in Scotland would join it.

The minister will be aware that a number of reports have been made on sustainability in education, going back to reports prepared by the late John Smyth of the Scottish Environmental Education Council. What progress has been made to date with the various organisations that have been engaging with the Executive in discussions on sustainability in education across the curriculum?

Rhona Brankin: There are already opportunities for sustainable development education and environmental awareness in the existing curriculum. I have spoken about environmental studies in primary schools; in secondary schools, there is specific input in subjects such as biology and geography. The cross-curricular nature of sustainable development is recognised in the citizenship guidelines published by Learning and Teaching Scotland. The new national qualifications include a set of courses, from access to advanced higher, in the subject area of managing environmental resources.

Crofting

4. Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what the maximum proportion of land under agricultural use is that would be considered appropriate for decrofting in a crofting township. (S2O-7604)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): There is no maximum proportion of croft land that would be considered for decrofting in a township. The needs and circumstances of individuals and crofting communities must be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Crofters Commission when it receives a valid decrofting application. The commission must consider each application on its merits against its own published policies and in compliance with its obligations under the crofting acts.

Mr Stone: Given that the lairds have quite a lot of land that would be perfectly suitable for development, and that sometimes the best land is covered by a decrofting application, would it not be a good idea for the Executive to develop an upper limit? The more land is decrofted, the more the

idea of a crofting community and a crofting township is undermined.

Rhona Brankin: We do not have any plans for such a limit. We think that the existing mechanism works well and meets the needs of the wider public interest. The danger is that an arbitrary limit would be liable to stifle development and could apply unfairly to individuals.

I am aware of concerns; indeed, I met the cross-party group on crofting last week. As Jamie Stone might be aware, the draft Crofting Reform (Scotland) Bill contains provisions that will give crofting communities the power to determine the policy guidelines to be applied by the Crofters Commission in making decisions on regulatory matters in their area. It is hugely important that crofters and crofting communities are involved at an early stage in matters that affect their communities.

Agriculture (Sustainability)

5. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it is satisfied with the long-term sustainability of Scottish agriculture. (S2O-7642)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): Working with the industry, we are determined to secure the long-term sustainability of Scottish agriculture.

Murdo Fraser: Does the minister agree that unless the welcome return of over-30-month beef into the food chain is accompanied by the lifting of the current export ban on that product, there is likely to be a detrimental impact on the already low price? What discussions has the Scottish Executive had with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on that and what progress is being made in relation to the lifting of the ban? I am sure that she would agree that unless the export ban is lifted, the future sustainability of the beef sector is under serious threat.

Rhona Brankin: I am very much aware of the issue; the beef sector is of course hugely important to Scottish agriculture. Our priority is to reopen export markets at the earliest possible opportunity. We will be pressing the case for lifting the European Union embargo with our European partners. We agree that a prolonged domestic consultation period is neither sensible nor necessary and we will take the matter forward with our DEFRA colleagues.

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): Does the minister believe that one of the most significant factors in the sustainability of Scottish agriculture is the attitude taken by the supermarkets towards the balance of risk carried by them and by producers? Is the Executive

minded to become actively involved with consumers and producer organisations in trying to encourage supermarkets, which are making enormous profits, to share some of those profits with people in agriculture whose incomes are collapsing?

Rhona Brankin: Incomes are not collapsing, but ministers recognise that the industry is going through a difficult period with low commodity prices, especially in the beef and milk sectors. Ministers regularly meet industry representatives from all parts of the supply chain and encourage them to work together for the benefit of the sector as a whole. We will continue to emphasise to supermarkets the importance of maintaining a sustainable food chain.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): Question 6 is withdrawn.

Environmental Protection (Firth of Forth)

7. Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with Her Majesty's Government in respect of environmental protection issues arising from the recent application for ship-to-ship transfer of oil in the Firth of Forth. (S2O-7628)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): The Scottish Executive is in regular contact with the United Kingdom Government on a wide range of issues, including environment protection considerations relevant to the proposal for the ship-to-ship transfer of oil in the Firth of Forth.

Christine May: The minister will be aware that the proposal is for very heavy grade crude oil to be transferred using flexible connections between vessels on swinging anchors off Methil in my constituency. She will also be aware of the real environmental safety concerns raised by me, Scottish Natural Heritage, Fife Council and other local authorities on the Forth, other MSPs, community groups and individuals. Will she assure my constituents and all others concerned that she will make HM Government aware of those environmental and other concerns and urge that the application not be agreed until such time as those concerns have been fully addressed?

Rhona Brankin: I am acutely aware of the concerns expressed by the member, her constituents, other MSPs and local authorities. As she knows, Scottish Natural Heritage raised objections in response to the original draft oil spill contingency plan and recommended that an appropriate assessment be undertaken in line with the requirements of the habitats regulations. SNH has advised that it has subsequently received further relevant information from Forth Ports and that that information is being considered by

officials and their legal advisers. Scottish ministers will take advice from SNH following the outcome of that further consideration. Further discussions will take place with the UK Government, if appropriate, in respect of our devolved responsibilities for environmental protection.

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): The proposed transfer of oil between ships in the Forth is set to drive a supertanker through the Executive's marine strategy. Will the minister ask Alistair Darling to put in place specific regulations on those transfers and a locational strategy for such operations in UK coastal waters? In the absence of those measures, will she demand that he reject the application by Melbourne Marine Services Ltd for oil transfer in the Forth?

Rhona Brankin: I have nothing to add to what I have already said, other than to re-emphasise that Scottish ministers will take advice from SNH following the outcome of its further consideration. Further discussions will take place with the UK Government, if appropriate, in respect of our devolved responsibilities for environmental protection. We are very aware of our devolved responsibilities in the area.

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): As the minister is aware, I have written to her department, to the Secretary of State for Scotland and to all relevant bodies about the recent application to indicate my strong opposition, particularly on environmental grounds, and the opposition of the communities that I represent. What reassurance can she give that the views of my constituents will be represented, particularly in light of the limited consultation to date with communities in my area?

Rhona Brankin: I can give the member an assurance that I am happy to meet her at any time; indeed, I have already had discussions with her about the proposal. I have to take advice from SNH. Constituents can voice their opinions to the member, and I am also cognisant of the position that her council has taken.

Water Services (Domestic Properties)

8. Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how it ensures that all domestic properties have access to water services. (S2O-7610)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): Domestic property owners need not connect to the public network. They can have private supplies and sewage treatment as long as those meet standards set by legislation.

Scott Barrie: The minister will be aware of my previous correspondence with her about the water services problems experienced by my constituents

in the former Ministry of Defence properties in Rosyth. Does she agree that it is not on for the Ministry of Defence and Thames Water to pass on responsibility for maintaining the water and sewerage systems to subsequent house buyers and that it is unacceptable that the estimated cost of future repairs has been withheld from home buyers?

Rhona Brankin: I am aware of the situation from correspondence with Scott Barrie; I am also aware of his concerns and the representations that have been made to him. It is a difficult, complex issue with widespread legal ramifications. It is safest to say at this juncture that I am happy to meet him to discuss some of the issues because they cover both devolved and reserved responsibilities.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): What representations has the minister had about the proposals to regulate domestic water supplies from a private source, particularly when those who provide the service will be charged significantly for that? What impact will that have on the decision of small rural bed-and-breakfast businesses to remain in the domestic sector?

Rhona Brankin: I have had representations on behalf of the private sector, which has some fears about the changes. Suffice it to say that the changes will be monitored closely and that some financial help will be made available.

Coastal Erosion

9. Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action is being taken to identify and invest in areas vulnerable to coastal erosion. (S2O-7614)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): We have substantially increased the resources available for flood prevention and coast protection schemes to £89 million over the period 2005-08. We have produced guidance for local authorities that suggests that they consider the preparation of shoreline management plans to help to identify vulnerable areas and the appropriate response. It will then be for authorities to come forward with suitable schemes to take up the increased resources.

Susan Deacon: I welcome the work that is under way. I am sure that the minister is aware that people who live in coastal areas, such as Portobello and Musselburgh in my constituency, are genuinely concerned about the potential impact of coastal erosion. What steps are being taken to communicate with communities, to let them know about the work that is being done and to provide opportunities for their views,

experiences and concerns to be addressed during that work?

Rhona Brankin: I am aware of the concerns that have been expressed in Portobello about the possible effect of climate change on sea conditions. Indeed, I understand that the City of Edinburgh Council is also aware of local concerns and that it will shortly commission consultants to undertake a wave study that should be completed next spring.

On the broader issue, it is important that the possible ramifications of climate change are well understood. Indeed, the Parliament debated the issue yesterday afternoon. It is incumbent on local members such as Susan Deacon and Alasdair Morrison, whose constituency has suffered from the appalling effects of climate change, to raise such matters. It is also incumbent on the Executive to do all that it can to combat climate change and to mitigate its potential effects.

Health and Community Care

Mental Health Strategy

1. Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress has been made on implementation of the mental health strategy. (S2O-7624)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald): The Executive and its partners continue to work to improve mental health services. Significant service improvements have been made as national health service boards and local authorities have worked together to deliver the framework for mental health services in Scotland and to implement the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003. However, all parties recognise that further improvements must be made in the future.

Marilyn Livingstone: How can we improve access to occupational therapy for mental health patients? Such support is crucial and can often prevent both the escalation of problems and hospital admissions. It is also crucial for carers who, after all, play a significant role in the care of patients who often suffer from multiple and complex symptoms.

Lewis Macdonald: I certainly agree that the earliest possible intervention is the best result both for patients and for staff who provide the appropriate treatment. I also agree with Marilyn Livingstone's specific point about the importance of occupational therapy.

This year and last, we have provided £400,000 to attract former skilled professionals, including occupational therapists, back to practice. We recognise that that process needs to continue and that it is important to assist and support carers in

dealing with such matters. Indeed, I expect next week to announce and publish the results of the care 21 project's investigation into the future needs of carers.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 2 was not lodged.

Cancer (Diagnosis and Treatment)

3. Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action is being taken to improve the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. (S2O-7631)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr): Scotland's cancer strategy "Cancer in Scotland: Action for Change" sets out the strategic direction for cancer services. Since 2001, £150 million has been invested, which has led to the employment of 300 additional staff and the introduction of state-of-the-art imaging, radiotherapy and other vital equipment across the country. In addition, a new west of Scotland cancer centre is being built at a cost of £87 million. Our recent announcement on diagnostic waiting times adds £50 million for the purchase of more diagnostic equipment.

All that hard work is leading to a significant improvement in survival rates. For example, deaths from cancer have fallen by 14.8 per cent since 1995, which means that more Scots are now living with and beating cancer.

Michael McMahon: As the minister takes a keen interest in cancer, he will be aware that early diagnosis is very important in the recovery of people who have been diagnosed with cancer. In that respect, a vital bowel cancer initiative that has been introduced in England has been making good progress. How does the minister intend to address the issue of bowel cancer scanning, which helps with the diagnosis and treatment of that illness?

Mr Kerr: I happily advise the member that we are going further than the initiatives that have been introduced down south. We will be able to screen a much wider age group; indeed, good evidence from our pilots in Tayside, Grampian and Fife shows that we will be able to screen everyone between the ages of 50 and 74. We are extending the programme throughout Scotland. It should all be in place by 2009, but its roll-out is beginning now.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): On the merits of early diagnosis, I refer the minister to question S2W-16616, by Shona Robison, which was answered on 26 May by Rhona Brankin, the then Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care, regarding

"research published in *The Lancet* ... on the relative effectiveness of MRI scanners compared with X-rays in

detecting breast cancer in women under 50.”—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 26 May 2005; S2W-16616.]

The answer was that further evidence was required. Has that further evidence been secured, and when will we see some response to that research?

Mr Kerr: The response to that research has not yet been given to me for ministerial discussion and approval, but we continue to invest in diagnostic equipment, as Christine Grahame is aware. I make a positive response to her question by saying that I await the research and advice that will come to me as minister, but nonetheless we continue our investment in scanning equipment and, in particular, in magnetic resonance imaging equipment.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 4 was not lodged.

Community Health Partnerships

5. Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress it is making on the development of community health partnerships across Scotland. (S2O-7597)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr): Since December 2004, all national health service boards in Scotland have submitted community health partnership schemes of establishment. Eleven schemes have been given ministerial approval to date following rigorous evaluation by the Scottish Executive Health Department. Work is continuing between the Health Department and four NHS boards regarding the details of their CHP proposals.

Mrs Milne: Some concern has been expressed about the relationship between local authorities and the CHPs and about the overlapping and harmonisation of different partnership initiatives. In the light of those concerns, can the minister clarify how, in practice, the CHP will be the main agent through which the joint future agenda is delivered?

Mr Kerr: The timing of Nanette Milne’s question is appropriate. Just yesterday, I spoke at the conference of the Association of Community Health Partnerships, which involved the wider family not only of health boards and those who are in our CHPs but of patient, local authority and other partners. As I said to the conference, we must ensure that we shift the balance of care into local settings and, as we do that, we must ensure that we are working jointly with local authorities, the voluntary sector and other providers.

There are some good examples; in particular, I cite the example of Glasgow’s community health and social care partnerships, which are integral in involving our local authorities and our health

boards and health services in the delivery of focused care around the individual citizens in need. I shall continue to ensure that I provide support to those CHPs, and to our local authorities, so that we can work together effectively at local level. The benefit to patients of such work, when we see it happening, is fantastic. It is a question of bringing together the public services around the personal needs of patients, and I think that CHPs and local authority involvement in CHPs are central to that. To date, we have had a good response from local authorities.

Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): I welcome the development of community health partnerships, in particular the newly formed West Lothian CHP. However, it has been suggested that there may be some problems in recruiting to posts in the CHP and that procedures may result in delays before the jobs are widely advertised. Is the minister aware of any such problems? If he is, what suggestions does he have for overcoming them?

Mr Kerr: I must be honest and say that I am unaware of such problems; nonetheless, I would be happy to discuss those specific matters with Mary Mulligan. The issue was not raised yesterday during the question-and-answer session at the CHP conference, but that is not to say that the problem does not exist. We have told the boards to get CHPs established, to get the processes sorted out quickly and to start integrating care at local level. I would seek to remove any barriers that stand in the way of that progress, so I shall discuss the matter further with the member.

NHS 24

6. John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive how it plans to improve confidence in NHS 24. (S2O-7605)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr): I chaired NHS 24’s annual review on 24 August and we had a frank and open exchange about the challenges facing the organisation. The interim chair was commendably honest in acknowledging that NHS 24’s performance last year was simply not good enough and that the service had failed to meet the public’s expectations, and our expectations, of it. We recognise that, for public confidence in the service to be restored, NHS 24 must demonstrate that it can consistently respond to calls quickly, reliably and safely, supporting access to primary care out-of-hours services where that is appropriate and with the minimum of delay.

John Farquhar Munro: I am sure that the minister agrees that the essence of good-quality health care is the delivery of local health care. Is

there a need for the NHS 24 service to be delivered on a more localised basis to ensure that it links effectively with health care providers?

Mr Kerr: I want to ensure that our local NHS boards deliver their part of the bargain on out-of-hours care. I have suggested to chairs of NHS boards that when NHS 24 started, they tended to transfer the whole issue of out-of-hours care to NHS 24. That was inappropriate and we want to correct that.

The NHS boards and NHS 24 need to ensure that local out-of-hours services are quick, reliable, safe and consistent in their delivery. That involves NHS 24 fulfilling its part of the bargain through the services that it provides, and NHS boards playing their role in out-of-hours services. It is about integration at a local level. I agree fully with the member that we want there to be as much local care in our communities as possible. That is the kind of delivery that the Executive seeks. I am aware of the member's interest in Ullapool and other areas.

I am ensuring that NHS 24 and our local health boards are working collectively and jointly to ensure a good service on which the community can rely.

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): As the minister knows, there are concerns in the rural part of my constituency, particularly around Killin, Crianlarich and Tyndrum, that NHS 24 call handlers do not appreciate the remoteness of that part of the Forth valley. Will the minister examine how that problem can be overcome as quickly as possible, so that residents can have confidence in the system?

Mr Kerr: Absolutely. NHS 24 is working with our local boards to address some of those issues and to develop existing links. The technology that is available to NHS 24 along with the co-location of many NHS 24 activities, such as the call centres around the country, will improve that.

The key to some of our concerns and issues of confidence in the service lies in ensuring that our NHS boards work together with NHS 24. Recent statistics on NHS 24's performance suggest that the service is improving and that it is responding to more calls within the standards that we have set, thus providing a better service. That includes a reduction in the use of call back.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): What is being done to help those doctors in practices such as Appin and Lismore who opt in to cover for 24-hour services?

Mr Kerr: It is right to reflect that we have NHS 24 because our general practitioners opted out of delivering that service. There were 3,500 votes in favour of doing so and 700 against. As a result,

NHS 24 has taken on the additional task and challenge of providing an out-of-hours service. It is clear that providing that service has an effect on those individual doctors who are still doing so and on their ability to provide services during the day as well as out of hours. We continue to work closely with NHS boards to ensure that we give GPs the right support so that that level of care is still available to communities.

In specific circumstances, as I discussed during the recess with boards all over Scotland, we are ensuring that we have close relationships with those GPs who work with us to ensure that the proper and appropriate support mechanisms allow them to do their job properly.

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): I will continue the theme that was raised by Sylvia Jackson and Jamie McGrigor. The minister accepts that some GPs still deliver an out-of-hours service in the traditional, pre-NHS 24 fashion. Is there a case for such a service to be maintained in the long term in certain very isolated rural communities? Is there an understanding within NHS 24 and local boards that exceptions might have to be made because of the geography of some parts of Scotland?

Mr Kerr: That is a fair point. However, I do not wish to pre-empt the outcome of the report into NHS 24 that has been undertaken on our behalf and which will cover some of those issues. I expect to receive that report by the end of this month and I will report to Parliament as soon as possible thereafter. I reflect on the member's point and think that it is a fair one.

Public Health (Funding)

7. Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what investment has been made in funding initiatives to help the public to acquire healthier lifestyles. (S2O-7629)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr): Tackling unhealthy lifestyles has been part of an integrated Government approach since devolution. Over the years, a substantial number of initiatives have been put in place that seek, for example, to reduce smoking, to improve diet, to increase physical activity and to reduce the misuse of alcohol.

We are supporting people to make the necessary changes and to make the healthy choice an easy choice, but we are also encouraging people to take responsibility for their own health. We must remember that many factors influence good health. Life circumstances—such as a worthwhile job, a warm dry home, education and a clean environment—also contribute towards physical and mental well-being.

Mr McAveety: I welcome the minister's positive words on the need for a social model of tackling ill-health in Scotland. Will he comment on the need to continue supporting organisations such as the east end healthy living centre, which is a major initiative in Glasgow's east end that combines culture and leisure facilities, the health service and other community health partners to address long-term ill-health issues? Will he commend St Mungo's Academy on its announcement this week of a partnership with Strathclyde police that will allow youngsters to access legally some 30 bicycles, which now will be put to more effective use during the week?

Mr Kerr: On the facility "to access legally", I leave it to the member to take up that point with his constituents.

Around the country, and particularly in Glasgow, there are fantastic examples of how we are tackling the issues of inequality and health inequality. We are trying to turn the national health service into an outward-focused organisation, with people out chapping doors and being active in the community on those very health issues. It is good to see that not only local authorities and health boards but voluntary sector organisations are involved in those initiatives.

I attended the recent opening of the new section of Baillieston health centre. On leaving the building, I was glad to find that the Glasgow Alliance initiative of providing cheap supplies of fruit and vegetables is an integral part of that health centre's work. We are doing many things to change the shape and focus of health in the community. We hope that those initiatives will help to tackle the issue by encouraging people to change their lifestyle through individual choice and by making the healthy choice an easy choice.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): Given the minister's comments on alcohol misuse, will he lodge an amendment at stage 3 to the Licensing (Scotland) Bill to establish a Scotland-wide target for a reduction in alcohol consumption? Instead of just homing in on binge drinking, does the minister agree that we should have as a health objective to discourage any increase in alcohol consumption?

Mr Kerr: I agree strongly that reducing overall alcohol intake is a health objective. Our initiatives, such as our well-developed alcohol action plan—it has been recognised as such by organisations such as the World Health Organisation—receive substantial resources. We are doing a lot to tackle the issue.

On the member's specific suggestion, I will leave it to the responsible minister to advise him.

Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003

8. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether all services and resources will be in place for full implementation of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 in October 2005. (S2O-7595)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald): I am confident that we will have the necessary systems and services in place by 5 October. We will continue to work with health boards and local authorities to ensure that fit-for-purpose services are in place across the spectrum of mental health needs.

Mary Scanlon: Will mother-and-baby, child-and-adolescent and medium-secure units be in place next month as required by the act? Will we have the recommended number of psychiatrists and mental health officers by that time?

Lewis Macdonald: For some of the issues to which the member refers, action is not required immediately or to the same extent as in other cases. For instance, the provisions on appeals against the level of security for patients will not come into force until May next year, but measures are being taken to deal with that issue.

We recognise that the recruitment of psychiatrists is a long-term issue. Measures are in place to try to address the issue, but we realise that some of them will be delivered more quickly than others. However, we recognise the importance of that matter.

On the needs of younger patients, health boards are required, in making provision, to have regard to the age-specific requirements of those who are under 18. I believe that every board will be able to achieve that, but the means by which they do so will vary from area to area. In some cases, discussions are on-going within boards and between boards and the Executive on how that will be addressed.

Alzheimer's Disease (Drug Treatment)

9. Janis Hughes (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence regarding the availability of drugs for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease and other dementia-related illnesses. (S2O-7620)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald): NHS Quality Improvement Scotland has ensured that advice from Scottish experts is available to the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence during its current consultations on

drugs for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. NHS QIS will publish its advice on whether the NICE recommendations should be implemented by the NHS in Scotland in due course.

Janis Hughes: I am sure that the minister is aware of the great concern of Alzheimer Scotland and many community dementia groups about NICE's proposal to cease prescribing the four drugs that are currently used to treat Alzheimer's disease. If NICE supports the current recommendation, will the minister ensure that NHS Quality Improvement Scotland gives very careful consideration to its implications and, in particular, that it examines the clinical effectiveness of the drugs on those who are taking them and the longer-term savings to the NHS in terms of continuing care?

Lewis Macdonald: I am very aware of the concerns surrounding the issue. Earlier this week, I met the Scottish dementia working group, which is made up of individuals who are diagnosed with dementia. The group expressed its concerns to me very clearly. I am happy to give Janis Hughes the assurance that she seeks. NHS Quality Improvement Scotland will give careful consideration to the issue and I will take a close and active interest in the advice that it produces.

Cultural Commission

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The next item of business is a debate on the report of the Cultural Commission.

14:56

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson): I am pleased to launch the debate and look forward to hearing members' views on the report, which was produced in June by the Cultural Commission. I am genuinely interested in hearing what members have to say, which is why there is no formal motion for debate. I believe that we should devote all the available time to discussing the way forward for culture and the arts in Scotland. That gives us collectively nearly one minute for each recommendation of the Cultural Commission and allows me approximately five seconds on each. Colleagues will not be surprised to hear that I do not intend to attempt to consider many of the recommendations specifically; I want, rather, to give them some idea of where our thinking is heading.

I welcome the commission's report and am grateful to its members and all those who contributed their views to it. I can safely say that it was the biggest listening exercise on culture that has ever been undertaken in Scotland. I have been seeking and observing reaction to the report from the key players in the sector. As might be expected, reactions range from approval for selected elements and proposals through to opposition to other recommendations. However, I have not detected an overall consensus, other than that we need to move forward quickly to action. I intend to do that. The debate will mark the formal end of the listening stage. I will return to Parliament later this year to announce our plan of action for the sector.

What do I see as being the big issues? We need to improve how the public sector supports the arts and culture. I refer not just to the Executive, but to key partners, such as local authorities. Many local authorities are doing great things for culture and I would like all councils to do the same. I will work with local authorities and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to achieve that.

We need to ensure that in all parts of Scotland people have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of cultural activities if they wish, and to see the best in the performing and visual arts. Our national companies will have a key role to play in that process. Whatever organisational structure is put in place, those companies will be expected to cater for audiences throughout the country.

We need more co-operation and closer working between public bodies and with the voluntary and

private sectors, but we also need to be clear about what the responsibility of the Scottish Government is. That is the issue on which I want to concentrate. I believe that we have an obligation to do three main things at national level. The first is to provide support for bodies and individuals who represent the pinnacle of performing talent at national level. The second is to secure the means of developing and nurturing that talent by providing opportunities for participation in a wide range of cultural activities. The third is to support and enhance Scotland's world-beating national collections. I will say a little about each of those points.

First, on performing talent, in 2003 the First Minister spoke of the links between culture and confidence. He also said much about aspiration and he said that all of us, especially our young people, must have something to aim for and emulate. The pinnacle of achievement that aspiring young performers should aim for is to be the best in Scotland, the best in the United Kingdom and the best in the world. I suggest that Scotland's national companies must aim to fulfil all three of those aspirations.

We must think radically and look beyond the current definition of national companies. We have, of course, already started on that. In the National Theatre of Scotland we have a model that targets funds specifically at production rather than at support of structures. That is a great example for promoting performing excellence and for distributing arts funding to properly showcase the finest talent.

I am determined that the Executive's future spending plans will target investment to programmes and delivery, rather than to unwieldy or unnecessary bureaucracies, which are a drain on resources. I am equally determined that our financial backing will support artistic and cultural activity and not stifle it.

Scotland's current model of cultural infrastructure has grown up as an accident of history rather than through a consistent nationally agreed plan. Solutions that once served us well are no longer fit for purpose. We must develop an infrastructure that we know can do its job. That means change—perhaps even a radical overhaul—but I am not convinced that the commission's preferred solution is the right one.

Of course, if we are to have world-class national companies we must nurture home-grown talent. My ambition is that the stars whom we see performing in our national productions should include Scots from all walks of life and all backgrounds.

During this year's Edinburgh international festival I attended—as did some colleagues who

are in the chamber—Scottish Ballet's Balanchine programme. Three members of the company came through the school of dance that is based in Glasgow's Knightswood Secondary School, which is very encouraging.

Scotland has always been a hotbed of artistic talent, but I believe that we need a new approach to help people who have proven ability to realise their potential. The current structures are not designed specifically to support that.

One of the strongest sections of the commission's report was on education. I intend to work with my colleague the Minister for Education and Young People to see which of the ideas would fit with and complement the Scottish education system. We will examine closely the evaluation work that the Scottish Arts Council is currently undertaking into the role of cultural co-ordinators and we will work with COSLA to see whether mainstreaming of cultural co-ordinators is the right way forward.

We should provide a ready route for the development of flair and talent that leads from the formal education system to levels of international performing excellence. The supporting role of schools should be pivotal in the early stages. Further progress should be developed through bodies such as the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and the new screen academy, which should take proven talent on to the highest level. That must apply to all art forms; not only the performing arts, but to literature, design and film which, frankly, have in my view been overlooked in the past.

I am interested in identifying ways to recognise and honour Scotland's major creative artists and cultural icons; I have asked the Scottish Arts Council to explore proposals for such a scheme. We set up the Dewar arts awards to help nurture up-and-coming talent. Additionally, the Scottish Arts Council's creative Scotland awards currently promote great ideas from established artists. It is a unique scheme that has been well received by the sector. Other countries celebrate their greatest artists; I believe that ours deserve the same recognition for their outstanding contributions. We have already given Edwin Morgan the title of Makar—a role that he deserves and which he has filled with distinction. I want to build on that and, over time, to create a roll-call of Scotland's cultural excellence that can act as a source of national pride.

The third responsibility of the Government is support and enhancement of our superb national collections. Those should be innovatively presented and made accessible to as many people as possible throughout the country. The collections must be used to excite, inform and educate not only Scots at home but people throughout the world.

A common factor in all three of the national responsibilities is access. I argue that there is no shortage of opportunity to enjoy culture. In fact, in Scotland at the moment it is constantly festival time. We set up EventScotland to help and support new and existing events around Scotland and it is doing just that. It is about to announce financial support for another 17 events around Scotland. If we secure the Commonwealth games in 2014, that will be a festival of culture as well as of sport.

We can do more, however. Our desire to boost access led us to ask the commission to explore the notion of rights and entitlements. The commission's report gives a comprehensive account of developments in this area and proposes legislation as the route to establishing such an approach. I am looking carefully at those proposals. I believe that we need to be practical and clear about what we are trying to achieve and about whether legislative change can contribute to that end. I am interested in testing and exploring initiatives, which seems to be the best way of making certain that what is implemented will actually work. I will be particularly interested in learning lessons from the cultural pledge that Highland Council—inspired by the celebration of Scotland's year of highland culture in 2007—is developing for young people.

I am also considering whether cultural standards and entitlements can succeed in developing an appetite for culture. I want to explore the reasons for participation—and for the lack of it—and I want to look more at how community planning can be used to encourage communities to plan for their cultural requirements.

I want to ensure that we exploit new technologies as a means of promoting Scotland's culture and developing audiences. I am therefore looking carefully at the commission's proposal for a national box office. VisitScotland is developing a pan-Scotland what's-on database for culture and sport that will help visitors to plan their trips. We may extend that online support to provide electronic ticketing for events around the country. I believe that the venues and companies that receive public subsidy have a special responsibility. It is not enough for them to focus only on the audiences that they have already; they need also to reach out to others.

It is not only the public sector that can play its part. Some private sector businesses already do a lot to sponsor and promote the arts. Given that all businesses benefit from the cultural life of the places in which they operate, the question is what more the private sector can do to support culture.

Another crucial question is how the many thousands of volunteers in the arts can be helped. I would particularly like to hear colleagues' views

on that subject. In considering the issue, we will be mindful of the report that the Enterprise and Culture Committee produced earlier this year.

Since the commission reported, acres of newsprint have thundered with comments about future funding for arts and culture. I have certainly been impressed by the scale of the figures that have been suggested, but that is easy for someone to do when they do not have to make tough and sometimes unpopular decisions on prioritising Government funding. Only when we have determined our final response to the review will we know what to cost. Clearly, a detailed assessment of the financial implications will be necessary. We will look at that as we deliberate on our implementation plans.

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): A minute ago the minister mentioned the private sector. Clearly there are great chunks of cash out there. Does the minister have any ideas as to how we might encourage the private sector—rich benefactors and so on—to put more of their money into the arts? What carrots can we use to encourage them to do so?

Patricia Ferguson: That is a big subject at which Arts and Business Scotland is adept and at which it continues to work. We will have to examine why people give their money in that way. Usually it is because they have some interest in a particular institution or in a project that an institution happens to run.

We need to look at the subject in terms of all our institutions and to find out whether there are ways of supporting culture better or of taking matters forward in more detail. However, I can tell members that our ambitions are based on the presumption that others will join us and that they will meet their respective obligations.

Because we are committed to culture, we plan to take decisive action. A lot of uninformed comment has been made about the Executive's approach to culture. It has been said that we are devoid of ideas and that we are averse to taking risks. Vicky Featherstone at the National Theatre of Scotland would not agree with that. It has also been claimed that we are philistines. It is strange, in that case, that the incoming director general of the National Galleries of Scotland said on his appointment that the Executive should be applauded for showing an interest in culture, particularly at a time when many other European Governments are doing the reverse.

We are lambasted for not providing enough money. I do not think that the National Library of Scotland would have agreed with that when it came to acquiring the Murray archive, or that the National Museums of Scotland would have agreed when it came to securing a Concorde for Scotland.

That we do not care about our heritage is another claim, yet we have taken decisive steps to secure the future of the Gaelic language and Gaelic culture. In addition, we are investing heavily in Scotland's year of highland culture and the 2009 year of homecoming, which will celebrate the enduring legacy of our national bard, Robert Burns—a true national and international icon.

Of course, we have also been accused of not listening. I assure members that we are listening and that we are taking action. The Government cares about culture. We want to do all that we can to make Scotland a hotbed of cultural talent and a nation that celebrates its cultural achievements. I hope that everyone here today can sign up to that ambition.

15:10

Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I congratulate the Cultural Commission on its report. I confess that I was somewhat sceptical about whether it would be able to produce a report that was focused enough. Given that the report contains 131 recommendations, some of my scepticism was well placed. The report should have had more focus, but its lack of focus reflects the commission's broad remit. Many of the recommendations are worthy and will direct the debate on cultural policy in the months and years to come.

We cannot delay making progress on many of the issues that the report addresses. One key issue is that the Executive must be clearer about what exactly it seeks to achieve with its cultural policy. The policy should serve to release the potential of the people of Scotland—which is fundamental to our national identity—and to enhance and build upon their creativity, improve the economy and make Scotland a better and more exciting place to live.

A good starting point for the Executive would be to focus on some of the issues that have been highlighted in the report, particularly the possibility of legislating on cultural rights. If we are to be ambitious about what we want to achieve with our cultural policy, we should underpin the right of Scotland's citizens to achieve their full cultural and creative potential. I hope that when the minister publishes her full response later this year she will say whether a bill will be introduced to achieve that.

In the course of the commission's consideration of evidence, and following publication of its report, there was quite a bit of debate about structure. The commission was correct to recognise that the Government must not just view culture as an add-on and that it should, rather, place culture in the main stream of Government thinking in order to

promote cultural awareness and creativity, which are at the core of any self-confident and healthy society.

I agree with the minister that the commission went wrong with its preferred option for structural change in the sector. Its proposal that there should be two competing bodies—one dealing with funding and another dealing with priorities—is a recipe for conflict and simply would not work. If we are to widen the scope of artists' contribution to society, we require a new flexible and proactive body for the arts in Scotland that recognises the primacy of artists in the whole process. Without teachers there can be no schools, and without doctors and nurses there is no health care, so without artists there will be no art. We need a process that places greater focus on artists, not on structure for structure's sake. Only then will we enable those artists to contribute to wider society. That means that we need to be prepared to invest money in, and support, art for the sake of art.

If we are to get the process correct nationally, we must first ensure that we get it right locally. Our local authorities have a responsibility to provide cultural leadership in their communities. One of the most effective ways in which we could ensure that they do so would be to ensure that cultural activity is central to the community planning process. Many people's first engagement in cultural activity takes place at local level. People must have a meaningful opportunity to participate in planning for cultural activities in their communities. Communities must feel that the process is purposeful and that it supports local artists and allows for the proper exchange of skills.

Mr Stone: Does the member agree that, as presently framed in legislation, the local authorities' role is a bit pick and mix in that they do not have to deal with the arts? Is there a case for hardening up the legislation to give local authorities a much firmer remit on the arts?

Michael Matheson: Mr Stone may be aware that the Cultural Commission's report recommends that the process should be underpinned with regulation or legislation and that the Enterprise and Culture Committee's report on its inquiry into arts in the community recommended that we ensure that cultural matters be embedded in the community planning process. I hope that the minister will make progress on those recommendations in the coming months.

Another key theme that the commission identified was the importance of our education system to effective delivery of cultural policy throughout the country. Too often, Scotland is ambivalent about its indigenous culture. The study of Scottish history, music, language and literature are often viewed as being of marginal importance. At present, of the five national priorities in

education, there is no mention of culture. Although Scotland has internationally recognised writers, Scottish literature is not routinely used to form the basis of literature teaching in our schools. We must ensure that we use the creative talents that we have in Scotland as a foundation for learning in our schools.

The Cultural Commission's report highlights the chronic underfunding in the cultural sector, which must be seriously addressed if we are to make progress; if it is not, the difficulties will continue. In the past six years, we have had a national strategy, two reviews and a commission, so it is understandable that the cultural community is somewhat sceptical about whether there will be any effective change now. We need decisions to be made about what will happen and we need the minister to take action and show leadership.

15:18

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): We believe that a strong cultural base is necessary for the health of our nation. Arts and culture are important for each individual. A basic foundation course that was attached to lifelong learning would inspire and educate some people and individuals would make their own choices of what they like and do not like.

The excellent brief from the Scottish Museums Council states:

"The reality for the user of cultural services in Scotland is a somewhat disjointed and potentially confusing experience. There are cultural black spots in local delivery and areas with a duplication of services."

I am afraid that that is often correct. As anyone who travels the length and breadth of Scotland will know, the black spots are not in the more affluent areas of our major cities, but tend to be in the deprived areas and rural towns. In contrast, the duplication of services occurs because there is too much administration in the centres and not enough direct funding for the arts and artists.

We should certainly talk about the importance of culture to tourism, which has become our biggest industry. It is vital that cultural attractions such as museums, libraries, theatres and centres of music exist throughout Scotland to cater for the increased market in tourism. I was interested in the minister's wish to involve VisitScotland as a ticket agent—that will be fine as long as the tickets are for the right shows, although I do not know what other ticket agents in Scotland will think about the idea.

Rural Scotland needs more cultural focal points to celebrate the present and the future as well as local museums that tell exciting stories of the history in each area. Historical tourism and archaeological tourism exist in abundance in Scotland and play a distinctive role in the make-up

of Scottish culture; they should therefore play a lucrative role in Scottish tourism.

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): Does the member agree that as well as catering for tourists, it is important—as the minister has said—to build that appreciation of our culture among our local people?

Mr McGrigor: I certainly agree with that.

The brief from the Scottish Arts Council indicates where many problems lie. It says that over the past 50 years its role and remit has greatly broadened but that the funding has not. The SAC says that the introduction of lottery funding by the Conservatives in 1995 gave increased opportunity for it to widen its investment in community projects, so the arts flourished. That has been successful to such a degree that lottery funds are currently oversubscribed by 100 per cent. The problem is that in 1995 the SAC provided core funding for 73 arts organisations on a budget of £23.7 million, but 10 years later it supports 108 organisations with a budget of £40.2 million. From those figures, anyone can see that its system is overstretched. Unfortunately, opera, music, dance, film and theatre in Scotland are suffering as a result. The fact that the lottery was used by the Labour Government for pet political projects such as land reform, instead of the projects for which it was originally designed, does not help because there is now less money for arts than there was previously.

The SAC has difficulty in distributing too little to too many, which is why the tragedy of Scottish Opera has happened. The Jonas report that showed that funds for Scottish Opera were inadequate was ignored, and as a result the highest quality cultural icon that Scotland has possessed for the past 40 years has been severely damaged.

We do not support the commission's preferred option of setting up a culture body and a culture fund because we do not believe that that would be of benefit to the public or to artists. The National Museums of Scotland, The National Galleries of Scotland and the National Library of Scotland have worked well with direct funding and direct accountability to the minister; I would suggest that Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet, the National Theatre and even Scottish Screen should perhaps join that club. That would mean that adequate funding and a proper long-term strategy could be determined directly by the minister for the arts and the leaders of the main Scottish cultural organisations, with no need for expensive middlemen. That would also enable the SAC or any other arm's-length delivery service to concentrate its resources on developing new themes for other branches of culture.

Culture Scotland and the culture fund will just necessitate more and more staff and large administration and accommodation budgets, which simply eat up money that could be used for direct funding of arts and artists, which is what we want. We think that the commission's political notion of enshrining cultural rights in law is impractical and ridiculous and would be a waste of Parliament's time. People already have rights to express themselves, which are noted in the United Nations's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and local authorities already have a duty to provide cultural experiences. The problem with local authorities is that often half their arts and leisure budget goes on sport, leaving little for other sorts of culture. However, that is another debate.

Let us never forget the importance of the voluntary and private sectors. The voluntary sector is a vital but often unsung element of Scotland's cultural scene. It is a source of huge experience, energy and talent. Voluntary groups are usually highly motivated by love of the subject, and therefore help to ensure the best possible access to cultural activity in Scotland. A comparatively small investment, covering the key issues of training, co-ordination and help to volunteers would bring a disproportionate payback to Scotland's cultural wealth. More funding should be available for that sector.

The approach to the private sector in Scotland also needs to be rethought. True partnerships between business and culture, founded on strategic co-operation for mutual benefit, will benefit all. Less than £10 million is invested in Scotland annually from the private sector and most of that is spent in Glasgow or Edinburgh. In America, private sponsorship is huge; that could be the case here if tax incentives were used to encourage individuals and corporate bodies to get involved in stimulating culture and arts in Scotland.

15:24

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): We all have to be selective in what we say. It is slightly like turning "Tristan und Isolde" into "The Minute Waltz". However, I would like to concentrate on what I see as the main issues.

We have to persuade people to take culture more seriously, including many of our colleagues in Parliament, ministers and some Government and council departments. Cultural activity is, in itself, good for people and is also a good investment. We must therefore pursue it more vigorously.

For a start, the minister—who has made an excellent effort in starting to approach the issue—should have a national advisory group. I do not mean that there should be yet another

consultation process, but there should be a group of people who would give her advice. The group could draw on all parties represented in this chamber—which would make it a collective effort, rather than a matter of party warfare—COSLA, which has made some interesting proposals, and people from large and small cultural organisations. Being able to get advice from such quarters would help the minister to get ahead.

Another thing that the minister needs is an audit of existing provision. Nobody knows what on earth exists across Scotland. We need a sort of Baedeker's guide to what exists in the way of cultural arrangements and activities.

The Executive's position needs to be strengthened. I am not sure about the quality and quantity of the professional support that the minister gets at the moment.

The minister—as ministers do—has quoted the success stories that have arisen from provision of funding. However, as I understand it, our drama companies get about half the money that the equivalent English ones do, our orchestral players are among the worst paid in Europe and there is a serious lack of sustained funding. We have to invest more because that investment will pay us back. Instead of pouring money into a big black hole in the health service, if we were to invest in culture, sport and things like that, we would get a huge return in relation to people's happiness and health, the economy and so on.

The national companies should be directly funded. Given that such funding seems to work quite well with museums, galleries and so on, why would it not work with opera, ballet and orchestral music? It could also work in relation to the major drama companies, particularly those that tour and which find it difficult to get money from local government. We must regard money that is spent in that way as investments in the buildings and the activities.

We have to ensure that our national bodies—museums, opera companies or whatever—spread themselves around the country more. For example, the National Library of Scotland should lead a sort of collective of local libraries in relation to exhibitions and that type of thing. In that way, culture could be spread around the country much better than it is. For example, this year Glasgow City Council helped Dumfries and Galloway Council to set up a good impressionist exhibition. The Scottish Executive helped, Dumfries and Galloway supplied many volunteers and Glasgow produced the pictures. Everyone benefited, particularly the 60,000 or so people who visited the exhibition.

The key point that I would like to make—it was one of the good points in the commission's

report—is that we need to have local cultural strategies created by local cultural partnerships between councillors, officials and the people who are interested in culture of all sorts, including individual and group activities, professional and amateur activities, museums and so on. There is huge energy in communities that could be stimulated if we were to go about things in the right way.

Some councils, such as Glasgow City Council, approach culture in a good way but others, which I had better not name, approach it in a bad way. If we are to do what I suggest and give a lot of power to local communities, there has to be a way to ensure that a good approach is taken. For example, Government monitors—or whatever they might be called—could ensure that people are performing as well as they should be.

We should place much more emphasis on education. Culture should be at the centre of education—not on the periphery as it is at the moment—because it makes people more creative and appreciative. We should nurture the talent that we have in our schools through our colleges and so on, and then we should give creative people a career path, which we do not do at the moment.

Publishing is an activity that is grossly neglected by the Government. The industry does not get any help, and Scottish books and writers are not properly represented in libraries and bookshops.

We should closely scrutinise quangos—if possible, we should get rid of some—and we should reduce bureaucracy. We should have no more consultants ever again. Also, we should try to attract funding from other sources, as the minister said. We have a great opportunity, and I hope that we can work together to take it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. I will try to allow as many back benchers as possible to speak. Members will have a tight six minutes each for speeches.

15:31

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green): I draw members' attention to my registered interest as a playwright with a very small income. That is relevant to the position of artists in Scotland today.

Eighty per cent of visual artists earn less than £5,000 a year from their profession. A Scottish Arts Council survey in 2000 discovered that 50 per cent of professional writers earned less than £5,000 a year. The same survey in 2005 revealed that 57 per cent of writers earn less than £3,000 a year—the situation is getting worse for artists in Scotland. That figure does not represent young hopefuls; two thirds of those who earn that miserable amount have been writing professionally

for more than 10 years. As has been said, although one or two artists may earn a fortune, it is almost impossible for artists to earn a simple living. The Cultural Commission recognises the fact that creative individuals are among the lowest earners in society and calls on the Executive to provide additional financial support and to raise the profile of creative individuals. The report recognises that support and encouragement for artists

“is a key factor in delivering cultural opportunities across Scotland.”

I think that it is the key to a thriving culture sector.

The commission's central findings on delivery structures are now dead in the water. At the conference that I organised in the Parliament last week for arts and artists organisations, there may have been no consensus on a preferred national structure, but there was unanimity against the commission's preferred option. No one believes that the bureaucracy costs would not increase; no one wants the years of disruption that setting up and bedding down such a system would take.

The present structures can be improved and the Scottish Arts Council can and must become less bureaucratic in its dealings with artists. Last year, the Enterprise and Culture Committee heard about the amount of time that voluntary arts organisations spend filling in forms for very small amounts of money. The real requirement is not for structural change, but for better investment—the commission's request for 1 per cent of funding to be spent on arts and culture.

Where art has a political purpose—art in hospitals, in prisons and in schools, for example—it should be paid for out of the budgets for those places. The Scottish Arts Council budget should be reserved for supporting art that is challenging, innovative and aiming only at excellence. Art in pursuit of social or political agendas may also be excellent, but it must serve its agenda first and should be paid for by those who set the agenda. It is up to the minister to argue the social case for funding for the arts in Cabinet and she has all the facts and figures on her side in doing that.

As Donald Gorrie said, the arts community has had enough of consultation strategy documents and best-value reviews. In the game of musical chairs that has so bedevilled the culture portfolio over the past few years, the music has stopped and the minister is in the chair. It is decision time. I welcome her speech, which promised real new steps forward, and I congratulate her on giving her first reactions to the report to the Parliament—that is worthy of note.

However, as the commission's report recommends, let us now see a procurement fund from the Executive to enable libraries to purchase

books that are published or written in Scotland. The cross-party group on Scottish writing and publishing, which met on Tuesday night, made it clear that that should be a priority. Let us have more Scottish literature taught in Scottish schools—another priority for the cross-party group. Let us have cultural activity recognised and adopted as the key methodology for all children and young people in education. The minister is right: the education section of the report is particularly strong and deserves to be taken up.

There must be greater awareness in the tourism industry of the potential of the cultural sector. VisitScotland should have a strategy for marketing Scotland's literary festivals.

Culture should be a key strategic theme in community planning. Let us have greater stability of funding. Last week, I visited the Scottish Maritime Museum in Irvine. The museum has an important collection with huge potential, yet there is no way of developing it because year-on-year funding bars the museum from applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other trusts.

Let us have cultural rights for all, including people in old people's homes, long-stay hospitals and prisons, who have great difficulty in accessing the arts. Let us see Government championing the arts. I would like cultural and artists' organisations involved in decision making. We have had business in the Parliament conferences and we have had a science in the Parliament event, so why should we not have an Executive-sponsored arts in the Parliament event?

Jennie Lee said:

"What the arts need from Government is money, policy, and silence."

I see that the minister knows the quotation well. I suggest that over the past six years the arts have received little money, no strategy, but a great deal of noise. The arts world, many of whose representatives are in the gallery this afternoon, awaits the minister's next announcement with great interest.

15:36

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): I, too, must remind the chamber of my registered interests as chairperson of the Scottish Library and Information Council and as a trustee of the Fife Historic Buildings Trust.

I welcome the report and find myself in broad agreement with most members—that is what I sometimes like about debates that have no motion to be decided on—although I do not agree with everything that everybody has said.

It is important to remind ourselves of the reasons for the review. I am sorry to have to

disagree with Chris Ballance, but the review showed the top-level commitment by the Executive to the role and place of culture in Scotland's life. The report, substantial as it is, demonstrates a great deal of work by many dedicated, committed people, many of whom are in the gallery this afternoon.

As the minister said, the report is the start of a process of action; it is not an end product and must not be seen as such. There are bits in it that people do not agree with. However, it contains many good ideas that do not need legislation or substantial structural change, but require focus.

Some of the proposals are already being carried out. Where the report perhaps falls down a little is in being overbureaucratic, as other members have pointed out. It does not give sufficient recognition to individuals, communities and organisations that are doing a great deal of good, innovative work.

I congratulate the Executive on what it has done so far. I have seen in my constituency of Central Fife what the Scottish Arts Council's cultural co-ordinators in schools have done. I have seen what has been done with lottery funding on the people's war project in Livingston, where school pupils produced a superb newsreel. I praise the work that has been done on the new national theatre. I welcome the support for festivals, the events strategy, the academy of artists, the cultural icons awards and the extension of the Irish aos dána concept. Those have either been done or are being done.

I agree with the minister and the many other members who have said that we do not need yet another quango to deal with the arts and that we do not require legislation. We can examine our structures to ensure that they are streamlined, as Chris Ballance and others said.

Action has to be centred on several key principles. The first of those is standards and quality assurance—although I am perhaps not thinking of Donald Gorrie's cultural inspectors calling. The Scottish Library and Information Council already has a quality assurance scheme for libraries, which it is now ready to pilot. The scheme will enable users to understand their entitlements and local authorities to demonstrate quality. Perhaps that is a starting point, from which we might see whether the scheme can be rolled out elsewhere.

One serious issue that is perhaps missing from the report is skills development. The announcement last week of the sector skills agreement for the audiovisual industries, through Skillset Scotland, is a key milestone in encouraging quality in arts and culture provision. On reflection, the commission might have felt that that ought to have been included. I hope that the minister will take that on board.

On equality of access and entitlement for all, Chris Ballance and others have mentioned various sectors of society—the young and the old and minority and non-English language speakers—as well as non-traditional arts and cultures. Donald Gorrie and others highlighted the right to a basic level of quality service across Scotland. I would also highlight at this point issues around new media, archives, digitisation and web-based information. The people's network initiative has done a great deal to give access to worldwide information, including information on arts and culture, right across Scotland. Work is also being done to set up a national photographic archive for Scotland.

People also need access to the best work of all our national companies. Everybody has the right to a quality experience, not just those who live in or have easy access to cities. In supporting those national bodies, how do we preserve the best of what is local? We cannot do that without the involvement and co-operation of local authorities, which operate venues and, of course, run education services and hold the funding. Local authorities are the first point of call for many services, such as libraries, museums and archives.

Next week, I will attend the launch of the first integrated smart card in Scotland, which will give people in Fife access to a whole range of services to which they are entitled. People could use such cards to access their cultural entitlement. Local community planning is key to that, as it brings together health, tourism and economic development. Michael Matheson and others have spoken about getting business involved. That is certainly the way to do things locally, although nationally we might need another solution. I hope that, from today, the implementation of the many good ideas contained in the report will begin.

15:42

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): I find this a difficult debate, because there is just so much to talk about and not enough time to do everything justice. "Culture" is such a catch-all word. It covers television, classical drama, opera, folk and traditional music, jazz, dancing and ballet. It is difficult to define what culture is: one person's idea of culture might be another person's idea of absolute horror if they had to sit through it for a couple of hours.

The Cultural Commission put in a lot of hard work—and, gosh, what a huge document it came up with—to try to define culture and somehow to create a route map to reach that destination. Culture is something to which everyone seems to aspire—every man, woman and child in the country will apparently be rejoicing in their love of

and participation in culture. I am not all that convinced that that is realistic, admirable intention though it is. I am also not convinced that we can be too prescriptive about culture—telling people what they will learn to enjoy. I remain to be convinced that legislating for cultural rights will take us beyond the initial euphoria of saying that everyone has a right to culture. Nevertheless, I remain open minded.

The role of government, both national and local, is to ensure access to cultural activities of varying kinds, as well as to ensure that awareness is raised of the different aspects of what we call culture. There might well be a lot of people out there who would enjoy certain things but never get the chance to participate in them or to see whether they like them. One of the keys to that, which comes out strongly in the commission's report, is the education system, which is where we should begin. I like the idea of a permanent, nationally consistent culture co-ordinators scheme. Christine May talked about Fife in that respect. Some of the cultural co-ordinators that we have had have done a great job in raising awareness among schoolchildren of the potential for performing and for just enjoying.

Schools are doing a lot just now—some teachers are doing an awful lot—as are our national companies. A primary school in East Kilbride has Scottish Opera come along every year. I am privileged to have gone along a couple of times to see the sterling work that Scottish Opera does in communities, which does not often get mentioned.

The issue is about taking culture—I am starting to dislike using the word—or the arts into schools and letting people see the opportunities for participation and enjoyment. However, it is also about ensuring that schoolchildren are taken out of school, whether as part of curricular or extracurricular activities, to all different forms of culture. That might involve visiting Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, which I did many times when I was at school—I know that other members did, too—visiting the national museums to see the national collections or learning how to use libraries. All those things start to form children's views of culture.

Recommendation 11 in the education section, on page 76 of the report, asks

"That a national strategy for educational materials, visits and experiences supported by companies and institutions across Scotland and co-ordinated by Learning Teaching Scotland be developed."

That is sound reasoning and logic and we can move forward with it.

Local authorities have a big role to play. I would love to see in every town an arts centre or

theatre—a physical presence for the arts that is used for all types of culture, whether storytelling, literature clubs or performances. People in every community should have somewhere where they can enjoy culture at a reasonable cost.

Mr Stone: Will the member take an intervention?

Linda Fabiani: I am just winding up.

Raising awareness must go right through the education system from primary schools to secondary schools and into further education. I make a plea for us to fund theatre companies such as 7:84—Wildcat used to do this as well—which go round schools and education establishments and into communities with political messages. We have to fund that and get folk thinking and stimulated politically. If they are stimulated politically, they will be stimulated in all other walks of life. It is far too easy to say that the companies are going against the establishment. I think that there is a bit of that, but I know that the funding for 7:84 is at risk. It has done things that I think are pretty awful, too, but surely theatre should be about challenging perceptions and making people think a bit differently.

I will finish there, much as I could talk for ever, even though I thought that I would have hardly anything to say when I stood up.

15:48

Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): Today we are talking about culture, but the truth is that the voice of Scottish culture speaks with a passion and an eloquence that no politician's speech can ever match. There is one spectacular example of when this chamber has really given vent to that voice—the day of the opening of the building. I ask members to cast their minds back to the fantastic performances by Eddi Reader and Nicola Benedetti, Liz Lochhead's cheeky rendition of Edwin Morgan's words and that moment when we joined hands in the camaraderie that can only ever be "Auld Lang Syne". It was a microcosm that captured what Scottish culture means to this nation, this Parliament and to us as human beings. I know that I was not alone in wiping tears from my eyes that day and I make no apology for saying so. The day was about pride, emotion, confidence, identity and sheer enjoyment—things that are hard to describe and virtually impossible to measure, but so real when experienced and so central to the well-being of our people and the success of our nation. That is what today is about.

Make no mistake, we have travelled a long way since devolution in recognising the centrality of cultural activity in Scotland. From the publication of the first national culture strategy through to the

First Minister's St Andrew's day speech and the Cultural Commission's report, Government has pushed the boundaries of thinking and crossed the Rubicon to recognise that culture is not a side issue or a fringe activity, but entirely consistent with, and a vital contributor to, the economic and social well-being of our nation.

Having recrafted that narrative—and I endorse what others have said—we must now work to make a reality of those aspirations. It would be a tragedy if momentum were lost in the months to come through a preoccupation with structures, indecision or bureaucracy or through yet more finessing of strategies, measurement or process. Let us be honest: it is not just Government that has such tendencies; all organisations do. Indeed, as individuals, we sometimes demonstrate those traits, too.

Of course money and investment must be at the heart of the debate and of course more investment is needed, but it would be quite wrong if we became preoccupied simply with numbers and with those parts of national or local budgets that are specifically earmarked for the arts. The big prize is to embed culture and creativity in mainstream planning and investment across public spending and in the private sector.

The Enterprise and Culture Committee's arts in the community inquiry has been mentioned. The committee was unequivocal in highlighting the virtuous circle that connects culture with economic growth, individual health and the well-being of communities. We do not need yet more evidence and evaluation to tell us that cultural and creative activity can help to foster enterprise and innovation, to improve health and even to reduce crime. However, we now need to make a step change in putting that thinking into practice.

We have much to build on. Let me give just a few examples of what we might do. Local cultural co-ordinators have rightly been mentioned, as they are delivering results in many areas. However, there are only around 75 such posts in Scotland, compared with more than 600 active schools co-ordinators. We can and must extend coverage.

What about the national health service, which has a budget that is rapidly approaching £10 billion? The value of arts and culture in preventing and even treating ill health, especially mental health, is increasingly recognised. There is growing evidence that such approaches are often more clinically effective and cost effective than many conventional medical solutions. Clinicians, too, increasingly express that view. Greater Glasgow NHS Board now has an arts officer who works to develop arts and health projects and to embed the arts in the work of the health service in the Glasgow area. We must ask what other NHS boards are doing in that regard.

Excellent work is being done in criminal justice. However, instead of constantly crying for more police officers, we should recognise the need for more community arts-based activities to help to change behaviour and to make our communities safer.

Great work is going on with our youngsters, but I make a plea for the very young. A baby can be stimulated through colours, music and movement from the moment that it enters the world and, many would argue, within the womb. However, too many children are halfway through primary school before they get access to opportunities for instrumental tuition, drama and the like. Projects such as bookstart, which puts books into babies' hands from when their stubby fingers can first manage to turn the pages, make a genuine difference. We have such projects in some communities; we need them in all.

There is so much more to say and so much more that needs to be done, but I end on the overarching point that many other members have made: we must now move from debate to action. The political will is not in question, but, just as we aspire to greater confidence and creativity for our nation, we must expect it from our Executive, demonstrate it in the Parliament and demand it from every individual and organisation that has an interest not just in the arts, but in the future of our country.

15:55

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): I begin by picking up two of Susan Deacon's points. On her comment about stimulating babies with culture, I have to say that my wife is very pleased with my attempts to stimulate our new baby. I talk to her politically each evening before she goes to sleep and, amazingly, she sleeps for nearly nine hours. However, I do not know what that says about her future party allegiances.

It would also be remiss of me not to talk about the excellent Eddi Reader. Last year, I missed the opportunity of listening to Eddi's performance in the Parliament, because I was otherwise detained declaring a republic on Calton hill. However, it is with great pleasure that I announce that, after performing for the Queen last year, Eddi will perform on 1 October outside the Parliament—this time for a republic. I think that she will be more at ease joining the Trash Can Sinatras and Dance Monkey Boy Dance on 1 October—which shows the breadth of cultural expression that will be on display.

That point is important. As Linda Fabiani pointed out, we must be careful in any political discussion about culture. After all, one person's culture is quite clearly another person's cringe—or, to put it

more eloquently, one person's culture is someone else's crap. As a result, we have to be less prescriptive and more enabling in our provision of funds. Donald Gorrie mentioned the good practice in Glasgow City Council, which has improved its cultural support. However, we must also bear in mind that, if we localise arts funding too much, there can be pressure to be more prescriptive. For example, in the early 1990s, the local licensing committee refused to give "Reservoir Dogs" a general film release certificate because it was too violent. However, the very same month saw the release of "Under Siege", in which Steven Seagal managed to kill about 300 people. We must be careful to defend national funding because it should mean that there is less pressure on prescribing what is or is not art or what should or should not be allowed.

The question of finance is clearly at the heart of the full report. Most of the briefings that we have received from various organisations draw our attention to recommendation 117, which refers to the current £100 million "funding gap" that the Scottish Executive needs to address by setting a target of spending 1 per cent of its budget on cultural provision. If recommendation 117 is not to be taken on board, the minister should at least tell us the level of funding that we can expect for future arts provision.

I am worried by the Scottish Arts Council's comment that, if it receives standstill budgets, the funding for many theatre and touring groups such as 7:84 will disappear and such organisations could be killed off. Indeed, I believe that a document released under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 shows that some discussions involving the Scottish Arts Council have centred on the suggestion that the type of audience that 7:84 receives is not exactly what is being looked for. Well, that is dangerous. Just because 7:84 might attract an audience that is different from the audiences that other national theatre or touring groups attract, that does not mean that it deserves to have its funding threatened. I invite the minister to make it absolutely clear today that she would be very angry if groups with the long-established success of 7:84—which was founded in 1973—were to find their funding under serious threat because of standstill budgets or budgets with only a small increase.

I hope that some of the commission's recommendations are taken on board and, more important, that the spirit of the commission's report is taken on board. The commission makes the point that arts and culture are for everyone and that we can no longer accept the idea that culture is only for some people. We have to improve access to all forms of artistic expression.

That is where the Parliament must come in, not to be prescriptive or to say what is good or bad, but to provide the facilities and funding for the widest possible expression of artistic talent. We recognise that not everything will always be everyone's cup of tea, but there will be audiences for just about every form of art. I hope that the minister will address the key funding question when she sums up, because, without the increased funding, the debate is just all talk.

16:01

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): We have spent the past six years discussing a cultural strategy. Many people hoped that setting up the Cultural Commission would be a great leap forward, or even a cultural revolution. More were sceptical. The report is certainly great—if only sizewise, in comparison to the time that we have today to discuss this really important issue—and it poses many important questions and makes good suggestions. Despite the 500-plus pages, however, there are important issues that receive scant attention and areas the surfaces of which are barely scratched.

The distinction between cultural rights and entitlements is useful. Identifying what we should be able to do and what we should be able to expect to have provided for us is a worthy objective. However, it does not really address the inherited cultural inequalities or tell us how to ensure that rights and entitlements are available to and appropriate for all. For example, the concept of social inclusion has a name check in the report. There are few references to disability in the document, although there are half a dozen in annex L, which comprises 130 pages of references. There are also four other references, to architectural design, the financial burden of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, home deliveries from the Falkirk library—a good library, I have to say—and social security in Croatia. Beyond references to being able to get into buildings, I found next to nothing about how to ensure that artists, performers and the public have equal access to and entitlement to participate in the cultural life of our nation regardless of disability.

The report proposes a conference for young people about transport, which is a great idea, but why not a conference on disability and the arts? After all, young disabled people face multiple barriers. They are excluded from cultural events and the issues are not only about transport but about prejudice and lack of facilities. Young disabled people are told, "I'm sorry, there's no loos," or, "There's boxes in the loo for the disabled folk," or, "You can't come because you're a fire hazard." That inequality is not acceptable. Mainstreaming equality means that proper

consideration should be given to those issues, not only by the Parliament and its Equal Opportunities Committee but also by those who consider our cultural policy.

Rights and entitlements must be wide ranging and robust enough to ensure that there is a fair distribution of cultural capital. Of course, whenever we discuss social and cultural capital, the issue of financial capital is seldom far away. Funding issues must be addressed, which means more money. It also means getting the right mechanisms for the allocation and distribution of funding. In doing so, we must avoid some of the errors of the past, and I do not think that we need another body with its own institutional agenda, impervious to the views of other stakeholders. We must democratise the arts, creating a mechanism that allows for a diversity of stakeholders to influence the development of the arts.

The broad and diverse swathe of those who are involved in traditional arts, popular and performing arts, libraries, galleries and the so-called high arts, trade unions, voluntary organisations and civic society must all have access to the decision-making process. Making culture an integral part of community planning would help only if planning was open and accessible to stakeholders in communities; that is not always the case.

With regard to traditional arts—a subject close to my heart—I am pleased that dance, music and storytelling are considered in various contexts and that there is a language recommendation that the Scottish Storytelling Centre should be resourced and developed to implement a national strategy for storytelling. I would like to have seen many more recommendations and am really disappointed that they are not there.

I know that broadcasting is reserved, but we have a duty to say what is good for Scottish culture. I would have liked the suggestion that there should be a digital radio station devoted to the music of contemporary Scotland to have been made as a recommendation. It would also have been good if the report had said that that should not be a substitute for more prominent use of such material by Radio Scotland.

I am not in favour of a wholesale adoption of the report's recommendations. However, like every other speaker this afternoon, I do not want it to be sidelined. We need to start work on this important issue and we need to move forward quickly; past standards have not given us any cause for hope about how quickly we can move. I am heartened to hear the minister say that she will come back to the Parliament to discuss how we implement the report. We are all responsible for ensuring that it does not die and for encouraging other people to debate and discuss what should be happening so that Scotland can have a culture it can be proud

of. Like Linda Fabiani, I am not sure that cultural prescription is the right idea; it makes me squirm. Culture is a right and we should support it.

16:07

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I open by saying to Donald Gorrie that "Tristan und Isolde" is the tantric sex of opera and I would rather have five hours of it than one minute.

To Christine May, I say that the idea that the report shows the Executive's commitment is nothing but sycophantic nonsense. The then Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, Frank McAveety, was clearly expected to make proposals because a Scottish Parliament election was on the horizon. The truth is that the minister did not have a scooby, so he commissioned the chairman of the Scottish Arts Council to take a year out to produce a report for the Executive.

The report would always disappoint. It could satisfy no one because there will always be disputes about what will be required. The minister's measured response was welcome and the three points that she brought to the fore were encouraging. I look forward to hearing what the Executive will decide in the end.

A debate in the Scottish Parliament about the state and the role of the Government can ask the question, "What can the state most usefully do for art?" or in a broader sense, "What can the state most usefully do for Scottish culture?" I agree with Allan Massie that the state or Government's role in education is probably its most fundamentally important role and it is the one to which we should give the most consideration. We need a literate nation. John Knox was probably the most important person in our cultural history. By setting up schools in every parish to ensure that we had a literate nation, he gave people access to culture. Literacy is not just about the English language; it is about all our tongues. Even people—dare I say it in this Parliament—such as Michael Forsyth, by investing in and expanding Gaelic-medium education, did far more for Scottish culture than any culture minister has done since.

The debate has not generally touched on funding; that is welcome because this Parliament has a habit of throwing money at problems.

Many members have considered the different aspects of Scotland's culture and that is important. One such aspect is access, which is crucial. However, access should not come at the price of cultural or artistic excellence. We want people to be inspired by the quality of our artists and performers.

As Cathy Peattie mentioned—quite bravely, for a Labour member—the past five to six years have,

in many respects, been wasted. First, we had a cultural strategy group for an Executive cultural strategy that made no mention of artistic excellence or Scottish literature. Then we had drift, when it seemed that nothing would come of it all. Then we had a crisis in our national institutions such as Scottish Ballet and Scottish Opera. Then we had the First Minister's speech, which raised people's horizons by asking people to consider what our goals should be. Then we had a Cultural Commission, which has produced this report.

Scotland has a wealth of cultural richness in spite of, not because of, the actions of an Executive that has had more culture ministers over the past six years than the Royal Lyceum Theatre Company has had directors over the past 40. What the artistic world needs is some certainty. People now look to the minister to provide that certainty so that they can plan. People need some stability and reliability in funding, so that they know the risks before they make their ventures.

The Parliament itself could be creative by considering how we might hold our quangos, non-departmental public bodies, national cultural institutions and ministers accountable. We could consider the direct funding of various bodies and hold ministers to account if the funding that those national institutions received was inadequate. We could ensure that the regional, local and voluntary bodies were more adequately funded by the Scottish Arts Council. We could also provide for competition among the bodies. We have many trusts, such as the Dunard Fund and the Gannochy Trust, so why do we have only one Scottish Arts Council? Why does the SAC also control lottery funding?

To me, the idea of a strategy is the antithesis of culture. A cultural strategy should not be under the command of a quango or a minister. Culture is spontaneous, organic and reactive. Culture is not even consensual—we should be debating rather than agreeing. Consider Scottish art's most important and active impresario, Ricky Demarco. One never knows what he will say or do next and one certainly never knows whether one will agree with him. That is what culture is about. It is unpredictable. A cultural strategy that is predictable, whereby the state tells us what to do, is wrong. All that we require from the state are the foundations from which our culture can be nurtured and can grow.

There is good culture, and there is bad culture. I look forward to the minister providing a basis on which we can build good culture.

16:13

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): The Scottish arts have had so many successes since devolution—I do not recognise Brian

Monteith's distortion of the past six years—that they are almost too many to mention. Of course we all want more.

That is why I believe that the starting point for debate for both the Parliament and the Cultural Commission is how to ensure that all Scots have opportunities to engage in cultural and artistic activities. There is no point in having new structures to govern the delivery of the arts, new schemes to promote them or new entitlements to enjoy them without providing people with more access to the arts. In my view, that access needs to be spread more evenly throughout society and the country. There is no reason why access should come at the expense of excellence.

Although the question to be asked of the Cultural Commission's proposals is how they will increase access to the arts, increasing access is not just about providing more opportunities for people to take part in the arts but about creating a cultural change in Scotland. Parts of Scottish society still view certain types of artistic endeavour as being not for them, but simply an indulgence for others in our community. Hence, it is no surprise that, when arts funding is being debated, some people argue that funding our national arts companies is not the best use of resources because they benefit only a small section of Scottish society. Those arguments can be challenged if we work harder to create better access for everyone to the whole spectrum of the arts.

I am interested in the commission's concept of cultural rights, but I am more interested in how we make those rights relevant. The commission has made some proposals that will help to inform how we go on to do that.

A report of this length is problematic when it comes to encouraging more people to be involved in this important debate. Like other members, I think that it places too much emphasis on structures—not just at national level, but at other levels. I would have liked to have seen an even greater focus on delivery. I do not intend to focus on structures, other than to agree with what others have said. Given the views that were expressed in the cultural conference, to which Chris Ballance referred, there is clearly no consensus in Scotland's artistic community in support of the report's preferred option. However, there is a consensus that, following the publication of the report, it is time for us to take action to address the issues with which it deals. That action will be informed by some constructive proposals in the report.

The report makes many recommendations, but in the time that is available to me I would like to mention just a couple. Today we have heard much about the success of the role of culture co-

ordinators. I hope that the idea can reach beyond schools and more widely into communities, to encourage more people to be involved in cultural and artistic activities. I am pleased to hear that the minister will meet COSLA to discuss that. I hope that progress will be made in that area.

The report also calls for best-value reviews for national companies. A key standard by which we should measure the companies' success is that they are truly national. By that I do not mean just that they should perform throughout Scotland, rather than in Edinburgh and Glasgow, although that is a key issue, but also that they should be encouraged to engage in even more outreach work, building on the success of their existing education work, to which Linda Fabiani rightly referred. Some of those principles can also be applied to the national collections.

The report discusses another key issue in creating greater access to the arts—how we can encourage greater parity in local authority arts spending. Almost all speakers have mentioned that, and I agree with everything that has been said about it. The minister referred to it, and we are all aware that progress needs to be made on it. That challenge raises the general issue of investment. Some of the numbers in the report seemed to me to be rather arbitrary, but that does not mean that we should not consider carefully issues of central funding, as well as how we can encourage more private investment in and sponsorship of the arts—an issue to which Jamie Stone referred.

I concede the difficulties in setting up a culture fund in exactly the way in which the report recommends. Michael Matheson was right to point out some of those difficulties. However, some of the functions that were proposed for the fund are genuinely good ideas for helping arts organisations to access wider sources of funding, and hopefully they can be taken on board. They should certainly be incorporated in any action plan.

Action is a theme that runs throughout the report. It may not have provided us with the final blueprint for the future of the arts in Scotland, but it contains many suggestions that should inform such a blueprint. As the minister reflects on how to take forward proposals, she will undoubtedly be assisted by the work of the commission. I urge her again to put the general theme of access to the arts at the forefront of her thoughts as she considers the way forward. We have had the time for contemplation. Now is the time for actions that will ensure that we have a thriving artistic culture that all Scots can take part in, benefit from and enjoy.

16:18

Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP): I want to take a slightly different tack and to take one step back. I think that we are avoiding a question—what is the global vision that would inform our decisions about priorities? We spend a lot of time talking about priorities, but I see no agreement on the global vision. If we do not agree that vision, we will not be able to have a sensible discussion about the priorities.

Without the underpinning, debates about funding and structure get us nowhere. They just become demands for more funding for this, that and the other pet project. We have heard some of those demands today. I do not take anything away from that approach—we all have a list of things that we would like to see funded. However, it will not get us any further forward in respect of the Cultural Commission's report. I see something of the same problem in the report, for all its length. Consequently, it is all over the place, which means that there is a danger that our debate will also be all over the place.

Three elements should underpin any strategy. First, we should focus on nurturing, encouraging and developing all our unique, indigenous art forms. That is not about being narrow and parochial. Our indigenous art forms are unique; if we lose them the world loses them, because they are Scotland's gift to world culture. If they do not thrive here they will disappear.

Secondly, we should focus on investing in the creative process and ensuring that the climate is right for writers of words and music and for artists of all kinds to ensure that there is a constant supply of new books, paintings, songs and creative work in all the newly emerging art forms. The importance of investment in the creation of art cannot be emphasised strongly enough.

Thirdly, we should ensure that Scots, with all their diversity, have access to all that their own country can offer and access to the best of the rest. That means not only pibrochs but Indian ragas—those are other countries' gifts, which we deserve to be able to access.

At best we end up talking about the third of those elements and miss out the discussion of the first two. I do not disagree with the talk of rights and entitlements, but we are in danger of putting the cart before the horse if we do not first ensure that there is something of quality to have a right to. That cannot be delivered by legislation. I am therefore a little sceptical about how the Executive could legislate so that rights and entitlements mean anything.

All the wonderful delivery mechanisms in the world will be utterly pointless if there is nothing to deliver. It is only when we are clear about our

strategic priorities that we can make funding and other decisions in a coherent manner.

Other countries all have to make the same decisions. For example, the vexed question of Scottish Opera comes around again and again. Whenever it does, everyone refers to Denmark and talks about however many opera companies it has. That is fair enough, but Ireland has no opera companies. Why is that? The difference between those two countries shows that in each one a national decision was made at some point about what could and could not be supported. In Ireland there is no national ballet or opera company but there is vibrant national theatre, which we are still waiting for in Scotland.

We all have views about the funding afforded to our existing national companies. The problem is that there are no strategic guidelines that would assist us in the decision-making process. The result is that huge sectors of the arts feel that they are underfunded in comparison to the national companies, but they do not understand why that is the case.

It would be churlish not to acknowledge in my speech all the good work that is currently taking place throughout Scotland in all sectors of the arts. The minister spoke about the role of central Government and was correct to do so with regard to the money that comes from central Government. Much of the work that is going on benefits from funding from the Scottish Arts Council and other work gets support from private sponsors. However, a key component in any cultural strategy must be the role of local government. We must recognise, with the caveat that local cultural initiatives are subject to the strategic imperatives that I have mentioned, the importance of local government in the sector. It is a provider of the bricks and mortar as well as what goes in the museums, galleries and libraries.

There is a very good example of the role of local government in Perthshire. On Friday afternoon I listened to a presentation of the Perth and Kinross cultural strategy. Local cultural strategies are important because we must recognise regional variations within Scotland and local initiatives allow a focus on that. For example, Shetland is always held up as an area that has a strong fiddling tradition and so it does. However, Perthshire also has a strong fiddling tradition that stretches from the legendary Neil Gow in the 18th century right through to Dougie MacLean, who was described by Michael Marra as Neil Gow's apprentice. I hope that Perthshire can capitalise on that tradition in the future. Perhaps we can capitalise on it in the wonderful new Perth concert hall, which has only just opened although its genesis was in the mid 1990s. The concert hall is an example of the ambition of much-derided local

government. It was paid for by Perth and Kinross Council, the Gannochy Trust and Norwich Union. It is also evidence of SNP ambition because it was an SNP administration in the council that started it.

I plead for a clear vision on the fundamentals. We can then debate the delivery mechanisms and the role of Government. If we do not reach agreement about the first, the arguments about the second—the funding decisions and the role of Government—will never go away.

16:25

Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab):

The English poet Matthew Arnold described culture as

“a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world”.

Thomas Carlyle said:

“Culture is the process by which a person becomes all that they were created capable of being.”

Those slightly grandiose statements show a view of culture in which it is seen as the pursuit of human perfection. However, in preparing for today's debate, I also came across the George Bernard Shaw quotation:

“What we call education and culture is for the most part nothing but the substitution of reading for experience, of literature for life, of the obsolete fictitious for the contemporary real.”

Although George Bernard Shaw may have overstated his point, what I like about the quotation is that it starts to open up the notion of culture and the creation of our culture as participatory—something that is done by us rather than to us.

Culture is not just about reading books, visiting galleries, watching movies or listening to music, valuable and enjoyable as they are; culture must also be about people participating in the arts at all stages in their lives by creating pictures, making music and writing poems and stories. That is not to take an anti-elitist approach—inevitably, some people will be better at each of the disciplines than others will be—but to take an anti-exclusive one.

The Cultural Commission report sets out four cultural rights, one of which is

“The right to participate in designing and implementing cultural policy”.

One of the key ways to engage with people in the development of cultural policy at the local level is through community planning, which is a subject that a number of speakers have touched on. Community planning is still a rather nebulous concept that is difficult to define. However, the basic concept of improved partnership working

that is allied to improved community participation is one that is sound in principle. If it works well, community planning should ensure strong grassroots participation in the development of local cultural strategies and offer the possibility of taking a truly cross-cutting approach to the development of arts and culture at the local level.

Let us imagine a local cultural strategy that was the preserve not of a council's community services department, but had been developed by a partnership of all the key service providers including education, leisure, social work, planning, the local voluntary sector and health board and even the local police.

Let us imagine a local cultural strategy that recognises the benefits of engaging young people in the arts as a way of challenging antisocial behaviour and promoting greater intergenerational understanding. As members who attended my recent members' business debate will know, that is not a flight of fancy. The youth workers and the young people of Airdrie have proven that that approach can work. It is important to ensure that young people have access to artistic and cultural experiences.

I recently learned about a number of drama workshops that the Scottish Youth Theatre is running for young people at Willowbank School in Coatbridge—a school that provides support for school refusers. The aim of the workshops is to improve social and communication skills and they have been judged so successful that North Lanarkshire Council has asked the SYT to continue the classes.

The SYT is an excellent example of a national voluntary arts organisation that has a good reputation for working with community-based groups. Indeed, its national roadshow will see over 100 free drama workshops being held across Scotland for young people aged between 12 and 21.

Some concern has been expressed about the report's lack of reference to the informal learning and development that takes place outside the school setting. I share those concerns. The work that is done by the staff and volunteers at the just youth project and the @home centre in Airdrie clearly demonstrate that much valuable work can and is being done outside the school environment. It is important that policies and resources recognise and support that.

Whether the work is done through local authority community learning and development departments or voluntary groups, community-based approaches to working with young people have a vital part to play. That must be recognised in all local cultural strategies.

The Cultural Commission's report, like all good art, has provoked much debate. I hope that the

Executive will now focus on the actions that are needed to build on and strengthen Scotland's already proud cultural heritage.

16:30

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I listened to the debate with great interest. I am going to do something quite different. Normally, it would be my job to refer to the speeches that have been made, but themes have developed throughout all the contributions, so I will not be specific. I will also go slightly off message. Donald Gorrie is the culture spokesman for the Liberal Democrats, but I would like to share with the chamber my own thoughts.

I have a fundamental, deep-seated belief in myself—[*Laughter.*] I concede that that is open to misinterpretation by the chamber. Within myself I have a deep-seated belief that culture is about the happiness of the human being, and it is linked to education. What is the sum total of culture? All the works of Beethoven, all the operas by Wagner and all the pictures that have ever been painted are mere baubles, and in 1,000 years' time will be dust. However, when they are produced and for the generations that follow they equal human pleasure and can lead to greater knowledge and greater education. That is the number 1 premise.

From that, I firmly believe that each human being on this planet has a cardinal right to develop their cultural level to their maximum ability. It may be music, it may be writing, it may be doing things with their hands or whatever, but it is part and parcel of the human condition. If we take that as the fundamental rule, a lot of things follow. In the previous chamber and in this one, my friend Brian Monteith and I have argued the toss about culture and the merits of a silver band versus a late Beethoven quartet, but each to their own. We agree that that is precisely how we should think about these matters.

The point has been made that it is about money, and of course it is, but let us think about this: what right does any of us have to be arty-farty and to dictate to people what is good for them because we think that we know about high art and they do not? That goes back to my point about each human being having the right to develop their idea of culture to their maximum potential. We could even go along the lines of discussing—as Linda Fabiani and I know—the merits or otherwise of having Jack Vettriano's work in this place or in the galleries of Scotland or elsewhere. The fact remains that Jack Vettriano's work is hugely liked by the Scottish people, and who are we to gainsay that? We have to think carefully about what is good taste and what is bad taste. What right does any of us have to say to our neighbours, "You're wrong about culture"?

I have a lady in my constituency who can knit anything. She can knit a toaster. She can knit a model steam engine.

Linda Fabiani: Is it you?

Mr Stone: No, it is not me, I promise. That is her idea of culture, and it has a role. Who are we to denigrate that?

I agree with many members that local authorities have a crucial role. Yes, provision is patchy—no names no pack drill, but some local authorities do an awful lot better than others. As we know, the law does not state in black and white, "Thou shalt deliver culture." Some local authorities do well and others do not. At some future date we may have to revisit the legislation. We must not be prescriptive to local authorities, but there are issues of community involvement and finding out what the different parts of Scotland like to do best.

As I have said in the chamber before, Scotland is like a diamond. Each facet of the diamond is different and reflects the light differently, so culture in the Highlands might be different from culture in Paisley or the Borders, but that is the beauty of the beast that is Scotland. Variety is the spice of life.

We have seen many well-meaning papers and taken part in many well-meaning discussions. One of the best things that has happened to the arts in Scotland—I do not like the word "culture"—is the fact that Richard Holloway has taken up the post of chairman of the Scottish Arts Council. He seriously challenges us all and brings a degree of commitment and questioning to the job that will only do us good.

I make a plea for a period of stability. I have read all the information that has come before me about today's debate, which shows that change for change's sake, or just moving the deckchairs to make another organisation, would not be the best way. We have had a lot of changes and argy-bargy in the past. We need to settle down, put our money where our mouth is and try to help and support the arts.

My good friend Donald Gorrie referred to the great opera "Tristan und Isolde"—I doubt whether that could be condensed into "The Minute Waltz" as he suggested and, in any case, the debate is more like the ring cycle than "Tristan und Isolde", but the point is that, in supporting the arts, we need to marry great or fine art with the local art that matters to people who do small things in small communities. That local art might just involve a small drama production, but it makes a difference to people's lives, which takes me back to where I began. Culture is about each human being lighting up their short space of life—just the strike of a match in eternal darkness—with a bit of fun and art, which will give them, their children and their grandchildren pleasure in life and happy memories for the future.

16:36

Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I must declare my interests: I am a member of the board of the Byre Theatre of St Andrews and a shareholder of the Scottish Media Group.

There is much that is good in the Cultural Commission's report, although cynics might say that, given that it sprawls over 500 pages and makes no fewer than 131 recommendations, there is scope to get a few things right. However, my major worry, which I share with Michael Matheson and others, is that, far from directing more money to the arts and cutting down unnecessary bureaucracy, the convoluted two-quango structure that the commission advocates would increase bureaucracy.

In the spat between the commission, represented by James Boyle in the red corner, and COSLA, represented by Bridget McConnell in the deeper red corner, we are not convinced that allowing local councils to dole out still further arts funding would cut bureaucracy or help to promote culture. I accept the view that many members have expressed that local authorities do fine work in supporting the arts, but I worry about an expansion of that role. The arts excel when they are free of political interference, which applies to local and national Administrations. That is why we are in favour of retaining the Scottish Arts Council, albeit in a far less overlapping role. The council has demonstrated that, given proper funding, it can be a distinctive arbiter of culture in Scotland.

Like Jamie Stone, rather than deal with specific speeches in my summing up, in the few minutes that I have remaining I will concentrate on three key aspects of the report. I will mention education and support for local theatres and, as a former broadcaster, I will perhaps say a word on Scottish broadcasting, to which, understandably, the minister did not have time to refer.

Art across the board cannot flourish unless people are educated to receive it. Brian Monteith was right to quote Allan Massie, who wrote in an article for the Policy Institute:

"Unless we accept that it is in the schools and universities that the tastes of future readers, audiences, viewers and frequenters of galleries are formed, and their ability to create and appreciate the creations of others is extended and deepened, artists will find no adequate public for their work."

It seems to me that a generation of young people who grow up with access to increased cultural activities will be a generation with a greater chance of self-fulfilment and the future bedrock of a healthy arts sector in Scotland.

I make no apology for identifying the Byre Theatre as a magnificent local facility—it was created largely by lottery funding, but it is woefully

unable to fulfil its potential because of an on-going shortage of revenue funding. The commission specifically picks out the Byre in talking about disparity in funding. The report states:

"Smaller theatres such as the Byre received around £200,000 ... less"

per annum than their English equivalents. It is a nonsense that theatres such as the Byre and venues such as the Crawford arts centre in St Andrews should have to be kept afloat by overworked, talented and underpaid staff, backed up by the efforts of volunteers who are rapidly approaching burnout. I invite the minister to come and look at the good work that is being done in such venues. The long-term health of theatre in Scotland depends on appropriate funding of regional producing theatres, voluntary cultural sector centres and touring companies such as 7:84.

On broadcasting, my personal view is that the current review of the role of the BBC is long overdue. As a state-funded organisation, it could do much to raise the level of culture in Scotland. Now that a plethora of commercial channels are available, there is no need for the BBC to compete to satisfy the lowest common denominator. Whatever happened to the organisation's Reithian ethos of educating and elevating public taste? The most casual look at a BBC schedule for peak time on Saturday night would have Lord Reith turning in his grave.

The commission accurately identifies that the structure of the Scottish television industry—the BBC and ITV—has not changed for 50 years. It notes correctly that neither TV nor radio in Scotland is funded at levels that allow commissioning of the more expensive genres. That is why the overall tone and configuration of both the BBC and ITV are so firmly set in London; it is also why Scottish-produced content on all national networks is so limited and feeble.

The commission recommends that Scottish ministers should consider how a Scottish channel could be funded and set up. I agree, but it is my personal view that we should go further. If devolution is a work in progress, as all parties in the Parliament appear to believe, is it not now time to review the decision that control of public broadcasting should be left to Westminster?

I look forward to collaborating with the minister on the important exercise of restructuring the arts in Scotland and I hope that she will be able to mention the future of broadcasting in her summing up.

16:41

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): I congratulate Ted Brocklebank on the final part of

his speech, which was excellent. He is welcome to cross the floor at any time.

There is a broad consensus among members that many aspects of the Cultural Commission's report are worth while and that many of its recommendations are both relevant and important. However, I think that Roseanna Cunningham put her finger on the button when she said that the problem with the report is that it does not lay out a vision of where we want Scottish culture to go in the years ahead. The absence of an underlying view of what the Parliament and the Executive should seek to achieve in the future makes it difficult to translate many of the recommendations into an overall cultural policy that allows us to decide priorities, where the money should go, where we need legislation and all the rest of it. The biggest job for first the minister, and then the Enterprise and Culture Committee and the Parliament, will be to develop the big picture which, with all due respect, I think the commission utterly failed to do.

Some of the recommendations are not important, relevant or worth supporting. I will pick out what I thought was one of the daftest recommendations ever: that another minister, a deputy minister for tourism, culture and sport, should be appointed.

Patricia Ferguson: I assure Mr Neil that I have it on good authority that there is no intention of appointing a deputy minister.

Alex Neil: That is highly encouraging because, when I look through the list of departments that have a deputy minister, I find that nearly every one of them is failing utterly to reach its targets. I can only hope that, as the sole power in the land in her department, Ms Ferguson will achieve her targets.

The commission laid a great deal of emphasis on structures and how we should deliver but, to my mind, that should come at the tail-end of the debate rather than at its start. As Roseanna Cunningham said, we need to decide what we want to deliver before we can decide how best to deliver it.

I draw members' attention to the excellent evidence that my friend and colleague Mr Matheson submitted on behalf of the Scottish National Party, which was the only party to submit evidence to the commission. Rather than recommending the creation of another two quangos, with all the bureaucracy and costs that would be attached to that, he suggested an idea that is similar to that put forward by Donald Gorrie, which would involve the setting up of a Scottish academy with advisory status. The academy would advise the minister, while the Education Department would do the administration. We do not need a bunch of bureaucrats in the

department, a bunch of bureaucrats in the SAC and a bunch of bureaucrats in a funding agency. We want to have just the one set of bureaucrats so we can save a lot of money on the other two sets.

The beauty of the idea of the Scottish academy—and I hope that the minister will take it seriously, despite the fact that it came from the SNP—is that it can be composed of people from the grass roots and from every section of arts and culture in Scotland. It would not be a body appointed by ministers on the recommendation of the civil service; it would consist of people who were elected by their peers in various sectors of the arts, who would come together regularly to help to develop an on-going strategy and advise the minister on where the priorities should lie, where the money should be spent and where the investment is required. That way, we would involve people and encourage the artists to participate in the decision-making process rather than having the decisions handed down to them in some dirigiste fashion, reminiscent of what happened in the days of the Kremlin.

He will find this utterly surprising—and this is certainly a rare occasion—but I agree with much of what Brian Monteith said. Many of the points that he made about the role of the state and the public sector were correct. The state should not decide what is good and what is bad, culturally speaking. We want to divorce as much of the decision making as possible from Government and Parliament and have the decisions made in a much more democratic and participative way that involves those who deliver our culture.

The primary role of the public sector is not to deliver cultural services—although in some areas, such as libraries, that will probably always have to be the case—but, particularly with regard to the creative arts, to enable, to provide support to and to assist in the development of the creative people who are the deliverers of art and culture. Another good recommendation—which is, like most of the good recommendations, buried in the report—is the idea of having a national awards scheme whereby we give many more scholarships. We heard from Chris Ballance about the financial difficulties that writers have. I do not believe that it is our job to provide our writers with a guaranteed income for ever and a day, no matter how good they are. However, we can give them much more pump priming than we do just now. Perhaps there could be a scholarship of up to three years. Some of those scholarships should be international scholarships to help to build the sort of international links that Roseanna Cunningham talked about and to develop our connections with other cultures worldwide. We need to provide the funding at the grass-roots level that will enable us to sow the seeds of creativity; we should not think

of ourselves as the people who have to create or run an organisation or come up with guidelines for cultural organisations. If we are going to encourage the cultural flowering of Scotland, we have to sow those seeds at a local level and at a national level.

It is right that we should ask our local authorities to do much more than some of them are doing. However, we cannot do that or give effective cultural rights to people if we do not ensure that the resources are there for them to exercise those rights. Indeed, it is not legislation that is required but resources. The philosophy that is required is an enabling one that will allow us to sow the seeds that will encourage the flowering of our nation. If we do that, we will become a culturally advanced nation, which will benefit everyone.

16:50

Patricia Ferguson: I am grateful to colleagues for their lively and enthusiastic contributions to the debate. The speeches have been wide ranging. If the Cultural Commission has done nothing else, one of the important things that has come about is that we have had a proper discussion of this important subject.

Christine May, Linda Fabiani, Roseanna Cunningham and Michael Matheson referred to rights and entitlements. I agree with the consensus around that issue. I do not think that legislation is necessarily the way in which to enshrine that kind of opportunity for the people of Scotland. With rights come responsibilities and duties, and against whom would someone make their claim if their right could not be fulfilled for whatever reason? We can work towards having rights and entitlements, but we do not necessarily need legislation. I reassure Cathy Peattie, in particular, that equality of access for people with disability will be a serious consideration when we consider rights and entitlements in the future.

Michael Matheson also mentioned cultural planning, as did other members including Linda Fabiani and Roseanna Cunningham. That is an area in which we need to take work forward quickly. The community planning framework is beginning to come in in our communities, and we need to keep up with that. I said that in my speech, and I hope that people understand the importance that I attach to it.

On education, I hope that Michael Matheson understands that the work that we are doing on the highland year of culture and Burns shows that we are serious about promoting traditional Scottish culture and art forms, ensuring that they are seen not just in Scotland, but on the world stage.

Several members—Jamie McGrigor and Chris Ballance, in particular—mentioned the importance

of tourism. I do not have any problem with Chris Ballance on that issue. To Jamie McGrigor, I say that I have been saying for more than a year that culture and tourism—and, indeed, sport—are inextricably linked, and I am delighted that we now have a convert on the Tory benches. Jamie McGrigor also talked about a decline in funding for the Scottish Arts Council, choosing to focus on lottery funding. However, since devolution, the amount of Government core funding for the Scottish Arts Council has doubled. Our commitment to making the Scottish Arts Council and the work that it does a viable operation cannot be questioned as Jamie McGrigor was questioning it.

Donald Gorrie mentioned the excellent exhibition that I opened in Kirkcudbright. Glasgow's Kelvingrove art gallery allowed some of its Impressionist paintings to go there and the exhibition was a huge success. It gave people in Kirkcudbright and people coming into the area the opportunity to see paintings that they would perhaps not get to see unless they were able to travel to Glasgow. That will continue. Kirkcudbright is in conversation with the National Galleries of Scotland about doing something similar in the future, and I wish that initiative all the success that it deserves. Richard Baker also mentioned the importance of touring, and I said in my opening speech that I see companies and collections that call themselves national as having to meet a criterion to encourage them to go down that road.

Linda Fabiani had a difficulty with the concept of culture. If we are honest, most of us can understand that. However, I ask her to cast her mind back to the excellent Scottish Ballet performances that she and I attended in the summer. At Motiv8, young boys from the age of five and some more mature ladies were participating in dance under the aegis of Scottish Ballet, which I think says a lot about what culture is. For small children, it can mean one thing; for older people, it perhaps means something else. However, that does not mean that they cannot work together and that it cannot be provided for in that way.

Susan Deacon made a valid point about embedding culture in our lives. I point to one example of that. In Dundee, brave decisions about investing in the arts and culture were taken 10 or 15 years ago, and we are now seeing that investment paying off, with people wanting to live and invest there. That is what we need to see throughout our country.

I was struck by Susan Deacon's comments about very small children learning about culture and enjoying the arts for their own sake. At lunch time I was at an event at the National Galleries of Scotland, where nursery children were being rewarded for the artwork that they had contributed.

I was interested in Tommy Sheridan's remarks. It is to Mr Sheridan's advantage that his storytelling does not have the same effect in the chamber as it does at home. Perhaps I can better his "Reservoir Dogs" story about the problems of licensing and being prescriptive about culture: I remember travelling to Edinburgh to see "The Life of Brian" because it was not available to those who lived in Glasgow.

Tommy Sheridan: That means that I am younger than the minister.

Patricia Ferguson: Well, we did not discuss chivalry, I suppose.

I agree with Tommy Sheridan that culture must not be prescriptive. We all have our own view on it, and we must all have the opportunity to develop our ideas.

I had the novel experience this afternoon of being described as "encouraging" by a Tory. I thank Brian Monteith sincerely for that. However, I assure him that culture and the arts matter dearly to me, and they are not just of great importance to me; they are of importance across the front bench. However, more important, they matter intrinsically to the people of Scotland. That is why we are so passionate about taking forward this debate.

Roseanna Cunningham spoke interestingly about a global vision, and she is right about that. That is perhaps where we could have hoped for a bit more encouragement from the Cultural Commission. However, there are many good things in its report, and we will continue to see the benefits of it as time goes on.

Like Roseanna Cunningham, I attended the opening concert at the Perth Concert Hall on Friday night. Visiting it will be a wonderful cultural experience for the people of Perth because of its wonderful architecture and design, but its programme shows that the venue will provide an eclectic mix of opportunities not just on the opening weekend but right through. I congratulate Perth and Kinross Council, under whichever guise, on developing that enterprise.

Chris Ballance: Before the minister concludes her speech, I wonder whether she would address the Cultural Commission's central recommendation that expenditure on culture should rise to 1 per cent of the Executive's budget.

Patricia Ferguson: I said in my opening remarks that we would have to cost whatever we plan to put in place, so we cannot give such commitments ahead of time. I question some of the arithmetic in the commission's report. I also point out to Mr Ballance that the cash available to cultural bodies in Scotland has risen from £120 million to £180 million from 2000. That does not include the money being spent by local authorities.

The Executive and I will reflect on colleagues' comments when finalising our response to the Cultural Commission's report. As I said, I do not intend that colleagues will have to wait beyond the end of the year to hear it.

I conclude by restating the Executive's commitment to the cultural sector. Culture matters, art matters, heritage matters, and architecture and design matter, too. We are investing in them for their own intrinsic worth and because they affect so many aspects of our lives. Most of all, we are investing in them because we are a modern, forward-thinking, vibrant country at ease with its place in the world. All my colleagues in the Cabinet recognise that, and they are looking at ways in which cultural activities can benefit their own objectives.

The First Minister said in his groundbreaking St Andrew's day speech on culture that the Executive was committed to

"providing and valuing creative expression and opportunity for all."

We want the best for our people, and we will deliver it.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of three Parliamentary Bureau motions on committee membership. I ask Margaret Curran to move motions S2M-3310 to S2M-3312 inclusive.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Euan Robson be appointed to replace Donald Gorrie on the Communities Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that Mr Andrew Arbuckle be appointed to replace Euan Robson on the Local Government and Transport Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that Donald Gorrie be appointed to replace Iain Smith on the Procedures Committee.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

17:00

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): On the ground of natural justice, I oppose motions S2M-3310 and S2M-3311. It is unfair that Euan Robson, who was able to declare his interests and join the Local Government and Transport Committee only on Tuesday, has been wheeled out of that committee so quickly, given that the Lib Dems were unable to supply a single member for either of the previous two meetings at which the abolition of the council tax was discussed, which is very curious, given the hue and cry that the Lib Dems give us about their concern over the council tax.

I ask the Parliament to allow Euan Robson to save himself from further embarrassment by being allowed to stay on the committee to scrutinise the Council Tax Abolition and Service Tax Introduction (Scotland) Bill properly. However, perhaps the Lib Dems will instead show that they are much more concerned about their ministerial Mondeos than they are about the millions of pensioners who have been hit by the council tax.

17:01

The Deputy Minister for Finance, Public Service Reform and Parliamentary Business (George Lyon): It gives me pleasure to respond to the member. If he is so outraged, perhaps he will tell the Parliament whether he is similarly outraged that no Scottish Socialist Party member attended the very same committee in his place for three weeks in a row, when he was on paternity leave. On Tuesday 31 May, there was no SSP substitute; on Tuesday 7 June, there was no SSP substitute; and on Tuesday 21 June, there was no SSP substitute. That means that there was no SSP substitute present at the Local Government and Transport Committee to consider the tendering of ferry services in the Clyde and

Hebrides or the Licensing (Scotland) Bill, or to hear evidence on local authority audits—issues that, I was led to understand, were of particular interest to Mr Sheridan and his party.

Does Mr Sheridan accept that, over the past few weeks, the Parliament and its committees have made real progress in considering a number of extremely important issues, and that four SSP members have missed all those vital debates because of their childish and irresponsible behaviour, which led to their exclusion from the Parliament?

Does Mr Sheridan accept that the only party represented in this chamber that needs to learn what a local income tax is really about is the SSP, whose plans for a national service tax would strip away local accountability, local democracy and local decision-making powers from democratically elected councils—plans which should be rejected?

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

The next item of business is consideration of two further Parliamentary Bureau motions, in the name of Margaret Curran, on committee substitutes.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Mr Jim Wallace be appointed as the Liberal Democrat substitute on the Justice 1 Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that Mr Jamie McGrigor be appointed to replace Bill Aitken as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Education Committee.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

The Presiding Officer: As usual, the question on those motions will be put at decision time, to which we now come.

Decision Time

17:03

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):

There are 11 questions to be put as a result of today's business. For this morning's first debate, on economic policy, if the amendment in the name of Allan Wilson is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Murdo Fraser falls.

The first question is, that amendment S2M-3321.4, in the name of Allan Wilson, which seeks to amend motion S2M-3321, in the name of Mark Ballard, on economic policy, 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)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (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)
 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)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 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)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

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)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 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)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of 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)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 59, Against 27, Abstentions 13.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-3321.1, in the name of Jim Mather, which seeks to amend motion S2M-3321, in the name of Mark Ballard, on economic policy, 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)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 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)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

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)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)

May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 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)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (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)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 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)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 25, Against 74, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: Amendment S2M-3321.2, in the name of Murdo Fraser, has fallen, so the next question is, that motion S2M-3321, in the name of Mark Ballard, on economic policy, 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)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (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)
 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)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 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)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

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)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 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)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of 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)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 60, Against 25, Abstentions 14.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament supports growing the economy as the top priority of the Scottish Executive; believes that economic growth must be sustainable; agrees with the Partnership Agreement commitment to assess economic development policies against their impact on sustainable development indicators; notes that the Framework for Economic Development in Scotland has made sustainable development the principal objective; welcomes the stronger emphasis on sustainability in the refresh of A Smart Successful Scotland; endorses the Executive's determination to drive forward its green jobs strategy, and endorses the Executive's commitment to sustainable development.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-3323.2, in the name of Peter Peacock, which seeks to amend motion S2M-3323, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on children of asylum seekers, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 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)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)

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)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 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)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (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)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 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)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)

ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 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)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 74, Against 4, Abstentions 21.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-3323.1, in the name of Christine Grahame, which seeks to amend motion S2M-3323, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on children of asylum seekers, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

FOR

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)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 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)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

AGAINST

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)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (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)
 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)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 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)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 40, Against 59, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-3323, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on children of asylum seekers, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 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)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 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)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)

Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 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)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of 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)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 80, Against 0, Abstentions 18.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament acknowledges the trauma experienced by the children of asylum seekers when families are removed for deportation and the impact this has on school communities; affirms its support for the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which states that governments should protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence; recognises that, while the Scottish Executive has no direct responsibility for the operation of the immigration and asylum system, it is responsible for the welfare of children, for schools, and for working with the UK Government to report on compliance with the UNCRC; commends the substantial work done in Scotland to ensure the effective education and inclusion of the children of asylum seekers; believes that, in the vast majority of cases, failed asylum seeker families do not pose either a security threat or a serious risk of flight; calls on Scottish ministers to give the greatest possible urgency to realising their aspirations for the most vulnerable children in Scotland, including those facing detention and removal, and urges them to continue discussions with the Home Office with a view to agreement that the Home Office will work closely with services for children and young people before the removal of any family and to convey to the Home Office the widespread concerns about practices such as so-called "dawn raids", handcuffing of children, and the removal of children by large groups of officers in uniform and body armour."

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-3310, in the name of Margaret Curran, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 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)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 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)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

ABSTENTIONS

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 95, Against 2, Abstentions 2.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that Euan Robson be appointed to replace Donald Gorrie on the Communities Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-3311, in the name of Margaret Curran, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that Mr Andrew Arbuckle be appointed to replace Euan Robson on the Local Government and Transport Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-3312, in the name of Margaret Curran, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that Donald Gorrie be appointed to replace Iain Smith on the Procedures Committee.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to put a single question on motions S2M-3313 and S2M-3314, on committee substitutes. The question is, that

motions S2M-3313 and S2M-3314, in the name of Margaret Curran, on committee substitutes, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that Mr Jim Wallace be appointed as the Liberal Democrat substitute on the Justice 1 Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that Mr Jamie McGrigor be appointed to replace Bill Aitken as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Education Committee.

Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-3074, in the name of Marilyn Livingstone, on survivors of childhood sexual abuse. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

I ask members who are leaving the chamber to do so as quickly and quietly as possible. *[Interruption.]* One word from me and they do what they like.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the invaluable work done by local groups, such as Kingdom Abuse Survivors Project (KASP) in Kirkcaldy, in providing services for survivors of childhood sexual abuse and welcomes the Scottish Executive's announcement to the Cross Party Group on Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse on future strategic action; further welcomes the creation of a reference group which would include adult survivors and cross party group representation; welcomes the appointment of a lead professional to assist implementation of this strategy following the report of the Short Life Working Group and the establishment of a survivors' fund of £2 million to pump-prime activity; welcomes the intention of the Executive to publish a document which will highlight mainstream Executive initiatives that already benefit survivors; welcomes the proposed scoping of what community health partnerships and managed clinical networks could offer, given that survivors are not yet aware of the potential benefits these could bring; further welcomes the creation of a network of professionals and adult survivors, which could be virtual, and the commissioning of NHS Education for Scotland to undertake self-help training and public awareness-raising, and welcomes the call for bids for demonstration projects to be met from the survivors' fund.

17:13

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): I thank all the members of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on survivors of childhood sexual abuse, many of whom are with us in the public gallery, for their tireless effort and support. I thank my colleagues Margaret Mitchell—our vice convener—and Maureen Macmillan for her work with Highlands and Islands survivors groups.

Our cross-party group was established in 2000 following a petition by Kingdom Advice Survivors Project in my constituency. I thank Anne Macdonald for bringing the issue to me as the local MSP and, indeed, for bringing it to the Parliament's attention. Anne has continued to give us all tremendous support as vice-convener of the cross-party group and for that we are greatly indebted to her. I have heard first hand from young children, parents and adult survivors, all of whom have been victims. Their experiences have made me determined to continue to work towards eradication of this heinous crime.

I want to take a few minutes to outline the road that we have travelled together. The cross-party group was established as a forum for an agreed programme of debate on childhood sexual abuse, its long-term effects and its links with mental health problems, alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence and homelessness. We were also determined to create greater public awareness and understanding in order to combat the many myths that surround sexual abuse and its impact on our society. The group, which includes a wide range of professionals and—importantly—survivors, has helped us not only to highlight concerns but to determine solutions to this very complex problem.

Following the successful "One Year On" event, the then Minister for Health and Community Care agreed to commission a short-life working group in the Executive to progress the issues that the cross-party group raised. Most important, our group was well represented and was able to contribute to the report that the short-life working group compiled in 2004. Before and after that report's completion, we met the Minister for Health and Community Care, Andy Kerr, to discuss the next steps and the way forward. I thank him for staying to listen to this evening's debate; indeed, I want to take this opportunity to put on record our sincere thanks for his help, support and commitment, which have been beyond belief. We really appreciate what he has done. I also thank Cathy Jamieson, Peter Peacock and Malcolm Chisholm for their support in developing the strategic response to child sexual abuse.

At our meeting with Andy Kerr in June, we discussed common themes that had emerged from the cross-party group's discussions and the short-life working group's report. That has resulted in action that the Executive will undertake to address our agenda. This evening represents a major landmark for us and for all survivors, and we thank everyone involved in helping us to move forward towards achieving our objectives.

We very much welcome the creation of a reference group that will include adult survivors and cross-party group representation, to help us to implement key policy objectives, and we welcome the appointment of a lead professional to assist the strategy's implementation. We believe that such a move is important; we need someone who can help us to drive forward the agenda.

We also welcome the commitment to scope what community health partnerships and managed clinical network structures can offer, and we welcome the important establishment of a £2 million survivors fund to pump-prime activity. The Executive will call for bids for demonstration projects to be met from the survivors fund—I am sure that the minister will give us more details on

that this evening. Information about a raft of other measures can be accessed on the cross-party group's website and I am sure that my colleagues will mention some of them during the debate.

The reference group's work will be crucial in ensuring that abuse of children is at the forefront of policy in Scotland. There are no short-term solutions, but such actions will ensure that survivors throughout Scotland will feel that they are being listened to. We must remember that, no matter whether we are talking about past or present crimes, those crimes were and are being committed against innocent children. It is our society's responsibility to protect the children of today and tomorrow as well as to support yesterday's children, who are today's adult survivors.

The cross-party group believes that the partnership that we have developed with survivors, survivor agencies, professionals and the Executive shows true commitment to addressing child sexual abuse. We are all aware of the challenges that we face and that there are no short-term fixes or easy solutions. Abuse of children will not end without real commitment and determination, so we must tackle it strategically, responsibly and with a cool head.

The cross-party group's vice-convenor, Anne Macdonald, has likened the way in which our society must address sexual abuse of children to the way it has addressed attitudes to other behaviour that we know to be wrong such as slavery, domestic abuse and apartheid. Our generation has acknowledged that abuse happens, so it must find a solution. It is our duty not to stand back and be fearful, even though the subject is sometimes too frightening to contemplate. We are in the 21st century, in our first Scottish Parliament in 300 years, and we have within our grasp the opportunity to contribute something lasting that will change people's lives for ever.

We can give hope to survivors, while sending a clear message to perpetrators that they can no longer depend on the silence that they have imposed on their victims. We will throw light on the shadows that they cast on the most vulnerable people in our society: our children.

17:20

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): I am delighted to support and speak to Marilyn Livingstone's motion and I congratulate her on securing the debate. As deputy convenor of the cross-party group on survivors of childhood sexual abuse, I know how much hard work Marilyn and the members of the group have put into addressing the enormity of the challenge of trying to meet the needs of survivors.

The motion gives a clear indication of just how much has been achieved since the short-life working group on care needs for survivors of CSA was set up in 2003 by the then Minister for Health and Community Care, Malcolm Chisholm. Those achievements include: the Scottish Executive's future strategic action plan; the creation of a reference group, which includes survivors and cross-party members; the establishment of the £2 million survivors fund to pump-prime activity; the commissioning of NHS Education for Scotland to undertake self-help training and public awareness training; and, crucially, the appointment of a legal professional to assist in implementation of the strategy following the short-life working group's report.

I pay particular tribute to the Minister for Health and Community Care, Andy Kerr, who, following the moving debate on child abuse last December, met adult survivors of CSA at the cross-party group to listen to concerns and to discuss a possible way forward.

Three key issues were discussed at that meeting. First, it was made clear that adult survivors of CSA were, sadly, not a new population that once identified will impact on health and other social care services. They are already in the system, but for the most part they are not recognised as survivors. Instead, they are to be found among other specific groups including substance abusers, homeless people and psychiatric patients. Secondly, it was recognised that there was no clear mechanism or responsibility for identifying and supporting adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, either in the health service or in other public services. Thirdly, it was recognised that the voluntary sector has considerable expertise in helping adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse and in substantial data collection.

In response to those points, and in recognition of the fact that it is a cross-cutting issue, it is greatly to the minister's credit that he was prepared to appoint a lead professional to co-ordinate and maintain meaningful dialogue with the various departments and personnel—health, education, social services and so on—who have a part to play in delivering the Executive's strategy. Without that action from the minister, there is little doubt that the considerable achievements that are listed in the motion would not have been possible.

For too long, we have been treating the symptoms of childhood sexual abuse—attempted suicide, self-harm and drug abuse—rather than addressing the cause. I am confident that the strategy that has been outlined, with its emphasis on training professionals, early identification of survivors and promotion of greater awareness of the prevalence of CSA, will make a positive and

significant difference to all those who are involved with this complex and vexing issue.

There is one final plea that I would make to the minister; namely, that in determining bids to be met from the survivors fund for the demonstration projects, the voluntary sector, with all its expertise and experience in dealing with survivors of childhood sexual abuse is not sidelined. There is little doubt that, as non-statutory bodies, voluntary sector organisations attract and encourage people of all ages and from all walks of life to take the first tentative steps towards confronting their past experience, secure in the knowledge that there will be no official record of what is discussed. When determining bids and when allocating funding generally, I urge the minister to keep that in mind.

Finally, Presiding Officer, I have been asked by the convener of the cross-party group to remind members that we will be meeting after the debate in committee room 3.

17:24

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): As is customary, I pay tribute to Marilyn Livingstone for securing the debate and for the terms of her speech, but my tribute has to go beyond that. This issue is one in which there are few votes, if any, and Marilyn Livingstone has championed and pursued it with vigour. The Parliament owes her a debt of gratitude for that. As she said, the issue has been hidden away and not spoken about. It is incumbent on Parliament to address such matters.

As someone who had a happy childhood and who has fond memories of it, I can only imagine the trauma that must exist for someone who grew up in an environment in which there was physical and sexual abuse, which was made worse because it came either from an adult within the family or an adult who was trusted by the family. I find it hard to imagine the difficulties, but we are duty-bound to address them and I am grateful that the Executive is ahead of the game in doing so.

I am not aware of local strategies but I am grateful that things are progressing. However, we have to marry local activity with the national strategy. Much depends on an individual's needs and the ability of the people who best relate to that individual to deal with them. There has to be an overarching strategy to address that.

It is clear that there is no single simple solution; what is done depends on the needs and wants of every individual, which makes matters much more difficult for the Executive. This is not an issue in which we can simply draw down an amount of money to put into a particular area because the problem is huge and diverse. The needs of a person in Kinghorn are not necessarily the same as the needs of a person in the north of Scotland.

It is not so much a geographical difference; what matters are the needs and wants of the individual.

There is a cultural matter to be addressed, which might require some unity within Parliament. Earlier this year I met a Scots émigré who said that they were a psychotherapist. As a Scottish male of middle age, my mind boggles at the term "psychotherapy". Just what are we talking about? When I put that question to some of my friends, responses went from it being something in the region of psychobabble to it being something effeminate. We in Scotland still have this attitude that something should be dealt with by just getting a grip or giving yourself a shake. The attitude is that big boys do not cry, although clearly they do. We have to change our cultural attitudes. Although that will cause difficulty for the Scottish Executive and it will take time, it has to get around the problem.

We have to invest in solutions to such problems. From the learned Dr Jill Scharff, I understand that it is easier and cheaper to invest in solutions. We have to persuade people not only that it would be better and more beneficial for the person who is suffering, but that it is cheaper than attendance at an accident and emergency unit and cheaper than the self-harm that Margaret Mitchell and Marilyn Livingstone commented on and the abuse of drink and drugs. We have to invest in allowing people to work back.

We cannot remove the trauma that victims have gone through. There is nothing that we can do but try to learn lessons so that we can ensure that it does not happen to other youngsters. We cannot do anything physically for those individuals, apart from seeking to work with them in order to allow them to work through their problems and seeking to address their current difficulties. That will mean that the Executive has to take action; to its credit, it is addressing the issue.

A change in attitude in Scotland is also needed. We must acknowledge that the investment is not a luxury or a frippery, but is of fundamental importance because such victims' injuries cannot be dealt with by putting on a sticking plaster. It is much more complicated than that.

Not only is it necessary that we work with individuals, it is absolutely essential if society is to repay the debt that we owe those individuals for allowing the abuse to occur in the first place. From the points of view of the taxpayer and of the Government, it is much cheaper to help people work through their problems than it is to address their symptoms.

17:29

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I am pleased to speak to welcome the Executive's further commitment to support adult

survivors of childhood sexual abuse. I congratulate Marilyn Livingston, Anne Macdonald, Margaret Mitchell and the many members of the cross-party group on the hard work that they have put in to achieve that result.

I congratulate the cross-party group members from the Highlands—Maureen from rape and abuse line and Bill from criminal justice social work—who regularly made the long trip down to Edinburgh to attend the cross-party group meetings.

Much of what I want to say has already been said. Childhood sexual abuse is not a topic that society is comfortable discussing, but such abuse takes place in rural and remote areas as well as in urban centres. It can result in mental health problems, self-harm, suicide, alcohol and drug misuse, eating disorders, relationship problems, aggression and criminal activity. Therefore, a range of agencies can be involved in dealing with problems that have a single root cause that may not always be disclosed. If it is disclosed, the person to whom it is disclosed needs training to know how to deal with it.

Inspired by the cross-party group, Highland abuse survivors project was set up in 2001 and it set itself the task of examining what services were available in the Highlands and how effective they were in reaching survivors. The project comprises representatives of statutory and voluntary organisations as well as some adult survivors and I join its meetings when I can. With funding from NHS Highland's choose life fund and the lottery's Community Fund, research was commissioned from Linda Hayward, who surveyed agencies in the Highlands that might have contact with survivors to find out where gaps in services lay.

The research found that no single organisation in the Highlands is funded solely to oversee the development, promotion, support and training that is involved in dealing with survivors of childhood sexual abuse. That has implications not only for survivors but for workers in agencies who are unable to offer adequate services to deal with the range of conditions with which a survivor may repeatedly present. At the moment, we have a revolving door; survivors are treated for the symptoms rather than the cause.

The research found that the psychology service was the most helpful of all the services that are provided by statutory organisations. However, there is a shortage of psychologists in the Highlands and waiting lists are long. That needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

After the psychology service, voluntary organisations were found to be the most helpful. In the Highlands, we are lucky to have the Children 1st centre at Killen in the Black Isle and a rape and

abuse helpline in Dingwall. The latter receives calls from the whole of the north and north-east of Scotland and beyond. Both those organisations deal specifically with childhood sexual abuse survivors and they do excellent work in providing counselling—whether that be via phone lines or face to face—from well-trained, supervised counsellors. As a result of HASP being set up, we now have two self-help groups—in Dingwall and in Inverness—which are run by survivors.

The research concluded that there are specific difficulties with access in the Highlands, as members might imagine. We need a specific service such as open secret or KASP to work towards meeting the needs of survivors in the Highlands and to provide outreach services to remote areas. We need training for staff who could deliver services in which a disclosure might take place. We also need materials and information, such as a resource centre or a website, to be easily accessible to survivors and to workers in those various fields. The Executive's announcement of the creation of a reference group and of a possible virtual network of professionals and survivors should help us considerably in realising those aspirations.

The research was presented at HASP's conference this summer. As that coincided with the publication of the Executive commitments that are outlined in Marilyn Livingstone's motion, there was detailed and sympathetic press coverage, which I hope has encouraged other survivors to seek support. The prospect of funding for survivors being available is very cheering. In fact, the Executive's announcement was greeted with absolute delight at the conference. In the Highlands, we aspire to fund a co-ordinator to bring together the different statutory and voluntary organisations, to forge links between them and to access training and education for professionals. All that we need to know from the Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care is how soon we can put in our bid.

17:34

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):

I, too, congratulate Marilyn Livingstone on securing tonight's debate, on the work that she has done on the cross-party group on survivors of childhood sexual abuse and on the support that she has given to the Kingdom Abuse Survivors Project.

To mark its 10th birthday this year, KASP will host a series of events throughout October and November. In marking the 10 years of its existence, the project is trying to raise awareness, which is very important. It will hold events in both Glenrothes and Kirkcaldy. Too many youngsters who have been abused grow into adults without

the issues being resolved. That is central to the debate.

It is important that organisations such as KASP are at the front line and that people who have been abused can go to them. For many people, it is a traumatic journey. These are abused, abandoned and damaged individuals, and organisations such as the project need to give the kind of support that most of us simply could not provide.

Many of the people who have been abused and damaged have come from children's homes—institutional care—as well as from a family setting. We owe those people a colossal debt. The apology that Jack McConnell, the First Minister, made last year to victims of childhood sexual abuse in institutional care was welcome, but we need to do much more than that. Many people who have been abused, damaged and abandoned feel lacking in worth. The work of the short-life working group and the strategy that has been established must be followed through, because we need to ensure that survivors of abuse recognise how valuable they are to society.

We must try to repair some of the damage. We wish that it had not happened and, as Marilyn Livingstone said, we need to take steps to ensure that such things do not happen in the future, but we must grasp the opportunity to ensure that those who have been damaged get some sort of healing so that they can feel part of society once again.

I thank Marilyn Livingstone for all the work that she has done. I know how much that work is appreciated in the Fife area. I also commend the minister for the work that he has done and the interest that he has taken in this subject, which we all recognise. We must take steps to ensure that the kind of support mechanisms to which the motion refers are put in place as quickly as possible, especially in the areas where no effective voluntary organisations are carrying out the healing work that is done elsewhere.

17:37

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald): I thank Marilyn Livingstone for lodging the motion and congratulate her on securing today's debate. I also thank all the other members who have spoken and contributed to it.

The debate is very valuable, not least because it gives me the opportunity on behalf not just of Andy Kerr, who has taken a close and active interest in this area, but of other ministerial colleagues who have taken a similarly active interest in it, to acknowledge the work of members of the cross-party group on survivors of childhood sexual

abuse and of the groups that have worked with the cross-party group and with us on the issue. It also gives me an opportunity to say, on behalf of the Government, to the survivors of abuse that we are listening and that we want to work to help them break down in a very public way the wall of silence around abuse.

Sexual abuse and the trauma that results from it have been hidden by the silence of the victims, but in recent years many more survivors have spoken out about their experiences. That can only help them and others who might otherwise be at risk of abuse. It also helps policy makers to respond by developing a strategy to support adult survivors, to give them a voice and to work to protect children.

Those who have spoken in the debate have commented on the history of our involvement with the issue, from the establishment of the cross-party group through to the setting up of a short-life working group to examine the care needs of people who have survived childhood sexual abuse and to consider its links with mental illness, alcohol and drug abuse, physical abuse, domestic violence and homelessness.

Ministers have considered the short-life working group's recommendations and agreed that we need a national strategic approach to develop better local services. We have established a survivors fund of £2 million to pump prime activity. We will call for bids for demonstration projects, to which a number of members have referred. We have agreed to establish a survivors network, which will include survivors and professionals who will work with them, to help people find a voice.

We have also set up a survivors reference group to help us implement action. The group met for the first time earlier this month. It is designed to be—and is—an inclusive group: it includes adult survivors, social and clinical care representatives, and members of voluntary organisations. The role of the cross-party group is also reflected in the membership of the group.

It is for the reference group to develop the detail of the wide strategic approach that we want to take to achieve lasting progress. We have provided some ideas on that and today I have made other thoughts on the issue available to Marilyn Livingstone as the convener of the cross-party group. I will make those thoughts widely available and they will form part of the agenda for the next reference group meeting.

It is also for the reference group to consider how best to use the funding. Far be it from me to suggest that members take their bids elsewhere, but I am sure that they will welcome the fact that the reference group will set the criteria, consider the applications and disburse over the next two financial years the funds that we have provided. I

have no doubt that the reference group will be aware of the particular strengths of the voluntary sector in this regard, as Margaret Mitchell suggested, and that it will be aware of the work in Fife, the Highlands and elsewhere when it considers the bids.

The policy will link with a number of initiatives in the Executive. It falls naturally into the work of the national programme for mental health and well-being as it links into mental health promotion, the prevention of mental illness, tackling stigma, reducing the risk of suicide and enabling recovery.

Our aim is to improve access to and the quality of services for adult survivors in Scotland. We aim to encourage better joined-up working among health, social care, education, community and voluntary organisations to improve access. We recognise that the earlier people access services, the better is the chance of their risk of illness and suicidal behaviour being reduced and of aiding recovery.

We want to increase public awareness of childhood sexual abuse so that people will feel more comfortable about disclosing the experience at an earlier stage and thereby reduce the risk of longer-term damage to their physical and mental health. As Marilyn Livingstone said, citing Anne Macdonald, there is useful experience to draw on from the work on domestic abuse and other matters.

We have heard during the debate about the many difficulties that people who have been victims face. The problems are immense and the reference group intends to address them. There is an enormous need for people to work together and it is our expectation that that will happen.

Our approach is also reflected in what is being done through "Respect and Responsibility", the national sexual health strategy, which contains a number of actions to address issues related to sexual abuse, including issues for adult survivors.

As has been said—the number of ministers who were referred to at the outset reflects this—the effects of childhood sexual abuse are not the sole responsibility of the Health Department: they extend to the departments with responsibility for education, justice and communities. We recognise that barriers can exist between services and that overcoming them can be a challenge. I am convinced that the strategic approach that we have suggested is the best way to achieve that aim.

On the health and community care side, we will scope what community health partnerships and managed clinical network structures can do to make survivors aware of the benefits that they may be able to offer. We will also commission NHS Education for Scotland to undertake self-help training and public awareness raising.

I acknowledge the work that has been done by the cross-party group and by the short-life working group to create greater awareness and I welcome the continued support throughout the chamber for the work of the reference group in taking forward that agenda.

In the past four years, we have sought to listen to survivors, who I know have often felt that their needs have gone unrecognised, and to begin to dispel the many myths that surround sexual abuse and its impact on society as a whole. Those are challenging commitments. We are working towards them, but we recognise that we cannot afford to be complacent when dealing with these issues. The commitments are not end points or even horizons; they are markers in our progress towards the bigger purpose of enabling survivors to live their lives to the full. Nothing less than that should be our goal.

Meeting closed at 17:45.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

No proofs of the *Official Report* can be supplied. Members who want to suggest corrections for the archive edition should mark them clearly in the daily edition, and send it to the Official Report, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP. Suggested corrections in any other form cannot be accepted.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

Thursday 29 September 2005

PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

OFFICIAL REPORT daily editions

Single copies: £5.00

Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00

The archive edition of the *Official Report* of meetings of the Parliament, written answers and public meetings of committees will be published on CD-ROM.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

Single copies: £3.75

Annual subscriptions: £150.00

Standing orders will be accepted at Document Supply.

Published in Edinburgh by Astron and available from:

Blackwell's Bookshop
53 South Bridge
Edinburgh EH1 1YS
0131 622 8222

Blackwell's Bookshops:
243-244 High Holborn
London WC1 7DZ
Tel 020 7831 9501

All trade orders for Scottish Parliament documents should be placed through Blackwell's Edinburgh

Blackwell's Scottish Parliament Documentation
Helpline may be able to assist with additional information on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament, their availability and cost:

Telephone orders and inquiries
0131 622 8283 or
0131 622 8258

Fax orders
0131 557 8149

E-mail orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

Subscriptions & Standing Orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

RNID Ttypetalk calls welcome on
18001 0131 348 5412
Textphone 0845 270 0152

sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

All documents are available on the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

Accredited Agents
(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers

Printed in Scotland by Astron