

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 1 June 2006

Session 2

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 1 June 2006

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

Education

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Good morning. The first item of business is a debate on motion S2M-4464, in the name of James Douglas-Hamilton, on education.

09:15

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): This debate takes place against a background of radical education reform in England, which includes proposals for city academies, foundation schools and even trust schools. I mention in passing that there is a total lack of ministerial enthusiasm for such possibilities in Scotland.

I will set out 10 principles that we are right to support. First, Scotland must have an education system that is second to none and which equips our young people with the qualifications and expertise that they need to flourish in the job market. Secondly, parents and teachers must have more say over the running of schools and there should be more local decision making, to help to drive up standards of attainment and ensure that resources are directed to the areas in most need. Thirdly, the curriculum should have the flexibility to provide the subject matters that are necessary to respond to pupil choice in, for example, modern languages, science and history.

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): I am grateful to Lord James Douglas-Hamilton for giving way so early in his speech. Will he clarify whether the Tories stand by the pupil passport scheme? If not, what do they stand for?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have only just begun to assert the principles that we support, so if the member listens I will explain with great clarity exactly what they are. Of course, our policy on choice has not changed, just as the Prime Minister's policy, which I understand the member does not support, has not changed.

Fourthly, there must be enhanced possibilities for school pupils to learn vocational skills when they want to do so, so that young people can respond effectively to the demands of the job market. Fifthly, special schools should be regarded as essential centres of educational excellence, which provide invaluable support for children who have additional support needs. Any

existing presumption of mainstreaming should not be allowed to displace the need for such schools, whose worth is well proven. Sixthly, the teaching profession should not be overburdened with paperwork, form filling and minor bureaucratic requirements. It follows that all factors that cause teachers to leave the profession early, including stress, should be addressed.

Seventhly, discipline and truancy matters should be dealt with effectively and head teachers should be given the power to exclude pupils permanently if that is necessary. Eighthly, health education, including an emphasis on nutrition, should be recognised as a key element in young people's education. Ninthly, physical education and sport should be promoted: they are conducive to a good quality of life and a school ethos that has its roots in the community. Tenthly, the invaluable work of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education must continue, so that every effort is made to ensure that standards in schools are maintained and that recommendations are made for improvements when they are necessary. We await with keen interest HMIE's report on the implementation of the McCrone agreement.

The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Robert Brown): I am impressed with Lord James Douglas-Hamilton's statement of principles. Does he agree that his approach requires teachers? If he does, why did the number of teachers in Scotland fall by 6,000 under the Conservative Governments of 1989 to 1997?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is essential that we deal with the present situation, as the agenda has moved on considerably. I will not say that everything that happened in the past was perfect. I defended the teachers in the House of Commons when there was a dispute with the Conservative Government. I put their case firmly and I was glad when the eventual settlement materialised, as I supported it early on in a speech in the House of Commons. Teacher retention is vital. I cannot give the exact figures for that under the Conservative Government, but I suggest to the minister that they are no longer relevant. The relevant point is that his Administration has been in power for several years and we are entitled to examine what he is doing.

On the principles that I mentioned, there is no difficulty in achieving agreement that the Scottish education system should be second to none. However, devolved school management is contentious. Fred Forrester, formerly of the Educational Institute of Scotland, has said:

"the blunt truth is that DSM is a tawdry and threadbare substitute for real devolution of education decision making to school level. If the majority of parents and the majority of head teachers want schools to have more autonomy, then they must go down the road of freeing schools from local authority control ... It could be kick started if some

successful secondary schools demanded the same direct grant status as Jordanhill School”.

I acknowledge that, at this stage, there is not a majority in the Scottish Parliament in favour of establishing self-governing schools or of the education reforms that Tony Blair is pioneering south of the border. However, surely to goodness the coalition Government should be able to implement consistently the policy of devolved school management. According to the latest estimates for 2004-05 from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, Clackmannanshire Council and Fife Council devolved slightly more than 50 per cent of their education spending to head teachers, whereas South Ayrshire Council gave its teachers control of more than 90 per cent of its budget. The Scottish average is 68 per cent, which is well short of the target figure. We want devolved school management to be implemented successfully throughout Scotland so that we have more local decision making that focuses on areas of highest priority, improves schools' ethos and drives up standards.

Incidentally, with regard to the question that the minister asked a few moments ago, I point out that one factor in the figures on teachers to which he referred was that, at the time, school rolls were declining because of the end of the effect of the post-war baby boom. However, it is today's figures that matter. The minister's policy on devolved school management is not materialising.

It follows that we must have a flexible school curriculum, which is a subject that we debated recently. On that issue at least, I welcome the Executive's review. However, we need a sufficiency of teachers who teach subjects that pupils wish to learn. That may not be an easy task, but ministers should work to achieve the aim. To give maximum effect to the principle of a flexible curriculum, it may be necessary to deploy a larger pool of supply teachers to meet demand.

We have pursued consistently the issue of vocational education. In fairness to the Executive, it has moved considerably on the issue, but pupils should have more access to careers advice so that each pupil knows the relevant options that are suited to his or her aptitude, inclination and ability. We want to encourage greater co-operation between business, industry and schools to ensure that careers advice is as up to date as possible with the skill needs of the job market.

We remain seriously concerned that the interpretation of the presumption in favour of mainstreaming may militate against special schools that engage in teaching children with additional support needs. We have felt that all the more strongly since the Minister for Education and Young People, Mr Peter Peacock, admitted that

the Scottish Executive has no idea of how many mainstream school teachers are qualified to teach children with additional support needs. The ministers will be only too well aware that, last week, the EIS expressed grave concern about that issue in relation to children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Our point is that special schools have a place and that that place should not be under threat as a result of the presumption in favour of mainstreaming.

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): Does the member share my concern that in the latest census of primary school teachers, only four teachers in the City of Glasgow designated their sole subject as special educational needs? The mainstreaming issue is not necessarily just about what is happening with special schools, but about special education within mainstream schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The member's point adds considerable weight to what I have been saying, which is that this is a matter that we need to address with the utmost urgency, especially in view of the recommendations of the EIS.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. I have given way three times and I am nearly at the end of my allotted time.

With regard to teachers being overwhelmed with excessive paperwork, I have repeatedly mentioned to ministers that if they can simplify the work of teachers by reducing pressures upon them, they will be contributing a service. However, there is little evidence that that has been done. On the subject of discipline, I return again to the very timely representations of the EIS, whose convener, Sandy Fowler, said last week that

“the Scottish Executive should provide, as a matter of urgency, additional off site behaviour facilities for children and young people displaying particularly challenging behaviour.”

The Conservatives have supported teachers on that matter by suggesting that head teachers should have the power permanently to exclude when there is no other reasonable alternative and that excluded pupils should go to a learning centre where they cannot disrupt the learning of the entire class.

We strongly support health education, physical education and sport. In years to come, those areas will no doubt be given a wider focus, consistent with pupil and parental demand. I have mentioned the role of HMIE in monitoring the McCrone agreement. We will no doubt return to that subject when the full facts become abundantly clear.

I return to the point that in order to drive up standards in our schools, we have to give parents and teachers greater involvement in the running of those schools. The Conservatives are on record as having voted against the diminution of the statutory rights of parents. I am concerned that the policy of presumption to mainstreaming may be given an interpretation in practice that is contrary to the best interests of those with additional support needs. In our view, every single child with additional support needs should have his or her case considered on its merits rather than be reduced to a cipher in a rigid formula.

Tony Blair spoke of the deadening uniformity of the comprehensive system. His action to promote diversity has much to recommend it. I challenge the minister with the words of the former special adviser to the Prime Minister, Julian Le Grand, who said:

"Policies designed to extend users' choices within public services are ... likely to do a better job of empowering users and promoting quality services in an equitable fashion than a no-choice system where providers have a monopoly, people are chained to their local school or hospital and where their only 'choice' if they are unhappy is to go private or to move house."

Surely it is not too much to hope that the minister will look sympathetically on the words of the special adviser to the Prime Minister.

The Conservatives recognise that teachers and parents know very much more about running schools than politicians, who are far removed from the immediate scene. It will be our purpose to set them free to do so.

I move,

That the Parliament believes that creating a greater degree of school autonomy, devolving more powers to head teachers and giving greater say to parents and teachers in shaping the education system will raise standards; is therefore disappointed at the abolition of school boards which will dilute parental representation in schools; notes that Jordanhill School, Scotland's only remaining independently run but publicly funded school, has consistently been among the top-performing schools in Scotland and won the SQA "School of the Year" award; notes that teaching unions are voicing concerns over the Scottish Executive's discipline and mainstreaming policies, and calls on the Executive to introduce reforms to create a more diverse education system in Scotland to raise standards, tackle discipline and serve the needs and aspirations of all pupils.

09:29

The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Robert Brown): I am grateful to Lord James for lodging today's motion on education because it gives the chamber the opportunity to consider the Executive's ambitious vision for Scotland's young people, the substantial effort that has gone into our education system since 1999, the process of improvement in which

we are engaged right across the board to widen, deepen and enrich the educational experience of Scotland's young people, and to compare that experience to the situation we inherited.

It is difficult now to recall the disastrous industrial relations in education under the Conservatives: the low classroom morale; the reduced numbers of teachers; the inadequate salary levels; the crumbling school buildings; the sense of drift; the lack of being valued that was felt by many teachers and children. That is the legacy of the Conservative years, when Lord James and his colleagues had the opportunity to put their education theories into practice.

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

Robert Brown: Perhaps the member will give me a moment to move on a little bit.

As Lord James rightly says, the agenda has moved on. Today, Scotland's schools are recognised internationally as a success and, in many fields, we are seen as an international standard: teacher induction, continuing professional development, enterprise in education, our provision and framework for additional support needs, and our support for leadership in schools. In the highly-regarded Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development programme for international student assessment studies, Scotland is in the top third of performers, having been outdone significantly by only three other countries. We learn from what works in Scotland and elsewhere and we share ideas with the world's other leading education systems.

Murdo Fraser: As we are currently making comparisons between the past and the record of this Government, is the minister proud of the fact that, since 1997, we have seen a ninefold increase in violent and disruptive incidents in the classroom?

Robert Brown: I will deal with discipline in a moment. I accept entirely that it is a serious issue that I suspect has been a problem since education began.

We are now a country that celebrates success in education. I had the privilege recently of presenting the standard for headship certificates in Glasgow to the cream of our up-and-coming education leaders. Peter Peacock and I have met teachers, classroom assistants, school cooks, janitors, special needs support staff, and many new and dynamic probationer teachers in visits across Scotland and in receptions at Bute House and elsewhere. I would also like to congratulate all the schools participating in tomorrow's Scottish education awards.

No one who visits schools up and down the country, or talks to the staff and young people, can fail to be impressed by the achievements of the system, by the buildings that have been built new or refurbished in historically large numbers, and by the new teachers—we are heading for our 53,000 target—and the opportunity that they give us when set against the parallel decline in school rolls, to which Lord James referred. Above all, people cannot fail to be impressed by the articulate young people that we are turning out, such as the third year girl at Holyrood secondary school in Glasgow who led the backpack for Malawi venture with huge panache.

Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab): I would like to address the minister's point about reducing school rolls. Will the minister acknowledge that that is not the case throughout Scotland and that some local authorities, such as West Lothian Council, have seen an increase in school rolls and that our funding mechanisms need to be sensitive to that?

Robert Brown: I take Bristow Muldoon's point. Sometimes the Conservatives do not always recognise that we have a system in Scotland in which the structure and framework are laid down by the Executive, which also provides the resources to a significant extent, but the schools are operated by local authorities that have to deal with their own individual situations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Pursuant to the question just asked by Bristow Muldoon, will the minister support popular schools and allow them to expand?

Robert Brown: That is part of the Conservative credo but the parallel situation is sink schools that contract; that is the unfortunate by-product of the Conservatives' ideas. We are interested in education for all, not in education for some.

I will talk a bit more about some of the schools that I have seen. There is the impressive pupil council at St Machar academy in Aberdeen, one of our schools of ambition that is developing its sporting and activity prowess. There have been impressive musical and scholastic achievements at St Joseph's college in Dumfries; there are the lively and attractive children at Hallside primary school in Cambuslang and—one of my favourites—Annette Street primary school in Glasgow, which has a rainbow of colours, creeds, languages and backgrounds and, more important, young children who are hugely motivated and excited by their eco-school activities inside and outside the school.

The partnership Government is committed—as I am sure everyone in the chamber is—to providing the best education for all our young people. We know that the world does not owe us a living and

that our education system must have a culture of continuous renewal and improvement if it is to continue to fit our young people for the challenges of today's global economy. We are well aware of the challenges and the wasted potential of too many children, not least looked-after children and the wider group who leave school with few qualifications, little motivation, and who are not in education, employment or training.

We do not pretend to have all the answers to those complex issues, but we believe that there is consensus across the political and educational spectrum on many of the key ingredients: the importance of a strong school ethos and values, clear and professional school leadership, early intervention against the background of the achievement of near-universal nursery education for three and four-year-olds, and a motivating curriculum that offers relevant and interesting choices for young people in academic and in vocational areas, in school and college settings, but above all in a way that helps to develop responsible citizens, effective contributors, successful learners and confident individuals, by building life skills and not just learning subjects. Although those words might be considered by some to be a matter of public relations, they are meaningful to teachers and educators across our system.

The Conservatives talk a lot about choice, reform and devolution of powers to head teachers, but their concept of choice has always been choice for the few, not quality for all. To be fair, the terms of their motion are similar to those of previous motions that they have supported throughout the existence of the Parliament, but I have two complaints about it.

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): Will the minister take an intervention?

Robert Brown: No, I need to make progress, as I have taken three interventions already.

First, the Conservatives have not moved on. They do not recognise the radical, life-enhancing changes that have taken place in Scottish education since they were last in charge. Their policies have about them a whiff of formaldehyde, which is the stuff used to embalm bodies. Secondly, there is a curious lack of detail about what the Conservatives mean by "reform". It is all a little curious. Perhaps they are waiting for instructions from David Cameron who, like the grand old Duke of York, marched them up the hill with the most reactionary manifesto in history and is now set to march them down again in his new guise—or disguise—as a liberal-conservative. We should perhaps celebrate today's debate as the last of the debates on the old Conservative education policies.

The Executive, on the contrary, is providing more freedom for teachers and schools, more choice and opportunity for pupils, better support for learning, and what the EIS described as an “unprecedented level of activity” on the part of the Scottish Executive and others in response to concerns relating to pupil indiscipline. We have a shared agenda, which is not top-down or dictatorial. Our agenda is about the empowerment of schools, teachers and pupils and about removing barriers and extending flexibility. It is also about trust and respect and an enriched experience.

Let me say a word about discipline. I wish that the Conservatives would read what the EIS committee on pupil indiscipline said in its well-balanced and constructive report. The report, which was primarily directed at assisting teachers to tackle school indiscipline, points out:

“There are no simple solutions, no ‘silver bullet’ which will solve the problem of pupil indiscipline.”

The EIS report agrees with us that the most important things are full and local consultation at school level, clear and concise policies, good communication and consistent application. That is borne out by report after report from HMIE. Evidence shows us that a well-led school with a strong sense of values and motivated teachers and pupils will have less truancy and fewer discipline problems both inside the school and in the surrounding community. The EIS report also makes the vital point that teachers have the right to clear guidelines and practical support, but also have a responsibility to have high expectations of their pupils and to develop their own professional skills in managing children.

Without wishing to rerun the many previous debates that we have had on additional support needs and inclusion, I remind members that there has been no sudden rush to include all children in mainstream accommodation. Indeed, the number of places in special schools or units has changed by only 0.01 per cent in recent years.

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con): The minister will recall the meeting that he, Maureen Watt and I had with a group of primary schoolteachers who came to the Parliament last week. Was he deaf to what they said when they highlighted some of the real problems that the policy is causing?

Robert Brown: I heard what was said in that regard. I do not pretend that the situation does not vary across Scotland according to differing local needs, but I believe that the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and the substantial resources that we have put in place to back that up provide a framework for dealing with such issues in an adequate way. A goodly part of

the solution is continuing professional development and the additional specialist support, such as classroom assistants and others, that we have put in place to support the system. That support has changed the face of education substantially over recent years and it will continue to do so as the new act begins to bear its weight.

We have promoted the individually based education that Lord James called for. Our legislation and guidance has increasingly stressed that the objective is education that is suited to the individual needs of the child. We have made it clear that it is up to the head teacher to decide when to exclude children, if that is necessary, but that we want schools and local authorities to provide appropriate alternative provision for children who are excluded. They should not be left simply to stagnate at home or to run about the streets and get into further trouble. That has been an issue from time to time in the past.

We can speak strong words in the chamber about the details, but I know that there is no member who does not believe in the central importance of education to our society and its future. In recent months, I have sensed increasing agreement about the broad vision and direction of travel.

I believe that pride in the many marvellous achievements of our schools in Scotland unites us all. There is also a fierce determination that Scottish education should be the best in the world, bar none. We have a superb generation of young people, who will do great things in the world. It is our job as an Executive and a Parliament to rise to the challenge. I invite the chamber today to support that vision through constructive, forward-looking analysis of the Executive's policies and not to refight the sterile battles of the 1980s and 1990s.

I move amendment S2M-4464.2, to leave out from “believes” to end and insert:

“applauds the fact that the Scottish education system is recognised by international benchmarking exercises as being amongst the best in the world; recognises the commitment of the Scottish Executive to sustained improvement in education and the biggest school buildings modernisation programme in our history, unprecedented stability in industrial relations and increased numbers of teachers and classroom assistants; welcomes the educational legislation which has, for example, established a more individual and supportive framework for children with additional support needs and increased the opportunities for parental involvement in education; notes that the top-performing schools in Scotland have served a wide variety of communities and congratulates all the winners of the SQA “School of the Year” award; welcomes the measured comments of the EIS in relation to discipline policies of the Scottish Executive, and believes that the model for continued improvement for Scottish schools should build on current strength and success and tackle known challenges by fostering the leadership skills of head teachers and other teaching staff, reforming the curriculum,

widening choice and reducing unnecessary paperwork, ensuring that teachers are freed up to teach, and pupils to learn, all with a view to equipping young people with the skills and values needed in the modern world."

09:40

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): When I saw the text of the Conservative motion, I had a sense of *déjà vu*. Yet again, the Conservatives are cleaving to the mantra of the market and competition in education—a mantra that has been rejected repeatedly by the Scottish people. I remember 1996, which was the last time the Conservatives were in charge of Scottish education, when 30,000 people on the streets of Edinburgh marched against Conservative education policies. They were not just trade union members, teachers or even parents; the community of Scotland turned out in its tens of thousands to reject the Conservatives' management of education. When we consider the issues that we are debating today, it is clear that what the Conservatives are offering has changed little from what they were pushing in 1996.

Choice in education is an issue in the current debate, but the issue is not choice between schools, but choice in schools. There is a lack of breadth in the opportunities that are available to some of our children in the education system. There should be diversity in education, but there should not be division. The Conservatives are about driving wedges between communities. The Scottish National Party—with the grain of Scottish views on education—believes in a national, comprehensive system in which schools are at the heart of communities.

Murdo Fraser: Will Fiona Hyslop expand on SNP policy? I understand that it is to allow comprehensive schools to develop specialisms—in sports or music, for example. How can that system work if we do not allow a degree of choice? If I have a child who is gifted in music and their local school specialises not in music but in sports, do they have to go to a school that specialises in sports? Why can they not go across town to a school that specialises in music? Is the member's policy not somewhat confused?

Fiona Hyslop: I explained the comprehensive system. I will now give one reason why I think that the Conservatives are wrong. Most of Scotland exists not in the city of Edinburgh, where one pupil in four goes to a private school, but in small-town Scotland. At the moment, the top 20 per cent of pupils are performing well, 60 per cent are doing fairly well, but 20 per cent are not achieving. My approach is to allow and encourage schools to have a specialism, so that every pupil can taste excellence in some subject. I want to ensure that excellence is available to all schools and pupils.

That is not market choice, selection and shopping around for schools, which the Conservatives would like to have.

I believe that there must be diversity.

David McLetchie: Will the member give way?

Fiona Hyslop: I want to continue.

We want a national comprehensive system in which there is a broad curriculum, which is one of Scotland's strengths. We send our pupils to school for far longer than any other European country—for 1,000 hours a year, compared with the OECD average of 750 hours—but they have less time than others for their own history, for languages, for science and for physical education. What are they doing? In the debate on the national curriculum review, the Executive acknowledged that overassessment is burdening and causing difficulties in our system. I want to push the pace on reviewing assessment, to open up the curriculum and to provide the space and time for the extra specialism that I want every school to have.

Here in Lothians, pupils leave school at 12 o'clock on Friday. Afternoons are already free in this region and we should be using the opportunity that that represents for the curriculum. I believe that if the 20 per cent of pupils whose performance HMIE tells us is flatlining got a chance to taste what it is like to be successful in languages, science, sport, drama or whatever, they could spread the motivation that they gain from that across other subjects.

I support the schools of ambition initiative, but I think that it is not ambitious to have only 20 or 30 schools in that category. I want all schools to have that opportunity.

I agree with the minister about the Scottish Qualifications Authority awards and I am glad that pupils and staff from Linlithgow academy will be attending. However, the reason why Linlithgow academy is successful is because it is comprehensive and takes pupils from all backgrounds and social areas. That is its strength. That lesson should be learned.

The EIS report that has been mentioned must be taken seriously. I have great concerns about the implications of mainstreaming. My concern is not about reviewing the policy. I acknowledge that special schools are not closing. However, there is an issue about special units. I will be meeting parents in West Lothian who have concerns about special units being closed.

Last week, Jack McConnell said that education and knowledge transfer should be at the heart of making Scotland successful and competitive. I agree with that. However, it took seven years of audit for the Executive to discover that. Further, on

Tuesday of the same week, I met university principals and vice-principals and the European education commissioner to discuss Scotland's input to the European institute of technology, work on which is being done here and now. Scotland can help to shape that institute. Why does it take the SNP to take Scottish education to the heart of Europe and drive forward that agenda?

Political leadership is about making things happen. The SNP has pillars that it wants to drive forward in relation to education. The early start is the best start and I think that we can get consensus across the chamber in that regard. We must ensure that our education system is accessible internationally. I believe in aspiration. We should end the complacency culture and generate ambition for all. At its heart, the Scottish education system is egalitarian. It is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay. Unlike the Conservatives, the SNP, the other parties in the chamber and people in the rest of Scotland believe in schools that operate at the heart of their communities. Education is not something that is boxed off; it is at the heart of Scotland.

I move amendment S2M-4464.1, to leave out from "believes" to end and insert:

"supports greater choice within schools, rather than between schools, in order that pupils can benefit from breadth in the curriculum and believes that the agenda for education in Scotland should be focused on raising the levels of achievement for all and should include a review of the deployment of education resources at school level against the national resources provided, an analysis of over-assessment in schools and policies to drive forward the pursuit of excellence."

09:48

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): I am always pleased to have the opportunity to debate education matters in Parliament, so I am grateful to the Conservatives for selecting education as their topic for debate and for making it the sole topic rather than using their time to have two debates. That gives people time to address some of the issues. However, that is the last time that I will be nice to the Tories in my speech, because I believe that their motion is misleading in a number of respects.

The Executive has devolved and will devolve more power to head teachers. The amount of budgetary control that head teachers have under devolved school management has increased. It was interesting that Lord James Douglas-Hamilton used the example of South Ayrshire, as the decision that he mentioned was taken when I was the chair of educational services in South Ayrshire Council. Labour-led councils have taken the decision to devolve more power and financial power to head teachers over a period of time.

Programmes such as the schools of ambition initiative, which Fiona Hyslop mentioned, will allow

head teachers to develop their own programmes to tackle issues in their schools and to formulate best practice that can be rolled out to other schools. That will allow diversity within our current education system.

The Executive has encouraged and will encourage parents to become more involved in their children's schools. Reference was made to recent legislation. Contrary to what the Conservatives' motion says, the replacement of school boards by parent councils is intended to give parents greater flexibility in determining how the parent body operates and places a duty on local authorities and ministers to encourage parental involvement. As we said in the debate that dealt with the matter, legislation alone cannot ensure that that happens, but we have created the legislative basis for it by placing that duty on those who are responsible for education.

The Scottish Parent Teacher Council welcomed the new Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Bill, declaring it to be parent friendly and focused on the issues that are of most concern to parents, and saying that it should deliver what parents have long said they want. If the bill was to reduce the amount of parental control, why on earth would a national parental body welcome it? It just does not make sense. Even the Scottish School Board Association, which was originally opposed to the bill, felt that its views were taken on board and that the functions of the new parent councils, which are dealt with in section 8 of the bill, would enhance the effectiveness of school boards. The Tories are beating on a broken drum.

The motion goes on to congratulate Jordanhill school on its successes, which the Conservatives seem to attribute not to the hard work of teachers or pupils but to the simple fact that it is the only publicly funded school that is not under local authority control in Scotland—a somewhat simplistic analysis.

Murdo Fraser: Is Elaine Murray suggesting that pupils and teachers in other schools in Scotland are not hard-working?

Dr Murray: I do not think that Murdo Fraser was listening.

Since the days of Mrs Thatcher, opting out in a variety of guises has been the Tories' magic wand for education. In February last year, Mr Fraser claimed that £600 million could be saved by removing responsibility for school education from local authorities, which would reduce council tax by 35 per cent. What he failed to say was how the money would be found in the Scottish Executive's budget to provide the public funds for each publicly run school. Would the Conservatives like to explain?

David McLetchie: How the money would be found is an interesting question. I remind Elaine Murray that the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform, Mr McCabe, has boasted in this Parliament that we are about to achieve £1 billion of cash-releasing efficiency savings. The money is available; what is lacking is the political will.

Dr Murray: What Mr McCabe is looking at is the way in which we configure public services, not removing schools—

David McLetchie: That is what we are looking at.

Dr Murray: It would not necessarily be cheaper. What the Conservatives are talking about would mean that we could not have such efficiency exercises across public services, because they would break things down into smaller and smaller units.

Bill Butler asked where the Conservatives now stand on passports. Before the general election, school passports were the best thing since sliced bread and Mr McLetchie swanned off to Sweden to tell us how wonderful they were. Mr Cameron does not think that they are such a good idea, so perhaps the Conservatives could explain where they now stand on the matter.

On school discipline, Lord James Douglas-Hamilton's press release last Friday claimed:

"The EIS report is firmly in keeping with what Scottish Conservatives have been saying for years."

Setting aside what the EIS might think about claims that it endorses Tory education policy, let us have a look at some of the things that were said in "Supporting teachers, tackling indiscipline". I quote from page 7, which states:

"At the present time there is an unprecedented level of activity on the part of the Scottish Executive, local authorities, the EIS and individual teachers in response to concerns relating to pupil indiscipline."

It states that there is no precedent for the current level of activity, not even when the great Tories were in control of the Scottish Office.

The EIS is asking for a number of things. Quite rightly, teachers are asking for sufficient funding for additional support needs. The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People has indicated the resources that have gone in and we must ensure that they are channelled properly. Teachers are also calling for additional staffing for in-school behaviour bases and units for the most challenging pupils, for early intervention and, if that is not successful, for off-site behavioural facilities.

Part of the Tories' solution—not in Lord James Douglas-Hamilton's speech, but in some of their press releases—is to use exclusion as a blunt

instrument. Of course, exclusion has a role to play, but it is certainly not a solution, and I do not believe that young people should be rewarded for bad behaviour by being given holidays, especially if they just transfer their bad behaviour to the local community.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Will Dr Murray take an intervention?

Dr Murray: I am afraid that I must make progress.

What we need is specialist training, more continuing professional development, a more flexible curriculum, the ability for young people who are seriously disruptive to work with teachers and trained assistants to confront and address their problems and the curriculum to be adjusted accordingly. The way in which some schools treat young men is an issue. I do not have time to expound on that, but the way in which young men are treated in schools can cause problems.

The motion concludes with some guff about "a more diverse education system". Lord James claims that that refers to some of the educational reforms south of the border. I am certainly not embarrassed to say that we are not seeking the same solutions for Scotland. The Tories managed to all but destroy the state education system in parts of England during their rule in the 1980s and 1990s. I lived in England from 1976 to 1988, but I was determined to return to my homeland. That was partly because I knew that we would get our own Parliament eventually and I wanted to be there when that happened, but I also knew that I certainly was not going to educate my kids in the corrupted and deformed education system in England. We resisted the introduction of such a system in Scotland and, as Fiona Hyslop rightly said, the Tories' philosophy and our education system is all the better for it. We do not need the solution of opted out schools and so on.

David McLetchie: Will the member give way?

Dr Murray: No, because I have to finish now.

We must offer choice within schools and excellence within schools. There must be ambition for all pupils, excellence for all pupils and all pupils must fulfil their potential. We reject the solutions that seem to be necessary south of the border. We have a better system here. We will improve on it and will ensure that it delivers for all our children.

09:56

Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con): Much has been said today about the record of the last Conservative Government. Elaine Murray managed 23 seconds of praise for it before she launched into seven minutes and 20 seconds of fairly extreme criticism.

I have what is probably a unique perspective on the last Conservative Government—at least among the members who are currently in the chamber—because I was educated from primary through to university level entirely under the last Conservative Government. I am certainly very appreciative of the standards in the schools that I went to and the standard of education that I achieved.

A member who is not present today is Richard Baker. He and I were at university together at the same time in Aberdeen. I seem to recall that when I was at university, a rather large march, perhaps analogous to the one that Fiona Hyslop mentioned, went down Union Street in Aberdeen. The march was led by the aforementioned Mr Baker and it called on the Government to cut the debt, not the grant. About a year later, his chosen party was elected to power and chose to reverse that policy. If we are going to talk about the record of Governments, we should talk not only about the record of the last Conservative Government, which in my view was significantly better than what has happened under Tony Blair or this Executive.

One of the other achievements of the last Conservative Government, which we often do not hear about, was the significant expansion in the number of people who went to university. The proportion of those who got to university under the last Conservative Government represented a significant increase on the figure that was inherited from the previous Labour Government and the previous Lib-Lab pact. Unfortunately, this Lib-Lab pact seems to have lasted rather longer than that one. We should scrutinise the records of Tony Blair and of this Executive. The comments that the minister made seemed to be more about the past than the future.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton mentioned 10 fundamental principles in education. I would have thought that most members would consider them to be relatively uncontroversial. If any member disagrees with or objects to any of them, it would be interesting to hear which ones they disagree with and on what basis they disagree with them. As the minister indicated, it would be helpful to have a degree of consensus, at least on the direction of travel of education policy. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has set out a good set of principles that might guide education policy in the long term. Whatever happens next year, this Executive is surely not going to be in power for a significantly longer period of time—the shorter, the better.

Attainment is one of the fundamental issues in education. The partnership agreement is clear on the matter. It refers to raising attainment and is right to do so. Last week, the Minister for Education and Young People assured Parliament

that all the education measures in the partnership agreement are on course to be met, which I presume includes raising attainment. However, the report produced by the futures project last week showed, as Fiona Hyslop indicated, that there has been no progress at all in the attainment of the lowest 20 per cent. That is surely one of the fundamental failures of this Executive. About a fifth of students currently in schools are being failed, whether by the system, the curriculum or whatever else. That is a consistent problem year after year and the situation is getting no better. The futures project, which is meant to set the course for the next 20 years, does not indicate any sign of progress. The minister must come back and say in what measurable ways he will be able to improve attainment, in particular the attainment of those whom the system is currently letting down. All of us would agree that the most able students tend to do okay wherever they are in the country; it is those at the very bottom whom the education system is failing most.

Robert Brown: Given that attainment levels have been raised in comparison with international standards, as the PISA study has reported, can we have the benefit of Derek Brownlee's ideas for tackling the admittedly significant problem of the lack of attainment in the lowest 20 per cent of the school population? As I touched on in my opening contribution, those children pose the biggest challenge for the system in future.

Derek Brownlee: The PISA study may have talked about attainment levels, but I understand that the reference was to overall attainment levels. The futures project report, which was published last week under the auspices of the Executive, said very firmly that the attainment of our bottom 20 per cent is not improving.

Surely one way in which the Executive should consider improving attainment is to put more emphasis on expanding vocational education. If that is what a young person seeks, we should give them the option of making that move rather earlier than is the case at the moment. That would give those who have particular problems more class time; the problem does not need to be intractable.

Businesses tell us that basic literacy, numeracy and information technology skills are not present in the young people whom they interview. In the debate on education, we should hear less from the Executive about structures and less of its obsession with reeling off statistics on funding. No one doubts that funding on education has increased under the Executive—indeed, spending on everything has increased under the Executive; it is just that the results do not necessarily improve by the same proportion.

Fiona Hyslop: Does the member agree that, despite national resources going into education,

we have an increase in the number of teacher vacancies? Is not the real and systemic problem the fact that the resources that the taxpayer has provided may not be reaching pupils in the classroom?

Derek Brownlee: Absolutely. I was just about to ask that question of the minister. Last week, we were told that the education measures in the partnership agreement are on track to be implemented. It set a target to devolve 90 per cent of budgets to schools. Perhaps the minister will tell the chamber the number and proportion of schools for which that target has now been met—after all, we cannot rely on all of them having Tory councils.

How many pages of new guidance have been issued to schools and how many have been withdrawn since the Executive took power? It would be interesting to hear those statistics from the minister today.

10:02

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): When I first saw the motion and amendments for today's debate, I thought that they were pretty arid and would lead to a debate that would be divided by inter-party factionalisation and finger wagging. However, I am glad to say that there has been some meat to the debate. In my contribution, rather than read out a pre-prepared speech, I will address some of the issues that have been raised thus far.

First, I turn to the discipline and truancy matters that members on all sides of the chamber have raised. Let us imagine that a 12-year-old child is standing on the floor of the chamber. Having done so, we would think of children not as people to be educated but as people with limitless possibilities, all of which we should try to develop. We would have not the usual arid debate about where we are in the league of nations at passing exams, assessments and all the rest of it, but a debate that was much more child-focused.

I was on the children's panel, the inspiration for which was the interests of the child. When we debate education, we should be thinking in the interests of the full development of the child and young person. All too often, we have no more than a knee-jerk reaction to discipline and truancy matters. Instead of considering why the child is failing at school, people tend to say that we must do this, that or the other.

Children who do not do well at school or who do not want to be in school are often typified by a lack of self-esteem, an inability to plan for themselves and a lack of support at home. Derek Brownlee raised the serious problem of the lack of attainment among the lowest-achieving 20 per cent of children. The overall approach that we take

needs to look at the child from birth right through to leaving school. We need more support for single-parent families and children who are in trouble. Those young people are often the ones who are not in school. We also need more support for children who are carers and children who are in care.

All those things need to be tackled. That cannot be done simply by education or in school, but schools can help by taking full advantage of the freedom that the Executive wants to give them to develop flexible curriculums. By doing that, they will be able to construct curriculums that are relevant to the needs of the children who are in the school and which acknowledge the diversity of needs. Perhaps we need to set targets that are beyond simple academic excellence—that is, targets for all our children to leave school with qualities of tolerance and patience, independence of thought, initiative, communication skills and the ability to assess risks and to co-operate with other people.

Robert Brown: I hope that Robin Harper accepts that that is exactly what the curriculum review and the leadership initiatives in schools are trying to do.

Robin Harper: Yes. I am not saying this in a spirit of criticism. I am simply trying to be encouraging and to point out that there is an opportunity.

The minister mentioned the leadership programme for head teachers. I am familiar with St Machar academy, as I presented the prizes there last year. I do not know why the school invited me, but it did, which was kind. Perhaps it was because of my rectorship at the University of Aberdeen. St Machar academy serves five of the six poorest districts in Aberdeen but it is a superb school with a tremendous ethos. I am sure that it also has fewer discipline problems than many schools in similar areas of Scotland—I am not saying that it has none, as I would never say that of any school. If that is the case, it is down to the school's accent on music, drama and developing the full range of talents and skills in the young people who are in the school. Many other schools are doing that, but the important point for the Conservatives is that we do not need to devolve even more power to head teachers. The head teacher who led St Machar academy, Mr Taylor, did so with the powers that he already had. His initiative and his ability to take the staff with him developed that school to where it is now, although he has now retired.

If the Education Committee cared to do some research into discipline in schools that concentrate on the arts, it would find that there is growing evidence that schools that give their pupils a full range of possibilities by putting art, music, drama

and sport at the centre of the curriculum, not simply adding them on, have fewer discipline problems than any others because the young people can express themselves.

Fiona Hyslop: On behalf of the Education Committee, I point Robin Harper to the report on pupil motivation that the committee produced recently, which will be available in the Scottish Parliament information centre.

Robin Harper: I thank Fiona Hyslop very much indeed. I will read that with interest.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): You should be finishing now, Mr Harper.

Robin Harper: Oh dear. I have spent all that time on only a couple of subjects. I will close by referring to what Frank Pignatelli from learndirect Scotland has said and what the Prince of Wales said at the reception for the Prince's Trust. In many cases, people who work with young people who have just left school are doing a repair job, because the bottom line is that they must increase those young people's self-esteem. How do they do that? I am sorry, but I mention it again: many of them use outdoor education.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should be finishing now, Mr Harper.

Robin Harper: As Mr Pignatelli said, let us do better things, as well as doing things better.

10:09

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): I mention for the record my 26 years of membership of the EIS.

I oppose the motion in Lord James Douglas-Hamilton's name. I note that it mentions Jordanhill school, which is located in my constituency. That is quite right too, because it is a good school. I have previously remarked in the Parliament on its good work in turning out successful, rounded individuals, such as we wish all our young people to become.

At the same time, I have voiced my approval of many other schools in my constituency where, under different circumstances, excellent work is being done to produce responsible citizens and effective contributors to Scottish society. Drumchapel high school springs to mind. There, indigenous Scots and our new Scots work well together, each group influencing the other in positive ways. I applaud all the good work that is under way across the public sector in Scotland.

For the sake of accuracy, let us get a few things right about Jordanhill school. It is proud to proclaim:

"Jordanhill is the local community comprehensive school which caters for all children whose needs it can meet."

That is quite right. It views itself as an integral part of the state sector and works closely with Glasgow City Council. Indeed, it has an agreement with the council's education improvement service in respect of staff access to business meetings, in-service courses and the full range of support mechanisms, on the same basis as the city council's staff. Its unique funding position is the result of historical circumstance. It is important that the school does not view itself as a model that can be rolled out across the public sector.

To complete the picture, I will remind the Tories about this in case they have forgotten: the school's unique position was a result of the parents' utter rejection of the Tory Government's dogmatic desire in 1987 that the school should become completely independent and fee paying. The parents' wish was to have the school become the responsibility of Strathclyde Regional Council. That proved unachievable. Thus, a compromise was arrived at.

A deep-seated distrust of comprehensive education lies behind and informs the terms of the Conservative motion. There is a philosophical antipathy among many Conservatives to the notion of socialised education. Even the innate good manners and inclination towards consensus of Lord James Douglas-Hamilton failed to conceal his party's in-built opposition to it.

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): Mr Butler will be aware that I was closely involved in the Jordanhill situation around 1985. Would he not agree that, although the parents rejected a number of solutions that were put forward, they worked very hard, with others, to achieve the solution that was obtained? Will he acknowledge that the person who made the decision to enable Jordanhill school to carry on as it had done was Margaret Thatcher, following representations from me and the parents?

Bill Butler: I think that the member has been reading too many *Daily Mail* editorials and, worse still, believing them. I would recommend a lengthy period of reflection in a darkened room for Mr Aitken.

I am not saying this to be an apologist for the present system. In the Government's document "Ambitious, Excellent Schools", which was published in October 2004, a range of significant challenges was noted. The document acknowledged:

"the performance of the lowest attaining 20% of pupils in S4 has remained flat in recent years and around 15% of 16-19 year olds are not in education, employment or training".

That is unacceptable. Derek Brownlee and the Deputy Minister for Education and Young People mentioned that. That is one of the challenges that we face. Many boys are underperforming, which is a deficiency that must be remedied. There are certain weaknesses in a minority of schools at leadership level. That cannot be allowed to continue.

The task of the Government and the Parliament is to face those challenges in a fashion that allows us to create a system in all our schools that is flexible and imaginative enough to allow every young person to achieve their potential. The Executive's approach is not uncritical. The education system is not and has never been perfect, and improvements are required. For instance, the need to refashion the curriculum to enable all our young people to compete and to reach the highest possible level of achievement in an increasingly competitive world must be treated as a matter of some urgency. That is being tackled.

I believe that the challenges are being faced. The trend is one of improvement. There is verifiable improvement in attainment throughout primary schools. Five-to-14 test data show that since 1997, in primary 7, attainment is up by 7 per cent in maths, 10 per cent in reading and 14 per cent in writing. In the early years, 89 per cent of primary 3 children reached the expected level A or better—an increase of 8 per cent from 1999. At secondary level, overall pass rates have risen at every level. We should be proud that more than half our young people go on from school to higher education at university or college. To state those facts is not to be complacent but to describe a trend of improvement and ensure that the debate surrounding the present condition and future direction of education is balanced and based on evidence.

What the Tories offer us is not a solution but a recipe that will return us to their years of chronic underinvestment, chaos and confrontation. I remember Michael Forsyth—he was no friend of Scottish education.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should be finishing now, Mr Butler.

Bill Butler: Peter Peacock, thank God, is no Michael Forsyth.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should be finishing now, Mr Butler.

Bill Butler: I would much rather have innovative thinking informed by principle, which is the foundation of the Executive's education strategy, than a return to the failed Forsythian nostrums of the 1980s, which were driven by inflexible, purblind dogma.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that if they run over their time, they stop someone else getting in at the end. Most members who have spoken so far have gone nearly a minute over their time.

10:16

Mr Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP): Like Bill Butler, I acknowledge readily the excellence of Jordanhill school, but the example illustrates the serious methodological flaw at the centre of the Tory motion. In performance ranking Jordanhill school, it assumes that every Scottish child has an equal chance of being enrolled there, which is inherently false. Are we expected to believe that the students there are a random sample of Scotland's children? Can we say honestly that children whose parents are poorly educated and of low income will have the same opportunity to apply to go there? In theory, that is the case but, in the real world, we know that it is not. Generalising that exceptional and specific example represents a futile attempt by the Tories to resurrect their past policy failures.

The Tories are clearly still besotted with league tables, which compare school outputs without any regard to school inputs. That is highlighted by Harvey Goldstein of the institute of education at the University of London, whose paper "Measuring the performance of educational systems" states:

"The apparent simplicity of rankings of average student test and exam results is deceptive: they largely reflect 'intake' achievements and, at the very least, we should adjust for intake differences – a value added approach."

Jordanhill school has in many ways won the intake lottery. Do the Tories really think that it is pure coincidence that Glasgow, which has the highest percentage of school pupils who are eligible for school meals, also has the second-lowest achievement and attainment scores? In the three councils with the lowest number of youngsters eligible for free meals, pupils are 30 per cent more likely to be successful in their fourth-year exams.

The motion does nothing to address the real problems that our national education system faces. Family background and social and economic circumstances play a role in determining a child's chances of success. Quoting the example of one successful school does not prove anything.

According to Keith Topping, professor of education at the University of Dundee, when deprivation is factored in, some schools in deprived areas are shown to be doing much better than expected in pupil achievement, while some schools in areas of low deprivation are shown to be performing relatively poorly.

Tory policy logic is that if one person can be a smoker and live for 100 years, smoking is obviously not bad for us. We all know that such examples attract our attention because they are stories of people who have beaten the odds.

Scotland requires a well-thought-out national education policy, which is suited to the needs of all Scotland's children; which targets resources to where they are needed most; and which allows every child the opportunity to succeed. Good-quality Scottish education, which is available to all, is the essential key to prosperity for us all.

In my constituency of Angus, we have succeeded in increasing the level of parental involvement. Angus Council has worked closely with parents to develop a parental involvement and consultation policy that encourages meaningful parental involvement in a climate of trust. The policy emphasises the valuable role that representative groups of parents play in fostering good relationships between parents, schools and the education service, with effective co-operation between home and school to support pupils' learning and to allow potential difficulties to be identified at an early stage. The work in Angus was recognised by the Scottish Executive, which seconded the council's principal officer for school and family support into its Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Bill implementation team.

That kind of positive initiative shows that the SNP is delivering. Our national policies on class size reduction, the review of the national curriculum and the power of headmasters to exclude have been taken up by the Executive.

There are still major hurdles to overcome in the educational system. The Tories' blinkered motion is simply a disgrace when poverty is still a major hurdle and 25 per cent of Scots children live below the poverty line. Class sizes are still too large and less time is spent on history, languages and physical education in Scotland than in other OECD countries.

Scotland has one of the highest percentages of 16 to 19-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training. The Tories make a fundamental mistake when they choose elitism and neglect the Scottish tradition of education that is open and available to all. By praying in aid one example, the Tories are not diversifying education; they are avoiding the real needs and problems that have to be tackled and beaten. The SNP believes that a broad-based curriculum is essential and that the current overassessment and curriculum management increasingly restricts the choice and experience of our young people.

Scotland does not need a one-size-fits-all education policy that caters only for those who already have every advantage in life. Scotland

must address its systemic problems by raising standards and ensuring the highest quality in teacher training and resources as well as in school buildings and equipment, as part of an education system that involves and engages parents, pupils and teachers as an essential part of their local communities throughout this land.

I recommend to Parliament the practical work and initiatives of Angus Council and its consistent 22-year programme of school refurbishment, improvement and new building.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should be finishing now, Mr Welsh.

Mr Welsh: By reinforcing traditional strengths and providing a national system that values the worth of every individual within a well-resourced environment, we can create an education system that is truly fit and worthy for 21st century Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Iain Smith will be followed by Marlyn Glen. I point out that after Iain Smith has spoken, speeches will go to five minutes because people are not listening to me.

10:23

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): "Scottish education does many things well and some things particularly well. Most learners are well supported and well taught. The quality of service provided at the pre-school stage is strong overall, and most children are given a very positive start in their learning. In primary and secondary schools, young people generally make sound progress in their learning, behave well, have good relationships with their teachers and ultimately achieve an appropriate range of formal qualifications. Provision for children and young people with additional support needs in mainstream and special schools allows many to make considerable progress in their personal and social development. Parents report high levels of satisfaction about their children's schooling. Teachers are also positive about their own work despite its often challenging nature."

Those are not my words—they are the words of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in his opening remarks to the HMIE "Improving Scottish education" report, which was published earlier this year. His words show that Scottish education is largely doing a very good job and that, as the minister said in his opening speech, it does well in international comparisons.

We have a world-renowned, child-centred and responsive education system that works to find the best route for each child. Additional support for learning provisions that came into effect at the end of last year will further that aim.

Curriculum reform, lower class sizes, better facilities and improved procedures to deal with indiscipline have all been introduced by this Liberal Democrat-Labour partnership Executive and will contribute to better behaviour and learning in schools.

It is unfortunate that the Tories want to manipulate every area of dissatisfaction and call for improvement to justify their so-called choice agenda, which would see our responsive system replaced with one of elitism, closures and lower standards.

In 1999, we inherited an education system in crisis. Staff morale was at its lowest and the school estate was crumbling because of decades of lack of investment, particularly during the 18 years of Conservative government. For example, when I started my secondary education at Bell Baxter high school in Cupar, the old and crumbling school building was due to be refurbished and the proposal was to move the whole school to a single site. However, because of the lack of investment in education under the Conservatives, that exercise took more than 30 years and, indeed, was completed only a few years ago.

The recent HMIE report on Madras college in St Andrews in my constituency concluded that the quality of the accommodation is "unsatisfactory".

Murdo Fraser: But it has been like that for 10 years.

Iain Smith: Let me finish the point. "Unsatisfactory" is the lowest grade that can be given for accommodation in an HMIE report. We have not been able to bring all Scottish schools up to the desired standard because so much investment has been needed to catch up with the decades of underinvestment by the Conservatives.

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I endorse the member's comments. In fact, the BBC filmed the hut that I taught in to highlight the desperate state that the school estate had reached under the Tories.

Iain Smith: I thank the member for her intervention. We must recognise that we still have a lot of catching up to do to get our school estate up to the required standard. The Executive is making record investment to deal with that matter.

David McLetchie: Does the member accept that some of that record investment has been made as a result of a financing mechanism that was pioneered by the Conservatives and disparaged both at the time and subsequently by the Liberal Democrats?

Iain Smith: I think that the member will find that we have significantly improved on mechanisms such as public-private partnership and have introduced other mechanisms such as prudential financing to allow local government to improve the school estate and the community to make better use of school facilities. The Tories introduced PPP in such a cack-handed way that many communities found that they had less access to such facilities.

The Conservative motion harks back to the days when the Tories were destroying Scottish education. Indeed, one sometimes thought that they were doing so deliberately to promote their so-called choice agenda. They might well emphasise the importance of devolving school management and responsibility for school budgets, but that point is relevant only if there is a budget to devolve. When the Conservatives were in power, they cut money from schools left, right and centre. Giving schools more control over a diminishing budget will do nothing to improve the education system.

Although I support devolving more school management, we need to acknowledge that head teachers do not want to be accountants or managers. They want to be involved in education and I do not want a huge increase in bureaucracy in our schools because budgets have to be managed. Someone somewhere has to determine the resources that should be given to schools and, under the Conservatives, such decisions would be made not by local councillors in local council offices but by civil servants at Victoria Quay. Even though they are sometimes wrong, decisions about schools should be made by local councillors who are accountable to local people.

The so-called promise of greater choice means that schools will choose pupils, not vice versa. That is what has happened in England, where, as a result of the so-called choice agenda, the gap between sections of the school population has widened. The evidence is that the bottom 20 per cent of pupils that Derek Brownlee rightly referred to will be left behind even more than they are at present.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): So they are being left behind at present, are they?

Iain Smith: No one has denied that. We have all recognised that there is a problem with the bottom 20 per cent. However, that can be dealt with by investing more in early years education, before formal schooling begins. In fact, that is one of the Executive's priorities.

Although there is much that we can praise in Scottish education, we can never be complacent. The Executive will never be complacent and will continue to strive to improve.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that we have now moved to five-minute speeches.

10:29

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): One of the most perturbing aspects of the Conservatives' education policy is its price to Scotland's pupils and teachers. The

Conservatives' familiar rhetoric of independence and autonomy fails to acknowledge local authorities' fundamental role in the effective delivery of education policy.

The Government provides £29 million to local authorities every year to be used for flexible support provision. Local circumstances and factors are central in the allocation of those funds and valuable measures can be identified locally to deal with problems.

The scrutiny role of local authorities and HMIE is equally important in guaranteeing that the highest standard of education is on offer to our children. Any dilution of the role of local authorities in the implementation and delegation of education policy would run the risk of leaving schools and pupils vulnerable to the internalisation of problems, which would inevitably lead to falling standards.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the Conservatives' proposals is their aim of tackling indiscipline while slashing the education budget. I liked almost all the 10 principles that Lord James Douglas-Hamilton set out, but he was rather silent on the education budget and Tory plans to cut funding. For example, his support for special schools is admirable, but such schools come at a cost.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Will the member accept that we have absolutely no plans whatever to cut funding?

Marlyn Glen: I am sure that all members are delighted to hear the Conservatives promise to maintain funding—if they are ever in a position to make such decisions.

How do we maintain standards while tackling behaviour in schools? The exclusion of pupils must be and is regarded as the last resort. Off-site provision is the answer for some pupils, but it creates problems to do with reintegration into the main stream, which can multiply pupils' difficulties. On-site units are the answer for a minority of pupils, but such units need to be well staffed and working in them is hugely challenging for teachers and classroom assistants, who must daily deal with some of our most difficult young people. There is no point in talking about diversity while ignoring the pupils who have the most challenging additional learning needs.

The Government has been fervent in its commitment to tackling indiscipline in schools, through the implementation of the first national policy on discipline ever to be developed. The Government has invested £11 million in seeking alternatives to exclusion and £34.9 million in additional funding for specialist behavioural support staff in school. The Government relies on local authorities for efficient implementation and members are right to say that the issue is not just money but how services are delivered.

The recent EIS report "Supporting teachers, tackling indiscipline" cemented the role of local authorities in matters related to better behaviour. A multi-agency approach is needed if practical actions are to make a sustainable difference. There is no single way to solve the problem of pupil indiscipline, but the removal of options and players from the table would reduce the dynamics of available choices.

I commend the minister for his on-going dialogue with teachers unions. All members must accept that such dialogue is central to making progress across the board in education. The Executive has remained committed to diversity for children through pooling resources to offer community schools and schools of ambition, as well as 34,000 modern apprenticeships. The Executive is committed to universal provision and excellence based on equality of opportunity, while it acknowledges the need to address varying performance within and between schools.

The Tories' emphasis on autonomy and parental choice coupled with independent financial provision for schools would run the risk of creating a two-tier system, in which excellence for all would be lost in the name of diversity and choice for the few. All in all, we can grade the proposals from the Scottish Conservatives as C minus. The proposals are familiar and average. The Conservatives must try harder.

10:34

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands)
(Con): I will highlight the important contributions to the debate on education that Lord Sutherland and Baroness Warnock have made in recent months, which should give all members cause to reflect on the direction of policy.

In February, Lord Sutherland gave a lecture at the University of Strathclyde in which he said that the funding of schools in Scotland should be taken out of local authority hands, and the money distributed through a new funding body that would be accountable to the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament. He said that the current system is wasteful because of the costs of bureaucracy that are incurred in distributing money through 32 local authorities and that a schools funding council would be more effective by ensuring that more money reaches classrooms to tackle problems such as large class sizes and underachievement among the 20 per cent of pupils who are the lowest performing—the very problems that members have highlighted during the debate.

I could not agree more with Lord Sutherland. Direct funding could march hand in hand with devolved management, on the lines of the

Jordanhill school model. We all know that that is one of the most successful schools in Scotland—so successful that it was a former education minister's school of choice for his children. As we know, sauce for the gander is never sauce for the goose.

Bill Butler: Is Mr McLetchie stating that Lord Sutherland's proposal is now Conservative policy in Scotland, or is he simply giving his opinion?

David McLetchie: I was about to inform members that Lord Sutherland's proposals bear an uncanny resemblance to the Scottish Conservative party's policy, which we have advocated consistently for the past two or three years. Just because it is our policy, members should not let that discourage them. Our party is happy to be a font of wisdom and good sense in the development of education policy in Scotland. It is not the origin of a proposal that matters, but its merits. Accordingly, the Conservatives warmly welcome Lord Sutherland's contribution to the debate. I hope that it will enable others to remove their mental blocks and give his sensible ideas fair consideration, untrammelled by political prejudice.

Another benefit in what we can now call the Sutherland proposals is that, by relieving local authorities of responsibility for funding schools, we would relieve them of the obligation to levy council tax for that and transfer that obligation to the Scottish Executive and the central budget. That would enable council tax bills throughout Scotland to be cut by 35 per cent. Correspondingly, it would create a requirement for about £600 million from the Scottish Executive budget but, as I said earlier, financing the measure would not be a problem, given that Mr McCabe and the Scottish Executive tell us constantly that more than £1 billion of efficiency savings are there for the taking and can be redeployed elsewhere. We have a proposal on how to redeploy the money that is fully costed and which will put more money into our schools, improve standards, cut waste and lower council tax bills across the board. That can be achieved; it simply requires political will and imagination, although imagination is sadly lacking in the Executive.

The second contribution to which I would like to draw attention is the lecture that Baroness Warnock delivered to the General Teaching Council for Scotland in October last year on the education of children with special educational needs. Baroness Warnock speaks with particular authority on the subject, as she chaired the committee of inquiry on that issue that reported in 1978 and transformed the education of such children. Incidentally, I remind members that the Warnock committee was established by Mrs Thatcher when she was Secretary of State for

Education and Science and that its proposals were implemented when she was Prime Minister.

In many respects, the high-water mark of mainstreaming was reached with the Parliament's enactment of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000, section 15 of which required councils to provide education in mainstream schools unless exceptional circumstances apply. Of course, when a high-water mark is reached, the tide starts to turn, which was illustrated by Baroness Warnock's observations that it is little short of cruelty to educate some children in mainstream environments—she was speaking with particular reference to children with Asperger's syndrome.

The so-called right to mainstream education has resulted in a distortion of provision of education for children with special educational needs, is leading to the closure of local authority special schools and is placing unacceptable burdens on teachers and staff, who—as Lord James Douglas-Hamilton said—are not always equipped or qualified to cope with such children's educational requirements. We need to re-examine the subject to redress the balance and give parents a matching right to have their children educated in a special school, so that we put children first, not some ideology or orthodoxy. I support the motion.

10:39

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): It is interesting to hear the Conservatives continue to expound their ideas on education. It is also interesting that they are happy to take schools away from local accountability. In local authorities, councillors can be involved in helping head teachers to deliver education to communities. The Conservatives would be happy to create a new quango—I presume that that is because it was proposed by Lord Sutherland—that would be modelled on the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council. It is good that people have such alternatives from which to choose: they will have the opportunity to make that choice in less than a year, when that alternative will, I suspect, be rejected.

I wish to talk about the Executive's plans—what it has suggested it will deliver, what it has delivered and what it has not delivered. We have heard much talk of standards, goals, commitments and partnership agreements. In all those areas, the Executive has either changed its mind, failed to deliver or is yet to deliver. Although that can be seen as a criticism, it is to the Executive's credit that it has changed its mind on some issues, particularly where there were problems.

However, the Executive has abandoned its goal for exclusions and there is not yet a helpful alternative in place. There is no doubt that

indiscipline is one of the most serious problems and that the inclusion policy has contributed directly to it. Other members have suggested that resources are required, and a series of alternatives are being considered. The EIS's recent report has been used both in support of the Executive position and against it. Executive party members have suggested that their role has been commended for the amount of activity, but activity does not necessarily reflect a solution to the problems. I commend the Executive for addressing the problems, but what we need are solutions that work. I suspect that, as in many instances of its trying to create a more inclusive society, the resources have not followed the policy.

Normally, when an MSP visits a school, everything is organised and that MSP sees the school in its best possible light. However, I visited a school in my constituency in which I could see the problems that are directly associated with inclusion and the lack of alternative provision. The problems were highlighted to me by a young man who was being followed around by a classroom assistant throughout my visit. He had had to leave his class because he was not coping with circumstances in the class at the time, so the assistant was employed almost to deal only with that young man. It was not working; there was no adequate alternative provision—a base in the school or a base elsewhere within the city's education provision—that could adequately cope with his needs. A number of alternatives are available, but the necessary resources have not been delivered.

The Executive is guilty of failing to deliver on education. I commend the Executive for being willing to recognise where it has got it wrong and for being willing to change its policies, but we have yet to see delivery.

Schools in the more deprived areas are often those in which the problems are greatest. Such areas contain a substantial part of the 20 per cent of people for whom we are not delivering educationally. In terms of joined-up government—a phrase that is rightly beginning to disappear from the lexicon of political speech—we are not delivering beyond schools. Schools are not the only part of education; we also have higher and further education and vocational training. We are not delivering for people who are not in education or training because the Scottish Enterprise budget cuts will impact disproportionately on that part of the budget. We will therefore see even more people being abandoned because Scottish Enterprise could not do its budget sums properly.

10:45

Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP): I believe firmly in integrated schools that

are part of our communities, that are comprehensive and that provide equal opportunities and equality of education across the board for all our young people. The part of the Tory motion that I can address is about raising standards, tackling discipline and serving the needs and aspirations of all pupils. All members would agree that that is the one point on which we can all move forward and that we would all wish to achieve.

I have heard many concerns about inclusion today. Mr McLetchie told us about Baroness Warnock's lecture. I was at that lecture as a teacher who was trained in additional support needs—state enrolled nurse qualifications, as they were called at that time—just after Baroness Warnock's policies were put into practice. It was like a mantra as far as I and the people who trained with me were concerned. We believed in moving forward and in taking children away from a deficit model. We believed in including children in the classroom and not in having remedial teachers teaching them in cupboards and taking them away from the curriculum. I still believe that that is important and that we need to get the quality right. There are some major concerns that I would like to express, and possibly some solutions.

First, there is nothing wrong with the inclusion policy or the policy of mainstreaming—the problem is that our schools and teachers are not ready and are not fit to embrace mainstreaming. I suggest to the minister that he should look at the good practice that is going on in schools on the islands that have had to include everyone because there have been no alternatives.

I say also to the minister that it is very important to train our teachers adequately to meet additional support needs. Sadly, that is not happening across the board. We have teachers who are not able to identify that children have dyslexia or who are, because they have not had enough background training, unable to cope with children who are on the autistic spectrum. In some cases, they are sitting in classes with children who have many additional needs and they must also manage classroom assistants, but they have not been given adequate training to do all that and they are not given the right support.

Also, it is all very well to have classroom assistants, but they might or might not be trained and provision is patchy across the country. In some areas, excellent training is provided, but in others we could almost bring someone in off the street and stick them in the classroom. The system does not work and we need to get it right.

Fiona Hyslop: Does Rosemary Byrne share the concern that the budget that was allocated for the Education (Additional Support for Learning)

(Scotland) Act 2004 was for administration of the act and not for training and support?

Ms Byrne: Yes—that is part of the problem. I know that all members have casework about education; much of my casework is on education and Parliament has also just set up a cross-party group on dyslexia. The minister should come along to that group to meet people and find out where the gaps are. Also, when the minister listens to the parents of children who are on the autistic spectrum, he will see that their needs are not being met, either.

There is much to be said today, but I will finish by saying that it is very important that we look across the board at quality and class sizes. That means that we need a new national minimum standard. It is no use telling me that average class sizes are going down when I know that one school has a primary 1 class with 16 children while up the road, another school has a primary 1 class of 30 pupils. That is not equality and it is not good enough. Such large classed do not give the teacher the chance to tackle discipline and to deal with additional support needs.

Children who come from deprived backgrounds—I refer not just to deprivation because of poverty, but to deprivation among children who have no parents at home who have time to engage with them and the deprivation of those who live in areas that are not nice environments—need us to give schools the status of being a good environment, where there are people who will engage with them and who will provide the running commentary that I always go on about and which is so crucial to young people's future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must wind up now.

Ms Byrne: It is time we considered having no more than 15 pupils in primary 1 classes, in practical subject classes and in composite classes, and no more than 20 pupils for other mainstream classes. That would be a move forward and it would be a start, although much more remains to be done.

I would like to talk more, but I am unable to do so.

10:51

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): The opening of the Tory motion states that

“creating a greater degree of school autonomy, devolving more powers to head teachers and giving greater say to parents and teachers in shaping the education system will raise standards”.

For a number of reasons, that is misleading.

The motion suggests that schools currently have little say in how they operate and that there is too much power at the centre because of legislation by the Scottish Parliament and direction by local authorities. However, the motion fails to appreciate that local authorities have for a considerable time worked more closely with schools via devolved school management. I suspect that the Tories really want local authorities to shed all responsibility for primary and secondary schools. Essentially, they want to return to the vision of the Michael Forsyth era, when central Government tried every incentive to entice state schools to opt out of local authority control. It did not work then and it will not work now.

What further powers would the Tories give to head teachers, teachers and parents? The Tories may be good on principles, but they are short on details, especially on how devolving more power would help the vast majority of Scottish pupils. We can only speculate about what some of those increased powers might be. Would schools have the power to select pupils on ability or aptitude? If so, what would happen to pupils who were not selected for the top schools? Would we return to a two-tier system, such as existed when I went to school, when pupils from the same village travelled in separate buses to two different schools? Do the Tories want that kind of system, or do they want children to be in the same school but to be streamed? If so, when would streaming start?

In previous debates on education, the Tories have highlighted the need to improve the provision of technical and vocational skills learning in school. Is their solution to segregate children at post-primary level into academic and vocational streams? Late developers have always been an issue; segregation would limit such pupils' chances in secondary school and, invariably, their later life chances.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Does the member accept that, in many schools in Scotland, setting already takes place?

Dr Jackson: I do not think that many people are averse to setting. There is a big difference between setting and streaming, but the Conservatives have never got to grips with that.

On the role of parents, how would parental input be channelled so that, in the words of the Tory motion, they would have more say in “shaping the education system”? Without a doubt, parents have a crucial role to play in the life of a school and there is a need to ensure that adequate structures are in place to provide them with information on the curriculum and on how their children are progressing. However, in addition to that, the Tory motion suggests that parents could have a more direct role in determining the curriculum and the

teaching and learning methods that are employed. It is right that teachers and senior managers in schools have the main responsibility in those areas; doctors, for example, would not look kindly on patients telling them how to treat other patients.

In our consideration of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Bill, we examined many of the pertinent issues surrounding parental involvement in schools, but no one suggested that parents should interfere directly with the job of teaching. Yes—there will always be concerns about certain aspects of the curriculum at certain times and parents must always be able to voice their concerns and have them dealt with, but that is totally different from the emphasis that the motion puts on giving parents greater say in “shaping the education system”.

Let us look again at the reason that is given for giving schools greater autonomy—it is the raising of standards. Of course we want to raise standards. That is why the EIS—of which I am a member—strives so hard to improve the teaching and learning environment for our pupils. New schools are one way of doing that and smaller classes are another. Both issues are being tackled, and at a far quicker rate than was the case in the Tory years.

Finally, I turn to appropriate provision for pupils who have special educational needs, which is high on the Scottish Executive's and Parliament's agendas. It is not an easy aspiration because there are considerable resource implications, mostly in human terms. I worry that giving schools greater autonomy and moving them away from local authority control would be dangerous for educational provision for that group of pupils, for whom local authorities provide considerable resources at present.

The Tories want to create a more diverse education system. We can only speculate about what that would mean in reality—a reality that, I hope, will not materialise. I ask all members to reject the Tory motion.

10:56

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con): This has been a very good debate on the most important of all the subjects that fall within the remit of this devolved Scottish Parliament. Education is the future of this country, and it is the inalienable duty of every Parliament and Government to endeavour to raise the standards of the education programme that they deliver. I utterly reject any insinuations—some have been made this morning—that the Scottish Conservative party does not hold that principle dear.

Much has been said about how to raise standards, so I make no apologies at this stage in the debate for focusing my contribution on one issue and concern that has been brought to my attention very vividly in my constituency—the mainstreaming of education for children who have additional and special support needs. Like most policies, this one has as its background nothing but the best of intentions but, as has been highlighted all too vividly to me in Castle Douglas primary school recently, unless it is backed up with adequate resources, the results can be close to catastrophic, as some members have mentioned this morning.

I make it plain that Castle Douglas primary school has just received one of the finest HMIE reports that I have ever read. It is an excellent school, whose head teacher and staff match that description. Several special needs children have already been successfully assimilated into the school and, on the whole, the policy works reasonably well. However, one pupil has needs that are so specific that a specialised facility has had to be provided for that child alone. Until very recently, the child was taught in a converted cupboard, and it was not much of a conversion. Now, after months of wrangling with the local authority, in which many departments appeared to be incapable of communicating with one another, a portakabin has been brought in and adapted for the child's use. That will at least prevent the complete trashing of several rooms in the main school, which this poor individual has brought about on more than one occasion.

The onset of the child's violent behaviour is often put down to the fact that the school simply does not possess either the human or the physical resources to provide the full-time specialist teacher input that is required, in the appropriate facilities. The result is that the child must be excluded from time to time. I dread to think what would happen if his mother was working and was unable to take him on those occasions. On other occasions, he is sent home at lunch time because teacher resources are urgently required elsewhere. Regardless of how we look at the matter and whatever the circumstances, that child is being failed, rather than supported, by the system. That is no fault of the school which, as the headmaster told me, would be bitterly disappointed if it were unable to handle such situations. However, he also emphasised the desperate need for the resources that will make that possible without its disrupting the workings of the rest of the school.

The nub of the problem is the disruption that can be caused to the education of the rest of the school. The problem was underlined last week when, as I said earlier, Robert Brown, Maureen Watt and I met in Parliament a delegation of

primary schoolteachers from across Scotland. For some reason, no representative of the Labour Party was present.

Dr Jackson: How do Lord Sutherland's ideas on centralised control and the devolving of more responsibility to schools get over that problem?

Alex Fergusson: Contrary to one or two suggestions that were made earlier, that policy and our policy would deliver more money to education, which would improve the provision of classroom facilities.

Robert Brown, Maureen Watt and I met a delegation of primary school teachers from across Scotland. It was abundantly clear that disruption was a big issue with them—it was the first thing they asked about. I am in complete agreement with Steve Sinnott of the National Union of Teachers, who said that there has to be

“a halt to the closure of special schools”.

I go further: I suggest that a special unit in a mainstream school is not always the right answer, however well intentioned the idea might be.

One of the most enjoyable parts of my job is visits to schools across my constituency—at least, it is once the pupils have got over that fact that I am not the manager of a well-known football club in Manchester. Most of those schools are doing well under the watchful eyes of dedicated and enthusiastic staff. However, we must be careful because there is a danger that we could undermine that dedication and enthusiasm by asking too much of them through this mainstreaming policy.

11:01

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): I declare that I am a member of the General Teaching Council. Like other members, I am pleased that the Conservatives have selected education for debate. It has given the Scottish Executive and back-bench Labour members the opportunity to show the people of Scotland that we are committed to a modern, comprehensive and ideal school education that is based on universal provision and excellence, and is rooted in the principle of equality of opportunity. We have done that throughout the debate.

The debate also allows us to reflect on the dark years of Tory Government when, as a young woman, I was keen to teach but had to compete with more than 50 qualified applicants for one place at teacher-training college. Happily, I got that place, but I had then to worry about getting a job that was, if I was being realistic, going to be either a temporary job or a supply job. Now, however, we have a guaranteed one year post-training placement for teachers coming out of

college, the lowest pupil to teacher ratio for more than 15 years, nearly 6,000 classroom assistants, and guaranteed training and skills enhancement for teachers.

While I am singing the praises of the Executive and the Labour Party, I point out that we now have free nursery places for all three and four-year-olds, if a place is wanted; investment in early-years education and child care that is well above the OECD average; the first national policy on discipline; and we have introduced community schools. On health and nutrition, we have improved the standards and nutritional quality of school meals, we provide free fruit for primaries 1 and 2 and there is chilled water available in schools. All those things help children to learn and none of them was available under the Tories.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member give way?

Elaine Smith: Sorry—I do not have time.

On mainstreaming, there is a place for special educational units in schools, particularly for autism, which has been mentioned by other members. However, I aspire to a society in which every child has the choice of accessing their local school and receiving an excellent education that is specific to their needs rather than having to travel miles for their education. That is worth aspiring to; I wonder whether the Tories are against mainstreaming as an idea.

Willowbank school in Coatbridge in my constituency offers day support to young people who have experienced social, emotional or learning difficulties that have impaired their academic and social progress and their experience of school. It provides full-time and part-time day placements for up to 50 young people of secondary age. Pupils and staff have visited Parliament and I have visited the school and can say that it is an excellent school in terms of discipline and supporting pupils. I want to take the opportunity to commend the committed teachers in that school.

On the wider matters of indiscipline and violence in our schools, a number of informed and innovative projects are being developed throughout Scotland. For example, the Zero Tolerance Trust has developed the respect initiative, which uses curricular materials in primary and secondary schools and youth settings and promotes the values of good citizenship, respect for oneself and others, avoidance of violence, respect for difference, avoidance of gender stereotyping and other forms of discrimination, and the value of collective powers.

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): Will Elaine Smith give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): The member is in the final minute of her speech.

Elaine Smith: The pack of materials addresses all forms of discrimination, including bullying, gendered bullying and abuse, racism and homophobia. Although ZT's main aim is the prevention of violence against women, the respect campaign addresses all the underlying attitudes, actions and beliefs that surround that. The materials are being used in 19 local authority areas. I ask the minister whether all schools could start using the respect materials and I invite him to comment on that.

11:05

John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP): The debate should be consensual, but sadly—as usual—the chamber has divided along party lines. It is time all members got their blinkers off, because the most important thing is the education of the children, not members' party-political allegiances. It is time all members got that through their heads.

I am probably the only MSP to have been educated under a coalition Government—during the war, when parties on all sides were in power. Exclusion has been mentioned: it was never a problem when I was at school, because anyone who needed to be disciplined was belted or given a punishment exercise to carry out. It is strange to think that the yob culture seems to have coincided with the lack of discipline in schools. That is something that the politically correct members should perhaps consider closely, because how any teacher can control a class without some form of discipline is beyond my comprehension.

Robin Harper: Is John Swinburne suggesting that we should reintroduce the licensed assault of pupils by use of the belt?

John Swinburne: I do not know whether Robin Harper is advocating a continuation of the yob culture, but I am just pointing out the coincidence of the fact that, when teachers stopped belting children in school, there seemed to be a lack of discipline out in the streets, which endangers people's lives in many cases.

School buildings are being thrown up all over the place under public-private partnerships or private finance initiatives. The only drawback is that, for the next three or four decades, local authorities will have to pay over the odds for the schools in those communities.

One problem that has already been aired is that of education for disabled people. Disability does not always equate to a person's being in a wheelchair. I was privileged to be invited, along with Donald Gorrie, to Glencairn primary school in Motherwell, which is attended by a large number of central-belt children who have hearing impairments. The school is absolutely brilliant—

the quality of teaching is superb. It is beyond my comprehension how the children overcome their difficulties, but they do it to such an extent that, when it came to the question-and-answer sessions—Donald Gorrie will bear this out—it was impossible to differentiate between the pupils who have hearing impairments and those who are not so unfortunate. The work that it does is a great credit to that school, but the big drawback that the teachers encounter is that its excellent provision is not replicated when the children go to secondary school. Children are reluctant to move away from an environment in which they are comfortable to an environment that does not have such specialised facilities. That is one of the many matters relative to disability that we have to look at.

I have become acutely aware of the shortcomings in the education system for children who are disabled in many ways. There must be greater financial input to that area.

11:09

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): I apologise to Lord James Douglas-Hamilton for missing all of his speech and, to a lesser extent, to Robert Brown for missing part of his. I was asked to a meeting by a very important person—even more important than Robert Brown—to discuss policies and ideas that are of particular interest to me. I am afraid that I did that first.

I am happy to support the Executive amendment, which is one of its more sensible ones. It strikes the right balance between setting out the good things that we are doing—we are doing many good things in education—and not being complacent. We must strike that balance.

We must encourage innovation, initiatives and so on from the bottom up rather than have cascades of paper come down from Edinburgh to schools and local authorities. We should develop the enthusiasm, skills and new ideas of teachers, head teachers and even councils. We should also learn from one another. We are very bad at doing that in Scotland. Lots of people do good work through teaching in a particular way that works splendidly. Other people should learn from such examples, but that does not happen. I hope that the minister can encourage innovation from the bottom and stop having innovation from the top.

The Executive has made serious efforts to address indiscipline and difficulties with individual pupils, but there are still problems. We all hear horrific stories during our work or in our social life about teachers being assaulted or, as Brian Adam mentioned, about situations in which the system is trying to help an individual pupil but is failing to deliver. We must scrutinise the support that is

given to pupils who have problems. We should not be hooked up to a doctrine either for or against integration into mainstream schools. We want to do the best that we can for each pupil.

We could do some things better, such as outdoor education, which is still in a very poor state. We should also do more to support education outside school. People learn more outside the classroom than they do inside the classroom. We still do not put enough support into youth work and charges for the use of school premises are often too high. Often there is not a good system for supporting people with coaching, such as having teachers help them. We could do a lot better on those matters, but in general the minister and his colleagues are doing a good job and we should support them.

11:12

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): I place on record my whole-hearted support, and that of the Scottish Labour Party, for the comprehensive model of education in Scotland. I remind members that when we had the national debate on education a few years ago, the majority view of parents, current students and wider Scottish society was in favour of the comprehensive model.

The debate, which has been wide ranging, has gone much further than the terms of the motion and the amendments; that has been good.

I agreed with Fiona Hyslop's introductory comments, in which she illustrated clearly the problems that plagued our education system the last time that the Tories ran it. She referred to the industrial strife that characterised our schools and the low morale that existed among teachers. She acknowledged that we have moved on considerably.

The speech by Bill Butler, who is the constituency member for Jordanhill, was very useful because it put that school in context and reminded us how it came about. He showed that the Conservatives, by trying to extrapolate from one particular school—out of all our schools—and saying that it is a model for the rest of Scotland, are making a false argument that does not get out of the starting blocks.

Indiscipline is a problem in our schools and the effect that some children's poor behaviour has on others cannot be underestimated. However, we must get away from the idea that excluding pupils for bad behaviour or indiscipline is a solution to the problem. When I returned to work in Fife in the 1980s, it had the highest exclusion rate of any regional council in Scotland. Certain schools in Fife had an even higher exclusion rate. However, that did not make Fife's schools any better. All it meant was that a large proportion of our

secondary school population was being excluded from education, which was what a lot of those pupils wanted. Elaine Murray was right to say that there is no point in rewarding bad behaviour by giving a pupil time off. We must be much more imaginative if we are to produce solutions to school indiscipline rather than think that exclusion is the only answer.

Many members spoke about the lowest 20 per cent of pupils and the difficulties that they experience. I will touch on that issue in my closing remarks. The local authorities of Scotland's former coalfield communities have been aware for some time that poor results and underachievement are a feature of secondary education in their areas.

Analysis of education and skills levels over the years in the Scottish index of multiple deprivation have revealed the extent of the problem, which was also highlighted in a recent independent survey that was carried out by the coalfield communities campaign Scotland, which was formed by the local authorities for Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Lothian, Fife, Midlothian, North Lanarkshire, South Ayrshire and West Lothian. The conclusion of the survey report says:

"What the figures show is that the cycle of educational disadvantage in Scotland's coalfield communities has not been broken. Twenty or more years ago perhaps no-one would expect the educational achievement of people from coalfield areas to be particularly high. Indeed, it was the 'norm' for education to take a low priority when industrial jobs were more readily available. But to participate fully in the modern changing economy needs much more emphasis on education. The Government itself needs to have much higher ambitions for the coalfield areas. There is no excuse to settle for second best or to perpetuate what has become the 'norm'."

That is absolutely right.

The biggest challenge that faces our education system is not whether we want, or do not want, a comprehensive model—that debate has long since been won—but what we want to do for the young people whom our education system is failing. Absolutely nothing that any of the Conservative members said this morning addressed that issue; nothing was said about what we should do for those young people. If Scottish education is to move forward, we need to concentrate on that issue.

Ms Byrne: Does the member agree that, if we are to motivate the young people in those communities, the first thing that we need to do is to ensure that there is a future for them? The best motivator for a young person is to see that there is something that they can move on to, which will give them a structure in their life—a job and a decent standard of living.

Scott Barrie: I agree absolutely. However, what is interesting about the survey report is the

difference between the young people who come from the coalfield areas and those who come from other parts of the same local authority area—sometimes even from the same school. We need to break that cycle.

Elaine Murray and Bill Butler touched on the issue of underachievement in our schools, particularly by males. The gap in achievement between girls and boys appears to be widening rather than narrowing.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: One minute.

Scott Barrie: We must consider the whole issue of gender in our schools, by which I mean the gender of the teaching staff. Although we have made some small progress with regard to male teachers in primary schools, far too many of our primary schools are still all-female enclaves. If we are serious about tackling the underachievement of boys, it is important that we have good, male role models in our schools. Boys need to see that education is something for them, as well as for girls. If we tackled that issue, we would go a long way to reducing some of the difficulties that boys encounter when they enter high school where there is a far greater prevalence of male teachers.

Much has been said in the debate about special education provision and some members have grossly exaggerated the difficulties around the concept of mainstreaming. I agree that there are challenges, but it is not the case that every child will attend a mainstream school. We have had debates on the subject in the past.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member must close.

Scott Barrie: It is about time that some members spoke about the situation as it actually is, rather than what they pretend it is.

11:19

Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP): It is clear from the debate and from other education debates in the past that the Scottish Conservatives will not reconcile themselves to the comprehensive system of schooling that we have in this country. I cannot decide whether their desire to break up the system is motivated by nostalgia for the days when the lower ranks knew their place and rarely impinged on the natural order of middle-class progression through the grammar schools to university, or by right-wing ideology that views education not as a public good but as a marketable commodity that should be subject to consumer choice in order to ensure economic efficiency in its allocation and distribution. Brian Monteith—before he cast himself into the darkness—and Murdo Fraser typify that strain of Tory thinking. I will be

interested to hear what Murdo Fraser says on the subject, although I guess that it really does not matter why the Conservatives take that view because they have taken themselves well out of the Scottish mainstream by continuing to hold it.

However, there is no doubt that there are deep-seated problems and challenges within our education system that need to be addressed if the system's current standing in the international ratings is to be maintained, let alone enhanced. First among those is the fact that one in five of our pupils gets little or nothing out of the school experience. The lowest-achieving 20 per cent are flatlining in performance according to HMIE reports and, with 14 per cent of our 16 to 19-year-olds not in employment, education or training, the knock-on effects of that system failure are socially and economically damaging.

Poverty and deprivation are at the root of the problem, and the Executive has proved to be ineffective in tackling the vicious cycle in which low educational attainment leads to low pay or unemployment. Early intervention through the provision of high-quality child care in early years education is the key to breaking that cycle. It provides children from deprived backgrounds with the early cognitive and behavioural gains that can help to equalise their life chances and educational opportunities if they are properly supported throughout their school journeys. That will, of course, require significant investment, not least in a highly qualified workforce. It is disappointing to witness the Executive's tacit support for the cutting back of nursery teachers from family centres in Glasgow as well as the interminable delay that has been built into the national early years workforce review.

Another big challenge is the need to renew the teaching profession. As 40 per cent of the current profession are due to retire in the next 10 years, that is no small task. Despite its rhetoric, the Executive is clearly struggling to hit its targets for increasing teacher numbers. For evidence of that, we can point to the rising vacancy rates—for maths and science teachers in particular—and the minister's climb-down on class size targets.

There is no doubt that the McCrone deal has helped to create a better climate for recruitment—we will leave aside the impact on pupil attainment—but we need a culture change and an enhancement of the profession's status. As the Education Committee's inquiry into pupil motivation found last year, the teacher makes the difference in motivating pupils and engaging them in the learning process. Teachers will raise the standards but, as Matthew MacIver of the General Teaching Council for Scotland pointed out to us, politicians have all too often undermined the profession through endless initiatives, constant

analysis of every action in the classroom and overloading teachers with unnecessary administrative burdens. That disempowerment of teachers, coupled with the lack of appropriate support systems to cope with pupil indiscipline, acts as a constant drag on their recruitment and retention.

How do we tackle that? We must give teachers more freedom to teach. The problem with the mainstreaming policy, for example, is not its principle but the fact that its implementation has been underresourced, as Rosemary Byrne eloquently expressed during her speech. Graham Donaldson's report "Improving Scottish Education" got to the heart of the matter with its call for space for imaginative teaching that can capitalise on approaches that make learning relevant, lively and motivating and for the system to be much more rigorous and explicit about the development and certification of essential skills such as literacy and numeracy for all pupils.

Getting rid of the current assessment overload is an absolute priority. In the current system, teachers are training pupils to pass exams rather than teaching thinking skills and opening minds. The result is the creation of a growing proportion of false positives from the system. People can be qualified, but illiterate, much to the consternation of universities and employers.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close now.

Mr Ingram: The SNP's amendment encapsulates our approach to meeting the fundamental challenges that face Scottish education—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have to close.

Mr Ingram: I now close.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. I call Robert Brown to speak for precisely seven minutes.

11:25

Robert Brown: This has been a high-quality debate, in which many good points have been made. I do not want to lose the point that Adam Ingram made about the centrality of teachers to the process. We can put the structures in place, but it is teachers and educationists who do the business at the chalk face.

I want to put in context the various positions that have been expressed from different parts of the chamber. The debate has centred, rightly, on the Scottish Executive's programme for making Scottish education the best in the world once again. That programme consists of three prongs,

the first of which is the necessity to lay the foundations by addressing issues around buildings, teacher numbers and the overburdening of the system. Those measures are well down the line, but they are not yet complete.

Secondly, the programme aims to enrich and widen the school experience. That is under way, with the school curriculum review, the leadership stuff, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, the greater involvement of parents and the discipline stuff, as we have been discussing.

Thirdly, there is the iceberg of those whose needs the system does not meet. There are a number of potential directions or solutions, including early intervention, nurture classes, family support, improved support for the transition between school and college or work, effective work experience and alternative education options. Those are all part of the current response to a seemingly intractable challenge, which Peter Peacock described as requiring the work of a generation to resolve.

Even children from the most difficult backgrounds can grow up and seize their opportunities, with the right support and encouragement. That is the optimistic and central point that we must keep our eyes on. There is a great deal of consensus about all that and a lot of good work is taking place throughout Scotland. The Conservatives are giving us what purports to be a critique of that. They say that tinkering with school structures is the right approach. I believe that their view is based on a faulty analysis. They speak about poor attainment levels, problems with teacher retention, the restriction of parental choice and particular problems with special schools.

The Conservatives are wrong on all those counts. As we heard, attainment levels are up according to international standards, by which they are benchmarked. Teacher recruitment and retention have been revolutionised since the McCrone settlement. The number of special units and special schools is up. The number of places in those units, as part of the total number of school places, is about the same as it was in the past.

It is time for the Conservatives to apologise to parents for the mess in which they left Scottish education and to recognise the real achievements of the Parliament and the Executive in revitalising our schools. More to the point, the Conservatives are heavy on complaints and light on solutions. Does anyone really believe that allowing schools to opt out will solve discipline challenges? I challenged Derek Brownlee, during his speech, to give us a flavour of what the Conservatives would do about the problem of the underachieving 20 per cent. We have heard nothing from him or from any other Conservative members about that.

Derek Brownlee: On the basis that the minister and the other parties agree that no progress has been made on the bottom 20 per cent and that attainment is going up, what specific things is the Executive doing now—it is, after all, in power—that are different from what it was doing before and which might actually make an impact on the problem?

Robert Brown: I was just telling the member—as a number of members on the coalition benches, and indeed on the SNP benches, have been telling the Conservatives throughout the debate—about the sort of things that have been taking place in Scottish education to achieve exactly that. The Conservatives are putting forward a critique, raising a number of challenges and suggesting that the Executive's policies are not working. They suggest options involving school structures. I suggest that that is not the central issue, which is in fact to do with a much more complex pattern of addressing those challenges across the board with a series of initiatives.

There has been some talk about off-site units, but nobody touched on the provision that exists, apart from Elaine Smith, who mentioned the provision that exists at a school in her area. A considerable amount of services are offered by organisations such as Fairbridge and Spark of Genius, which provide just such off-site facilities for some of the most challenging children in our society. We need to develop more of a mix of experience and different approaches, but it must deal with the needs of individual children. As Scott Barrie said, simply excluding pupils from school—temporary solution as it might be in some situations—is not the answer to the problem. All that it does is put the children back on the streets, which creates other, run-off problems.

Fiona Hyslop dealt ably with the issue of choice between schools and within schools. She made the point that most Scots live in small towns where there is a choice of only one school for most people. I attended such a school, as did many other members. She also made the important point that schools operate at the heart of the community.

Ms Byrne: Will the minister take an intervention?

Robert Brown: I am sorry, but I cannot take any more interventions, because time is short.

As Elaine Smith said, we are not seeking solutions that are anything other than specific to the Scottish situation. That is an important aspect of our approach. We are building on the successes of the system to try to make it even more successful.

The motion mentions Jordanhill school. Given that the school is in a Liberal Democrat ward in Bill

Butler's constituency, I, too, have an interest in it. Jordanhill is an excellent school, but excellent work is done in many other schools, such as Lochend community high school in Easterhouse, which also received the SQA school of the year award, in much more challenging circumstances. We are not necessarily suggesting that the form of organisation of those schools be used across the board, but are building on success by considering what works.

We have discussed the problem of inclusion. I do not want to rehearse that debate, because some provisions of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 came into force only six months ago. The new framework needs time to bed in, but it is improving, and will continue to improve, the provision that is made.

We need to concentrate on raising quality to the same level throughout Scotland and to deal with issues that emerge—nobody pretends that the system is perfect.

We are ambitious for our schools and young people. We are building on a strong system. We challenge ourselves on our performance across the board and ask whether we can do better with regard to looked-after children and young people not in education, employment or training—the NEET group. We want to use information and data intelligently, not least the benchmarking information from throughout the country, to highlight specific issues and target our efforts. Those are the things that will achieve success. I support the Executive amendment.

11:32

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

This has been a wide-ranging and instructive debate. When my colleague James Douglas-Hamilton opened the debate, he set out 10 principles that he felt should underlie education policies and on which we hoped we might find common ground with other parties.

What has been striking about the debate is that, far from finding common ground, we have seen a fundamental divide between the Conservatives, who believe that the core of education policy should be what parents want for their children, and those in other parties who think that it is right for the state to decide what sort of education children should have.

We believe in greater local decision making and in more power being devolved to head teachers. James Douglas-Hamilton talked about our support for devolved school management and quoted in support of his views Fred Forrester, formerly of the EIS—not a natural Conservative supporter—who said:

"the blunt truth is that DSM is a tawdry and threadbare substitute for real devolution of education decision making to school level."

People who have experience of education who are not Conservatives share the general thrust of our policy.

We support greater parental involvement and greater powers being given to school boards. It is disgraceful that the Executive is considering reducing the role of parents in schools and taking away school boards' statutory rights. We reject the Executive's nanny-knows-best approach, which is all about ministers handing down directives from the centre and local authority officials telling schools how to run themselves. We want maximum power for schools and those who are involved in contributing to the running of them, whether they are head teachers or parents.

Iain Smith: Will Murdo Fraser explain why he thinks that head teachers are so keen on the system that the Conservatives support, given that in England, which has such a system, one in four schools do not have a permanent head teacher?

Murdo Fraser: I cannot speak for Mr Blair's education system in England; the member will have to raise that point with his Labour colleagues. Every head teacher to whom I have spoken wants more control over budgets because they are interested in having more power. Good head teachers would welcome more responsibility and less interference from the centre.

Robert Brown said in his opening speech that he and the Executive were interested in education for all and not for some. The problem with the Executive's approach, however, is that it defends a system that means that the least well-off—those from the most disadvantaged communities—have the poorest access to the best education.

The minister and Executive members perpetuate the myth that all schools can be just as good as each other. That seems to be the holy grail of the Executive's education policy, but no number of Da Vinci codes will help the minister find it. The simple fact is that some schools are and always will be better than others. The problem with our current one-size-fits-all comprehensive system is that better schools are available only to those from better-off backgrounds.

The example of Jordanhill school has been quoted in the chamber and referred to in our motion and by Bill Butler.

Robert Brown *rose*—

Murdo Fraser: The houses in the Jordanhill catchment area in the west end of Glasgow command a premium compared with identical houses a couple of streets away that do not fall within that catchment area. That is because

people appreciate the value of living in the Jordanhill catchment area and are prepared to pay for it. The consequence of that is that people are being priced out of accessing education at Jordanhill. Our system of educational apartheid, which is being supported by the current Executive, disadvantages those from less well-off backgrounds. The minister needs to get his blinkers off and realise what is going wrong.

Scott Barrie: Will the member give way?

Murdo Fraser: If the member will forgive me, I will allow the minister to intervene first.

Robert Brown: That was why I mentioned, in both my opening speech and my earlier intervention, a series of schools in different social catchment areas, including Lochend community high school in Easterhouse—hardly a leafy suburb—that won the SQA award.

Murdo Fraser: I accept absolutely that schools in different social areas are doing well, but Jordanhill makes my point exactly. It is a magnet school, it is doing well and we need more like it. However, most important is the need to ensure that there is access for all to our best schools and not just for those who can afford to live in those catchment areas. That is the problem with the current system.

We reject a one-size-fits-all approach. We believe in greater diversity in the state sector. Why should we not have in our towns and cities schools with different specialities?

I welcome the fact that the SNP is moving towards a more diverse system. The pity is that for reasons of blinkered ideology, the SNP cannot take its policy to its natural conclusion, which is choice for parents. Fiona Hyslop said that we cannot have choice because there is only one viable option in many rural areas. Although that is true to an extent, in European terms, Scotland has a heavily urbanised population. Even the small town of Elgin, with which Fiona Hyslop will be familiar after the recent by-election, has two secondary schools. Every candidate in the by-election supported the retention of those two schools. Why can we not have one secondary school with a science bias and the other with an arts bias? Just because we cannot do that everywhere does not mean that we should not try to do it in many places.

Fiona Hyslop tied herself in knots trying to explain the SNP policy. She said that all pupils should have the opportunity to know excellence. However, if a local school had a speciality in, say, music, and I, who am tone deaf and completely unmusical were to attend that school, does she mean to tell me that I would benefit from attending a school with excellence in music? It is sensible to give someone the opportunity to go to a school

with excellence in arts, science, mathematics, sport or whatever, but it is an absolute nonsense to say that there can be excellence in only one subject, whether or not a child has aptitude for that subject.

Mr Welsh: Jordanhill is an example of a magnet school, but Murdo Fraser neglects to say that nobody from Shettleston or any other place can go there because it is exclusive to those who are resident in the area. That policy was in the regulations that the Conservatives introduced.

Murdo Fraser: I agree absolutely; Mr Welsh makes my point exactly. The problem is that such schools are exclusive when they should be open to all. We should allow everybody to access the best education, not just those who can afford it.

In the very brief time that remains, I want to touch on the important issue of mainstreaming, which was the subject of some very informed speeches by David McLetchie, Rosemary Byrne, Alex Fergusson and others. There is widespread concern about the presumption in favour of mainstreaming, which is causing huge problems in the classroom not only for teachers but, equally important, for children, not least those with special needs, who are simply not getting the care and quality of education that they need. Indeed, it has been a particular problem for children on the autistic spectrum. Instead of pursuing an ideologically blinkered approach based on the presumption that mainstreaming is best in all circumstances, we need to think about what is right for the child and consider each child on his or her merits.

Our current comprehensive system leaves too many children behind. There is no point in being ostriches and pretending that there are no problems with it. We accept that school education has improved since devolution, but the glowing picture that was painted by the minister will be unfamiliar to far too many people in our classrooms who are struggling with indiscipline and disruptive pupils. The Conservatives are happy to find common ground with other parties to pursue common goals and to drive up standards; however, we will not hesitate to say what is right—even if we are, for the moment, the only ones who are doing so.

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

General Questions

11:41

Crofting Counties Agricultural Grants Scheme

1. John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether the crofting counties agricultural grants scheme will retain a separate budget and remit under any future funding proposals. (S2O-10058)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): The future of the crofting counties agricultural grant scheme is under consideration in the context of the rural development programme for Scotland and land management contracts. At this stage, it is not possible to anticipate the outcome of the public consultation exercise, which closes on 27 June.

John Farquhar Munro: I cannot emphasise strongly enough the need for this scheme to continue to be delivered in the way that it has always been delivered. It must under no circumstances become tier 3 funding, as doing so will turn it into a competitive lottery. Will the minister assure me that the status quo will remain?

Rhona Brankin: I cannot provide such an assurance because we are in the middle of a public consultation that does not end until 27 June. As Ross Finnie and I are well aware of the importance of support to crofting communities, we will carefully consider all the submissions to the consultation. I am sure that the member himself will make a submission, which will be considered in due course.

Sexual Health (Young People)

2. Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what role it believes the national health service has in promoting sexual health to young people. (S2O-10064)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr): The NHS has always had a key role in providing a wide range of health promotion advice and support for young people. All NHS boards have dedicated health promotion officers who, in addition to providing a full range of health promotion programmes, offer specialist support to local authority colleagues in the provision of sexual health advice and information to young people.

Margaret Smith: Like other members, I have signed up to the sexual health strategy, which acknowledges the need for a partnership involving parents, schools, the voluntary sector, the Executive and the NHS. Given recent reports that a third of all pregnancies in under-14s in Scotland happen in the Lothian area, does the minister agree with NHS Lothian's decision to prevent those not on its payroll from handing out contraceptives and advice to under-16s? Alternatively, does he agree with me, the British Medical Association and the Family Planning Association—or FPA, as it is now known—that limiting the role of suitably trained volunteers who work to guidelines poses an unnecessary threat to the important service provided by a range of voluntary sector organisations, including Crew 2000?

Mr Kerr: First, I acknowledge the member's support for "Respect and Responsibility: Strategy and Action Plan for Improving Sexual Health". In response to her question, NHS Lothian has, in the interests of child protection, issued protocols that forbid volunteers, including those with organisations participating in the c:card scheme, from providing condoms to under-16s. However, my understanding is that only a small number of young people are affected by the decision, because most organisations in the scheme already use paid members of staff to issue condoms. However, I am more than happy to examine the issue and will raise it with NHS Lothian during the annual review process.

Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): Does the minister share my concern about the increased incidence of chlamydia among young people, not least because the infection is the single biggest cause of tubal infertility in women in Scotland? What steps is he taking to address the situation? Will he join me in applauding the excellent work that is being done in the Lothians and say how he will build on that work to roll out arrangements for testing, diagnosis and treatment throughout Scotland?

Mr Kerr: I reassure Susan Deacon that I share her concern about that serious matter, which forms a major plank of the work of the national sexual health advisory committee. I chair the committee, which brings round the table key health professionals and other organisations and interested parties. I recognise the good work that is being done not just in Lothian but in other parts of Scotland; I particularly acknowledge the good work on chlamydia testing in Lothian. I will await the results of the committee's work stream before taking the matter further.

Elderly Care (Argyll and Bute)

3. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it will take to improve the availability of care services for elderly people in Argyll and Bute. (S2O-10022)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald): It is for individual local authorities to determine their community care needs and to secure an appropriate range of services.

The Executive's joint improvement team is helping Argyll and Bute Council and NHS Highland to develop their strategic governance and local management arrangements. That work has been undertaken in response to a request for practical support from the Argyll and Bute partnership and is promoting more effective local delivery of joint services, which will ultimately benefit the people who use them.

Jackie Baillie: I suggest that Argyll and Bute Council needs more help, because I am seriously concerned about the provision of elderly care services in the council's area. I have constituents who have been assessed as needing 24-hour care or day care but who have been told to wait because there is no money. No interim arrangements are in place and nothing is being provided for those people.

The local authority is failing to meet delayed discharge targets—indeed it is the only council in Scotland whose figures are heading in the wrong direction. Will the minister confirm that last year the council spent 5 per cent below grant-aided expenditure—which puts it at about 29th out of 32 councils—and will he urgently send in the Social Work Inspection Agency, so that it can examine the management of the service in Argyll and Bute in the interests of my constituents?

Lewis Macdonald: The joint improvement team's work is being done because all concerned recognise that there is significant room for improvement. I expect the outcome of that work to be an improvement in the services that are delivered. If such improvement does not transpire, I will be minded to ask the Social Work Inspection Agency to conduct an inspection, scrutinise the processes that are being followed and ensure that provision improves so that the needs of older people are met as they should be met. However, I hope that the joint improvement team's work will deliver significant advances in admissions, discharges and other areas in relation to which there are clearly deficiencies and problems. I want to see how that work develops during the next few months.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): It is good to hear Jackie Baillie ask about issues in Argyll and Bute. I will refer to the north of

Argyll and Bute. The Scottish Executive continually boasts about its record on the delivery of free personal care, so can the minister explain why there is an embargo on free personal care in Argyll and Bute? For example, only two people have left Oban hospital to enter residential or nursing care homes since Christmas, despite the fact that homes in Oban have vacancies and there remain 13 delayed discharges in the hospital. Why have some people waited five months for an assessment? Why are there no direct payments for home care packages? Why is the Scottish Executive not delivering free personal care in Argyll and Bute, despite repeated questions on the subject and an election pledge to deliver the policy throughout Scotland?

Lewis Macdonald: If Jamie McGrigor had done the work that Jackie Baillie has done to examine community care services in Argyll and Bute, I am sure that he would know the answers to many of his questions. If he had listened to my earlier answers, he would have heard me say that there is room for improvement—that is recognised not just by the council and the health board but by the Executive. That is why we are working with the council and the health board to ensure that they meet the requirements. As I said to Jackie Baillie, I will keep a close eye on how the improvement work proceeds and I will ensure that we follow up that work if required.

Community Health Partnerships (Nutritional Advice)

4. Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action is being taken through community health partnerships to ensure that the constituents of Glasgow Shettleston have access to expert nutritional advice. (S2O-10042)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald): Each CHP is responsible for determining its priorities. The east Glasgow community health and care partnership provides not only a dietetic service that offers expert dietary advice to patients, carers, advocates and agencies, but health promotion advice that is aimed at preventing ill-health in Shettleston and neighbouring areas.

Mr McAveety: I acknowledge the work that has been done in my constituency through projects such as the SEAL—south-east area lifestyle—project in the Gorbals and Govanhill areas, and the work of the east end healthy living centre in the Gallowgate. Will the Scottish Executive continue to support such initiatives to assist in tackling the health inequalities that are a feature of life for too many of the constituents whom I serve in Glasgow Shettleston?

Lewis Macdonald: Those initiatives are significant. I applaud the east Glasgow partnership's work to address nutritional issues. A clear connection exists between the dietary and nutritional issues that Frank McAveety raises and some of the ill-health issues that apply to a large degree in the east end of Glasgow. The input of dietary advice, expertise and clinical interventions is critical to addressing those problems.

Marine Legislation

5. Mr Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to introduce comprehensive marine legislation, including provisions for marine spatial planning, and what its timetable is. (S2O-10004)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): I am considering a range of issues, including the potential for marine spatial planning, as part of the Executive's strategy for the long-term sustainability of Scotland's coasts and seas. I will come to a view on whether new Scottish marine legislation might be necessary in due course.

Mr Welsh: The ministerially chaired advisory group on marine and coastal strategy has existed for eight months. How many meetings have been held, how closely does it follow developments in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and how far has the concept of marine spatial planning been developed for Scotland?

Ross Finnie: As Andrew Welsh would expect, I am not driven by the agenda of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs—I expect support from the Scottish National Party on that general proposition. Everybody in the field agrees that marine spatial planning is not simply a bolt-on to terrestrial planning, but a three-dimensional issue that raises complex matters that must be considered and addressed properly. One of the advisory group's work streams has the aim of informing us better about precisely what is involved in developing marine spatial planning.

We keep a leery eye on what is going on elsewhere. Complexities arise from the present arrangements, under which the Parliament has control up to a 12-mile limit, whereas the waters beyond that are a United Kingdom and European matter. Other complexities arise from the fact that we have absolute power over fisheries management within the adjacent water boundaries and over our investment in merchant marine offshore developments. The issue is complex, which is why I cannot rush into a solution. However, the advisory group is giving all its work streams careful consideration in the best interests of the people of Scotland.

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands)

(Lab): Will the advisory group address the issue of whether planning departments will have sufficient capacity and training to deal with marine spatial planning? As a forerunner to that, will the minister say what progress is being made on the transfer of planning powers over aquaculture from the Crown Estate to local authorities?

Ross Finnie: As I explained to Andrew Welsh, the advisory group is examining carefully the requirements and the principles that should guide any system of marine spatial planning. We will have to consider carefully whether local authorities have sufficient capacity or, alternatively, what mechanism can be used that is properly accountable but which nevertheless has the appropriate expertise.

No final decision has been taken to transfer to planning authorities control over the siting of aquaculture developments. Again, that matter involves a careful balance. We need to ensure that we get the appropriate level of accountability, while remaining cognisant of the powers over existing sites and the desire, as was shown in the consultation on the issue, to move certain developments to more environmentally appropriate areas.

Hospital-acquired Infection

6. Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands)

(SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress has been made in combating MRSA in hospitals. (S2O-10003)

The Minister for Health and Community Care

(Mr Andy Kerr): The ministerial task force on health care associated infection has completed its initial three-year programme to improve prevention and control of hospital-acquired infections, of which MRSA is an important element. The group is embarking on a new programme of work that will focus on implementation and monitoring of compliance with infection control requirements and guidance.

Significant milestones directly relevant to MRSA control include the implementation of a national cleaning services specification and a mandatory system to monitor compliance with those cleaning requirements; the introduction of alcohol hand gel by every front-line bed; mandatory infection control training for staff; and the issuing of prudent prescribing guidance on antibiotics.

Health Protection Scotland is responsible for the national mandatory system of HAI surveillance and has reported on MRSA on a quarterly basis since April 2001. Unlike virtually every other European country, the Scottish picture remains one of stability, with no significant increase in the incidence of MRSA.

Rob Gibson: Is the minister aware that in March, leaked management team minutes from Western Isles NHS Board showed MRSA patients sharing wards with non-MRSA patients, due to there being fewer available beds as a result of budget cuts? Will he deplore the senior management's recent dismissal of the steep rise in hospital-acquired MRSA as

"one person's finding and interpretation"?

Will he insist that the true costs of MRSA control should be quantified, publicised and factored into the Western Isles NHS Board's recovery plan?

Mr Kerr: We need to ensure that we are comparing like with like. On rates of MRSA bacteraemia in the Western Isles, the indication is that there have been six cases between 2003 and 2006. The latest report—which has not been validated or published—gives no indication of a rise in the rates in the Western Isles. A number of issues are at play here. MRSA is a major priority for the Executive and its control is a major focus of mine. Compared with the rest of Europe, we are stabilising our rates; they are rising everywhere else. We are doing a lot of good in relation to MRSA; our investment is paying off. I am concerned about any report that points to patient safety issues. I am examining the matter and will respond in due course.

Foster Review

7. Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland)

(Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what contribution it made to the Foster review of non-medical health professional regulation. (S2O-10015)

The Minister for Health and Community Care

(Mr Andy Kerr): Scotland is committed to ensuring that the public can remain confident that dentists, pharmacists, nurses and other health professionals are fit to do their jobs. For that reason, the Scottish Executive was fully involved in the review of non-medical professional regulation. Scotland was represented on advisory and reference groups that assisted the review. The chief nursing officer actively participated in the monthly advisory group meetings from April to December 2005 and has received and commented on draft proposals throughout the process. I will be considering the eventual recommendations and their particular implications for Scotland in due course.

Mrs Milne: What discussions has the minister had with the osteopathic profession in Scotland regarding changes to the regulation of osteopaths? What assessment has he made of the merits of changes to patient care? Should the Foster review suggest that the osteopathic profession be absorbed into the Health

Professions Council, and should that proceed, is it inevitable that the Scottish Executive will be obliged to accept that outcome?

Mr Kerr: No, it is not inevitable. However, I need to take the report in its totality. There is a lot of agreement on professional status revalidation issues, the regulation of support workers and many other areas, so I share a degree of common purpose with the rest of the United Kingdom. As I indicated earlier, I will respond to the report in due course, but we are driven by Scottish needs. Nonetheless, the main areas of agreement about why change is necessary are subscribed to by me and by the Executive. I will respond to those matters in due course.

Caledonian MacBrayne (Coach Charges)

8. Dave Petrie (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd has any plans to charge tourist operators for unoccupied seats on coaches on ferry routes across the CalMac network. (S2O-10000)

The Minister for Transport and Telecommunications (Tavish Scott): That is an operational matter for CalMac. However, I understand that the company's new charging system for coaches involves no charge for individual coach passengers.

Dave Petrie: I have discussed the matter with CalMac. Bearing in mind the increasingly fragile nature of the Highlands and Islands economy, has an assessment been conducted of the likely impact of the move on the use of routes by tourism operators? I have been advised by one major bus company that it is extremely concerned over this extraordinary move, which has been confirmed by CalMac.

Tavish Scott: I understand that the main coach operators were consulted prior to the implementation of the measure by Caledonian MacBrayne. The new coach pricing arrangements will standardise revenue from car deck space. The process simplifies the booking procedure for coach operators and, indeed, for Caledonian MacBrayne. Therefore, it should be easier for coach operators to plan their routes and tours and provide savings over the longer term.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Prime Minister (Meetings)

1. Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister and what issues they will discuss. (S2F-2331)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I expect to meet the Prime Minister again soon.

Nicola Sturgeon: The First Minister has said repeatedly—some might say ad nauseam—that he will take no decision on new nuclear power stations until the issue of nuclear waste has been resolved. What is the First Minister's view on how nuclear waste should be dealt with?

The First Minister: Having established jointly with the other devolved Administrations and the United Kingdom Government an expert committee to make recommendations to us all that would progress finding that long-term solution, it would be entirely wrong of me to pre-empt the expert committee's work. We expect to see its final report in July.

Nicola Sturgeon: The First Minister will be aware that the expert committee to which he refers has now said what its preferred option is for dealing with nuclear waste—it is proposing geological disposal. The First Minister will also be aware that it specifically asked people to give their views on that proposal by Friday of last week.

I remind the First Minister that on 4 May he encouraged people to

"contribute to the consultation and the debate."—[*Official Report*, 4 May 2006; c 25290.]

If it is okay for the First Minister to ask others to express a view on the proposal, is it not reasonable for others to ask the First Minister what his view is, given that he is supposed to be leading the country? I know where the Scottish National Party stands. We know where the Greens and the Liberal Democrats stand. The question is: where do the First Minister and the Labour Party stand on the issue?

The First Minister: For the sake of absolute clarity for Ms Sturgeon and others, I repeat that we established an expert committee to make recommendations that would help us to move towards a long-term solution for nuclear waste. We did that in conjunction with the other devolved Administrations and the UK Government. That committee has not published its decisions, as Ms Sturgeon claims; it has published a draft report that it has put out to consultation. Ms Sturgeon is right that I have encouraged others to make

submissions to that consultation. When the committee considers them, it will produce a final report and report to us.

It would be an absolute insult to the people on the committee, who have been given a difficult task, for any Government to pre-empt what it might recommend and tell it what to think. The committee members are the experts. They will make a recommendation and we will consider it.

Nicola Sturgeon: It seems that can't say, won't say is becoming the First Minister's personal political philosophy. I remind the First Minister that he said a couple of weeks ago in this chamber that

"it is not beyond our wit to make a major contribution"—
[*Official Report*, 20 April 2006; c 24830.]

to this debate. It seems that that is not quite true in his case.

Is the First Minister aware that nuclear waste disposal is a devolved issue and therefore a matter for the Parliament? Is he aware that many of the sites that would be geologically suitable for nuclear dumping are here in Scotland and would directly affect Scottish communities? When all that is added to the fact that the First Minister has based his decision on new nuclear power stations on the issue of the waste, and to the fact that there is now a recommendation on the table, is it not incredible that the First Minister is simply not prepared to give a view? I will ask the First Minister again: what is his view on the issue?

The First Minister: Dear, oh dear, oh dear. How often can we say it? We established an expert committee. We expect it to come up with recommendations. We will look at those recommendations and make decisions as appropriate. We are not going to pre-empt those experts who are looking at the evidence and making their recommendations by telling them what to think in advance. That might be the way of the SNP, but it will not be the way of this Government here in Scotland.

Given the number of times that I have now said that in the chamber and the number of times that Ms Sturgeon has raised that issue only to be given exactly the same answer, I find it astonishing that, in a week when people throughout Scotland are concerned about education, health, jobs, crime and other important issues, she has yet again returned to a question to which she knows the answer. The answer is that the experts will recommend, but we will then decide.

Nicola Sturgeon: The problem is that we are all still waiting for an answer. The First Minister will not say what his view is on new nuclear power stations until a decision is made on the issue of nuclear waste, but he will not say what his view is on the issue of nuclear waste until someone else

makes that decision for him. Is it not the case that if the First Minister was showing real leadership he would say that there is no satisfactory solution to the issue of waste, so all we can do is choose the least bad option and, in those circumstances, the absolutely last thing that we should ever do is contemplate new nuclear power stations that will produce more filthy waste for future generations to deal with?

The First Minister: No. The problem is that Ms Sturgeon has nothing to say about education, health, crime, jobs or any other issue in Scotland. That is the reason why she is not in Government in Scotland and is never likely to be so.

The position on nuclear power and on nuclear waste is crystal clear. Our decision will be based on expert evidence and on the advice of those whom we have asked to advise us. We will properly consider the issue of waste with the other Administrations in the United Kingdom. We commissioned a joint expert group and we will listen to its views jointly. If we ever need to consider an application for a new nuclear power station in Scotland, we will consider it on the basis of that outcome. That is the right way for us to conduct ourselves and it is far better than pre-empting expert advice simply because the SNP passed a policy on nuclear power at some point in the past but passed no policies on anything else.

Cabinet (Meetings)

2. Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Executive's Cabinet. (S2F-2332)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): We will discuss issues of importance to the people of Scotland. I can assure Miss Goldie that those discussions will not include, until July or later, any report on nuclear waste management.

Miss Goldie: Well, some of us can come to a view on these things, but there you go.

Does the First Minister think it appropriate that an individual who, according to a newspaper report today, has been charged with murder and released on bail and tagged is allowed to go on holiday to Bulgaria?

The First Minister: Miss Goldie will understand that it is not possible—it certainly would not be appropriate—for me to pass comment on a specific case that is still in front of the courts. However, on the general issue, I state clearly that those who are deemed to be dangerous enough to be either remanded in custody or tagged should obviously remain under supervision in that way for the course of the period leading up to their trial. It is not possible for me to comment on individual cases, but I regard that as an important principle in

our duty to ensure the safety of the public and in the duty of the judiciary and others to ensure that public safety comes first. That is precisely why we are amending the current procedures on bail with a bill that is before the Parliament to ensure their more consistent and clearer application in future.

Miss Goldie: This latest outrage is simply another chapter in the depressing chronicle of the crumbling Scottish criminal justice system. The fact is that more murderers are being freed on bail because Labour was hellbent on making Scotland compliant with the European convention on human rights. More prisoners are also being released early from jail and going on to commit more crime because of Labour's failure to scrap automatic early release. The First Minister may have talked big on those issues for years, but nothing has actually been done. Can he explain why, while this mayhem is reigning, his Executive has prioritised criminalising non-existent fur farms and the docking of working dogs' tails?

The First Minister: I hope that we will have a higher quality of debate on these important issues. I also hope that the Parliament will agree to the important changes that are required to measures that have at least some grounding in the years when the party for which Miss Goldie advocated support so vocally was in Government in Scotland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom. We know that automatic early release was introduced by a Conservative Government in the 1990s.

We in the devolved Government are absolutely determined to end automatic unconditional early release in Scotland. That measure will be included in the sentencing bill that will be introduced this year. We know that the Conservatives supported the ECHR during all the years when they were in Government, but we also know that we need to change the laws and guidance on bail here in Scotland. Those provisions are now before the Parliament, in the Criminal Proceedings etc (Reform) (Scotland) Bill, and they will be implemented if the Parliament agrees to them. We will tighten the law on bail and ensure that it is more consistently applied throughout Scotland.

We also know that we have a track record that proves that when we say we are going to make changes, we make a difference. We know that the court reforms that have already been introduced in the High Court have led to considerable amounts of time being saved by witnesses who might have been called but who no longer have to be called. We know that a considerable number of cases have not been adjourned but have been heard on the day on which they were called, which is to the advantage not only of victims and witnesses but of people outside the Parliament, who need to have more confidence in our court system. Because those reforms worked, we will press ahead with

the others, despite some conservative voices in the wings, who will not stand in our way.

Miss Goldie: Before the First Minister rushes to blame the Conservative party for automatic early release, I remind him that Conservatives put legislation on the statute book nearly 10 years ago to end the policy. Unbelievably, Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish National Party have opposed scrapping automatic early release on four separate occasions in the Parliament. I hear moans and groans from Labour and Liberal Democrat members, but they should tell that to the victims of crimes that were committed by people who were automatically released early from prison. Will the First Minister give a categorical assurance today that automatic early release for all prisoners—regardless of their crime and whether they are serving short or long sentences—will be abolished?

The First Minister: I have given the commitment to abolish automatic unconditional early release on a number of occasions in the chamber. We said at the time that we would ensure that we obtained expert advice from a sentencing commission on the mechanism for achieving that. We established the commission, which has reported. Cabinet discussed the matter yesterday and will do so again in the next fortnight. In the sentencing bill that will come before the Parliament, we will make very clear that the system will be abolished and replaced. That is the right thing to do for Scotland. I accept absolutely our responsibility as the current Government of Scotland to abolish automatic unconditional early release. I just wish that Miss Goldie accepted her responsibility for the matter, because the Conservative party introduced it in the first place.

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Margaret Jamieson has a question on a related constituency issue.

Margaret Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab): Does the First Minister share the astonishment of the family of Bryan Drummond on hearing that a youth charged with Bryan's murder has had his request to have his tag removed granted at Kilmarnock sheriff court, to allow him to go on holiday? Will the First Minister confirm that the Executive will do more to ensure that the rights of victims and their families come first? Will he ask the Lord Advocate to meet me urgently, as I requested earlier this week?

The First Minister: I am sure that the request will be granted. I stress again that I cannot comment on the individual circumstances of the case. I have made my view on the consistent application of bail procedures, tagging and remand in Scotland very clear. We need to ensure that public safety always comes first. I say to Margaret Jamieson—if it helps at this time—that the area

procurator fiscal for Ayrshire has been asked to review all the circumstances and to provide a report on the case. The Crown is currently considering more generally whether guidance is sufficiently robust in such cases.

Subject to Parliament passing the Criminal Proceedings etc (Reform) (Scotland) Bill later this year, which will tighten the law on bail, the Lord Advocate will ensure that new guidance is put in place that will secure the implementation of those new provisions and their more consistent application across Scotland. There will be no doubt in the minds of judges of the High Court or the lower courts that that guidance and those rules must be applied.

Chancellor of the Exchequer (Meetings)

3. Colin Fox (Lothians) (SSP): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Chancellor of the Exchequer and what issues they will discuss. (S2F-2337)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I expect to meet the chancellor soon.

Colin Fox: When the First Minister meets Gordon Brown, could he ask him if he is finished with the book that I lent him about how to support your party leader and build mutual respect among your colleagues? I need to lend it to somebody else.

I would like to turn the First Minister's attention to a more serious and important matter. Yesterday, a member's bill was lodged that seeks to take rail passenger services in Scotland back into public ownership. As the First Minister knows, under the powers that were conferred on it by the Railways Act 2005, the Scottish Executive can insist on a publicly owned not-for-profit train operation. Does the First Minister agree that a public rail service whose revenues are reinvested in that service would be more efficient than a system in which billions of pounds pour out of the trains and into the pockets of private rail companies?

The First Minister: I wish Colin Fox all the best in the weeks ahead. Peter Peacock says that he is certainly going to need it. Colin Fox has my sympathy and support. *[Laughter.]* I knew that that would get members going.

I do not agree that we should waste public resources on renationalising the railways in Scotland. We need to ensure that we have the right contracts for the services on the railways in Scotland—the new contract is an improvement on the old one and services are improving as a result of investment in rolling stock and new track. Also, we should use scarce public resources to invest in new track and ensure that we either reopen vital old routes or establish new ones. I am delighted

that we have announced this week that we hope to be able to proceed with the route from Airdrie to Bathgate, which will open up that part of central Scotland for work and leisure in the years ahead.

Colin Fox: I know that the First Minister will take in good spirit the fact that I am not at all grateful for his support.

The subsidy that we give to private train companies is now three times the level that was given when the service was publicly owned. More than 70 per cent of Scots want trains to be run for the benefit of passengers, not shareholders in private companies.

Does the First Minister agree that rail privatisation has been a disaster? It is inefficient, uneconomic and incapable of providing sustainable, expanded and affordable services or value for money in terms of the scarce public resources that the First Minister mentioned. Should the First Minister not be putting his full weight behind the public not-for-profit option? Is that not what the people of Scotland want him to do?

The First Minister: I welcome Colin Fox's support—if that was what it was—for our increased levels of investment in rail services. I believe absolutely that that increased level of investment is necessary to ensure that we have the conditions that Scotland's economy needs to grow and that people in Scotland and elsewhere need to move around our country more effectively. In addition, I think that it is important that we ensure that the service continues to expand and develop in the way that we have managed to achieve in recent years.

I agree with Colin Fox that the way in which rail privatisation was implemented by the Tories was a disaster in Scotland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom. However, this Government is part of the solution, not part of the problem. We are ensuring that there is new investment in rail services, new investment in rail infrastructure and, eventually, a better service for all customers and passengers.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): I bring to the First Minister's attention the report that was commissioned by Scottish Enterprise and that was published this week, which shows that the real level of unemployment in Scotland, after nine years of Labour Government, is 250,000 people. In the light of that Scottish Enterprise-inspired report, will the First Minister now tell us when we will see the employability strategy that has been long promised by the Executive and when he will publish proposals for dealing with the 35,000 16 to 19-year-olds in Scotland who are not in employment, education or training?

The First Minister: I know that Alex Neil has made a career out of distorting reports and

presentations by others and, at times, calling disgracefully for people to resign as a result, but I have to say that he paints an absolutely false picture of the Scottish economy. We know not only that unemployment has dropped radically but, critically, that employment in Scotland—Mr Neil cannot deny the statistics—is at its highest ever level, that it is higher than in any of the other nations of the United Kingdom and that it is among the very highest in Europe. Any decent nationalist party anywhere else in the world would welcome that statistic and be pleased about it. Only the Scottish National Party could be upset, because it contradicts its central thesis that Scotland cannot prosper under the current conditions.

We hope to publish sometime this month the employability strategy and the strategy to deal with those 16 to 19-year-olds who are currently NEET. If we do so, I hope that Alex Neil will support those strategies, not distort them.

Smoking Ban (Compliance)

4. Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth)

(Lab): To ask the First Minister whether there has been effective compliance with the smoking ban in its first two months. (S2F-2333)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Reports received so far from local authorities indicate that levels of compliance with the ban on smoking in enclosed public places are extremely high. We intend to publish the reports that we have received in summary and, I think, in detailed form. I am grateful to all Scots—smokers and non-smokers—for their assistance in making the new law work effectively in these early weeks.

Cathie Craigie: I look forward to seeing the published evidence. People certainly feel that the ban is working well. I am sure that the First Minister will be pleased to hear that members of this Parliament, including me, have greatly reduced their nicotine intake since the ban was introduced, and I am sure that that reduction is reflected across the general public.

Is he aware that smokers realise the risks and are aware of the damage to their health from the effects of smoking and that the majority of smokers want to stop? What further measures will the Scottish Executive take to assist more people to stop, particularly by targeting assistance at women and expectant mothers?

The First Minister: First of all, I congratulate Cathie Craigie, if she has indeed managed to reduce the number of cigarettes that she smokes every day. We may hold her to that in the months ahead. I should also say that we are absolutely committed not simply to legislating to restrict the opportunities for people to smoke but, more important, to assisting people, from the very young

to the very old, to reduce their nicotine intake or to stop smoking altogether. Many schemes run by our health service, the voluntary sector and elsewhere are being successful in achieving that. I hope that many other people will take up those schemes in the months and years ahead and that, as a result, Scotland will be a healthier country.

Euan Robson (Roxburgh and Berwickshire)

(LD): Will the First Minister have discussions with the UK Government about similar legislation in the English jurisdiction? In border areas there is some evidence of an imbalance in cross-border trade, because of smokers moving to the English jurisdiction to take temporary advantage of the conditions that exist there.

The First Minister: I am obviously delighted that our colleagues in the Westminster Parliament have agreed to follow the example set here in Scotland by implementing similar legislation in England and elsewhere. I know from my recent visit that there is considerable pressure for such legislation in Northern Ireland too, and I am delighted that progress will also be made on that.

On trade, I shall say what I said on many occasions in advance of the ban coming into play in March. The number of people who do not smoke in our country, or who want to smoke less than they currently do, far outweighs the number of people who smoke. The opportunities created for people in the trade by no-smoking premises therefore far outweigh the dangers of people moving to other premises to smoke. I hope that people who trade in the border area—even before the new legislation is in place south of the border—will see this as an opportunity and will try to attract custom north of the border from south of the border rather than let it all go in the other direction.

Scotland-Northern Ireland Co-operation

5. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind): To ask the First Minister whether he discussed the potential for co-operation between Scotland and Northern Ireland during his recent visit to Belfast. (S2F-2339)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Yes, I did. I indicated to the Northern Ireland Assembly that we wish to develop further co-operation with it in the future. I discussed areas of co-operation with senior members of the Assembly and with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Hain.

Dennis Canavan: Given that there is considerable support on both sides of the Irish sea for a programme of tripartite co-operation between Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, with the possibility of funding under the European Union co-operation objective, will the

Scottish Executive work with the Irish Government, the United Kingdom Government and the Northern Ireland Executive—when it is, I hope, re-established—to make such a programme a reality? It would have significant social, economic and cultural benefits. Some projects might also encourage a greater degree of mutual understanding and respect between people of different faiths and traditions in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The First Minister: I agree with both Dennis Canavan's objective and his rationale in respect of the benefits that achievement of his objective would bring. I believe that close co-operation will enhance mutual understanding and that such a programme could provide practical economic and social benefits, if an appropriate programme can be put in place. I know that officials in the different Governments are currently discussing such a programme. We have also recently offered—through Mr Canavan's good offices—to organise a meeting between ministers here and ministers in both the north of Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. I hope that it will therefore be possible for us to take the matter forward in the months ahead and to secure such a programme, which would benefit all of us involved.

Carers

6. Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): To ask the First Minister what progress the Scottish Executive has made on improving recognition of the work of carers. (S2F-2338)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): We recognise the importance of carers to Scottish society and to individual families, for a variety of reasons. Our recent response to the care 21 report "The Future of Unpaid Care in Scotland" set out our priorities for improving the support and recognition of carers. Those include requiring national health service boards to develop local strategies to identify carers and help them to access the support that they need in their caring role.

Donald Gorrie: I am aware that the Executive has been doing some good things. However, the problem with carers is that they are so diverse. They are individuals, and they range from young carers to old people. They are involved with the health service, local authorities, social work departments and many excellent voluntary organisations that try to co-ordinate them. Will the First Minister ensure that the Executive adopts a co-ordinated attitude to carers to promote their welfare and that a minister is placed in charge of that task and ensures that the programme works?

The First Minister: I am certainly keen to do all that I can to ensure ministerial co-ordination, ministerial leadership and appropriate co-

ordination of the many agencies involved. Those include not only—as I mentioned—the health boards, which need to develop local strategies to make the system work at the level closest to the citizens themselves and to their families, but local authorities and the many voluntary bodies that do such an outstanding job supporting carers. They advocate Government initiatives that give further support to carers and provide support and respite to individual carers in their local communities. That is an essential role for the voluntary sector as well as an important strategic role for local authorities and health boards.

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): The First Minister will be aware that a task group was established to prepare the care 21 report on behalf of the Scottish Executive. Central to the Executive's response to the report's recommendations is the establishment of another task group to consider how services should be managed. The First Minister's response to Donald Gorrie's question indicates that he understands the scale of the problem, but does he understand that there is immense concern because so much talk is going on about the proposals but there is so little action? Does he realise that people are becoming frustrated in relation to the Government's support for carers? Will the First Minister pledge today that he will ensure that the wise words of the Executive response to the care 21 report are translated into a concrete programme of action to bring about a decisive improvement in the support for young carers in Scotland?

The First Minister: It is very important to have a programme of action, but it is also important for that programme to be developed in liaison with the carers themselves and the many bodies that provide the support that carers require. As I said earlier, those bodies include both public sector bodies and, crucially, organisations in the voluntary sector that play such a great role in providing quality support and assistance to carers on carers' own terms. A programme of action is important, but it is also important that it is properly put in place in consultation with those who are most affected. That is what we will seek to achieve.

The Presiding Officer: Before I suspend the meeting, I wish to advise the chamber that I received an emergency question this morning from David Davidson on the implications of the illness of the Lord President, Lord Hamilton. I have decided that, under rule 13.8.2 of the standing orders, I will take the question at the start of our afternoon business at 2.15 pm. In order to protect the remainder of today's business, I have also decided to allow a limited opportunity for supplementary questions. Decision time will still be at 5 pm.

The question is set out in a revised section A of the *Business Bulletin*, which has been emailed to all members. Copies of the revised section are also available at the back of the chamber.

12:31

Meeting suspended.

14:15

On resuming—

Lord President

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The first item of business this afternoon is an emergency question in the name of David Davidson.

Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether the First Minister will make a statement today on the implications and possible consequences of the illness of the Lord President, Lord Hamilton. (S2O-00012)

14:15

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I thank the Presiding Officer and David Davidson for their assistance in making the arrangements to give the Parliament this information.

The Lord President has been ill for some time and remains under medical care, with no firm date for a return to work. I am sure that members of all parties will join me in wishing Lord Hamilton a full recovery as soon as possible. [*Applause.*]

During the Lord President's absence, Lord Gill, the Lord Justice Clerk, has carried many of the responsibilities of the Lord President. However, as the law stands, the Lord President alone may take certain actions or make certain decisions, and the absence of powers for the Lord Justice Clerk to act in his or her place adds unnecessarily to the difficulties in operating the superior courts. We therefore propose to bring forward a very short bill, which will provide that the Lord Justice Clerk may carry out any of the functions of the Lord President while the Lord President is incapacitated and unable to perform the functions of his or her office. In that bill, we will make provision for the next senior inner house judge to carry out the functions of the Lord Justice Clerk while the Lord Justice Clerk is, in turn, carrying out the functions of the Lord President. The bill will also cover periods when the offices of Lord President and Lord Justice Clerk are vacant.

We consulted recently on the case for the Lord Justice Clerk acquiring formal powers to discharge the functions of the Lord President when the office is vacant or the office holder is unable to discharge his or her responsibilities owing to temporary incapacity. The responses on that point were generally supportive.

The bill will confer on the court the ability to transfer on a temporary basis the responsibilities of the most senior judge to his or her senior colleague, when it is clear that the top judge is incapacitated. The process would be triggered if a

majority of the inner house judges declared in writing that the Lord President was incapacitated. The process would end when a similar number of judges were satisfied that he or she was no longer incapacitated. The bill will require that the judges advise the First Minister that they have reached such a conclusion, as the First Minister has responsibility for recommending the appointment of all judges. Beyond that intimation, however, the decisions would lie with the judges themselves. I should make it clear that the new powers will not impinge on the First Minister's separate responsibilities under the Scotland Act 1998 to establish a tribunal to consider any question of fitness for office.

Clearly the current situation adds pressure to the courts at this time, so I will mention two other steps that are relevant. First, the Minister for Justice announced yesterday the appointment of 22 more part-time sheriffs, which takes the overall total to 80. Secondly, the Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland has recommended to me the appointment of a number of candidates for the office of floating sheriff, which is a full-time appointment. I will consider the board's report shortly and expect to announce the appointment of up to six new sheriffs within a short time. Those additional appointments at sheriff court level should assist in securing the release of some senior sheriffs to serve as temporary High Court judges.

The Minister for Parliamentary Business will shortly put proposals for the scheduling of the bill to the Parliamentary Bureau. Our objective is that the bill should receive royal assent by the end of June.

I take this opportunity, on behalf of our Government, to reassure the Parliament and the wider public that we believe that an independent and effective judiciary is an essential element of Scottish life. The measures that I have outlined today will allow everyone who relies on our justice system to remain confident that it will continue to deliver justice swiftly, fairly and effectively.

Mr Davidson: I thank the First Minister for his informative statement, and I am sure that members support what he has suggested. He gave a timescale for achieving royal assent. Which of the justice committees—if either is involved—will scrutinise the bill? The Parliament must have an opportunity to scrutinise the bill in some form. Perhaps the Minister for Justice might care to meet the Justice 1 Committee's convener and me to discuss how we can help to facilitate action.

The First Minister: It is appropriate for the Parliamentary Bureau, which will meet next Tuesday, to consider timetabling for the bill. I hope that we will introduce the bill next week, which will allow the parliamentary authorities time to be

certain about whether the proposals lie within the Parliament's competence, in relation to its powers, although we believe that they do. The bureau will have to consider how Parliament scrutinises the bill during its parliamentary stages. We hope that that will happen quickly—the bureau will decide how to expedite that business.

I would be happy for detailed discussions to take place between now and then with the Minister for Justice, the Lord Advocate and me—if necessary—and with representatives of all the parties in the Parliament and the conveners of the two justice committees. I would prefer to proceed with all-party agreement, so that the Parliament acts with certainty and with consensus, to ensure that people throughout Scotland can be confident that our courts are functioning properly.

The Presiding Officer: I will take comments from Nicola Sturgeon and Annabel Goldie, to which I ask the First Minister to make a single response.

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): I thank the First Minister for his answer and his remarks about continuing dialogue between the political parties. On the Scottish National Party's behalf, I wish Lord Hamilton a full and speedy recovery and return to work. I have no doubt that questions of detail will arise during the passage of the bill, but I assure the First Minister of the SNP's full co-operation in taking the necessary and sensible legislative steps to fill a gap in our law as quickly as possible and in a way that protects the judiciary's independence.

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): I, too, thank the First Minister for the clarity of his statement, which is extremely helpful. On behalf of my colleagues, I extend best wishes to Lord Hamilton for what we hope is a speedy recovery. We also appreciate the work that Lord Hamilton's colleagues are undertaking to cope with what is clearly a difficult situation.

My party is willing to support the proposals that the First Minister outlined. An important influence on that attitude is the clearly indicated desire that the mechanism should be triggered by judicial rather than political impetus. That is an important recognition of the two distinct roles. I look forward to seeing the bill in detail, but I reassure the First Minister that, in principle, the Conservatives will be supportive.

The First Minister: As I said, to assist parliamentary scrutiny, it is a helpful coincidence that we consulted on such a proposal in the consultation paper "Strengthening Judicial Independence in a Modern Scotland". I would be happy to make available—before Parliament is required to scrutinise the bill and to inform representatives of the other parties—responses to

the consultation on that point before the other responses are published.

I assure Parliament that, in advance of David Davidson's question and my statement today, we consulted the senior judiciary. I understand that the Lord Justice Clerk has consulted most judges and that they have, without question, indicated support for the proposals. That assists the process. I assure the Presiding Officer that the Minister for Parliamentary Business will bring timetabling proposals to the bureau next week.

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Education and Young People, Tourism, Culture and Sport

14:24

Swimming Facilities (Aberdeen)

1. Ms Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with Aberdeen City Council regarding the funding for a 50-metre swimming pool for the city of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. (S2O-10075)

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson): The Executive has had no discussions with Aberdeen City Council yet, but my officials, with representatives of sportscotland, have arranged to meet Aberdeen City Council on 14 June to discuss its plans to build a 50m pool in Aberdeen.

Ms Watt: Is the minister aware that sportscotland specifically told the council not to include funding for a 50m swimming pool in bidding for enhanced sports facilities for Aberdeen? That seems directly to contradict the support that the minister and the First Minister have recently given to such a facility in Aberdeen. Is not that the latest example of the minister being unaware of the stance that has been taken by a quango that is supposedly under her responsibility, albeit at arm's length—whether it is at the Gyle or in Glasgow?

Patricia Ferguson: I am not sure about the references that Ms Watt makes to other non-departmental public bodies.

My understanding is that Aberdeen City Council sought advice from sportscotland on its proposal some time ago and that sportscotland's advice at that time—as it would have been to any other applicant or council that wanted to make submissions to our national and regional facilities fund—was that money from sportscotland and the Executive in Edinburgh was finite, that money for Aberdeen would possibly be finite, and that any bid for money would have to be affordable. That was the upshot of the conversation that took place with the council. I hope that there will be good conversations in the future that will allow the matter to be brought to a successful conclusion.

Commonwealth Games 2014

2. Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what benefits

Glasgow's bid for the Commonwealth games will have for Eastwood. (S2O-10043)

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson): A successful bid to host the 2014 Commonwealth games in Glasgow will present an excellent opportunity for the people of Eastwood and throughout the rest of Scotland. As part of the preparations for the bid, the all-Scotland sub-group has been established, on which representatives from councils throughout Scotland, including Councillor Allan Steele from East Renfrewshire Council, have been invited to sit. The sub-group's aim is to ensure that plans for the 2014 Commonwealth games consider every opportunity to spread the games' benefits throughout Scotland.

Mr Macintosh: I am delighted to hear about the role of Councillor Steele.

Does the minister agree that today's primary and secondary schoolchildren will be the international athletes of 2014 and that there can be few things as inspiring to them in their pursuit of excellence as the prospect of Scotland and Glasgow hosting the Commonwealth games in 2014? Does she further agree that, if we are to build on the success of Commonwealth games medallists and East Renfrewshire residents such as Barry Koursarys, Lee McConnell and Susan Hughes, all Scotland's authorities should join East Renfrewshire Council in getting behind Glasgow's bid?

Patricia Ferguson: I certainly agree with Mr Macintosh. I welcomed the opportunity to make a presentation to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities some time ago with Councillor Purcell of Glasgow City Council and Louise Martin of the Commonwealth Games Council for Scotland, at which every council pledged its support for Glasgow's bid. Mr Macintosh will see confirmation on the Glasgow 2014 website that all 32 local authorities have signed up to and support the bid. I encourage everybody inside and outwith the chamber to do likewise.

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): I call Margo MacDonald, who should remember that the question is about Eastwood.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): I am absolutely delighted that Eastwood should want to maximise the potential that the Commonwealth games offer, and am sure that there are many athletes of the calibre of Lee McConnell in Eastwood. However, there are also many promising athletes, some of whom are divers, in Edinburgh. Without hard cash being invested in facilities, it is possible that athletes—whether in Eastwood or Edinburgh—will not fulfil their potential.

Patricia Ferguson: Obviously, as Ms MacDonald will know, the ultimate responsibility

for providing local facilities rests with local authorities. Ms MacDonald and I have previously discussed the case of Edinburgh. The City of Edinburgh Council has made a submission for funding under our national and regional facilities programme, which will ultimately help the council to maintain and refurbish pools, particularly the Royal Commonwealth pool. I look forward to seeing that come to a successful conclusion.

Sports Councils

3. Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what support and funding is available for local sports councils. (S2O-10037)

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson): The Executive, through sportscotland, provides financial and other support to the Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils. It is for local authorities to determine the level of support provided to local sports councils.

Marilyn Livingstone: I thank the minister for her answer. I take this opportunity to inform her about work in my constituency. I am organising a meeting next month of local sports groups and interested parties with a view to re-establishing a Kirkcaldy area local sports council. Will the minister agree to meet the new sports council and me to discuss how we can drive sport forward in our local community?

Patricia Ferguson: Sports councils are a valuable way of taking forward local agendas in sport, so I would warmly welcome the establishment of a Kirkcaldy local sports council. Diary permitting, I would be delighted to meet the new sports council and the member.

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): I accept the minister's answer that this is all to do with the local authority, which is a standard ministerial answer to almost everything, but if the Executive is keen to promote sport—I believe that it is—it must recognise that local sports clubs are key partners that are not properly supported. Local sports councils are one way of channelling support to sports clubs, so will the minister consider direct funding of local sports councils, in addition to what they get from local authorities, which could then feed funding on to local sports clubs?

Patricia Ferguson: Local sports clubs can receive funding in a number of ways. One of the most important ways—it is probably the best—for local sports clubs to get funding is through the governing bodies of individual sports. Obviously, that would mean working with organisations that understand the specific needs of the clubs, their sports and their athletes. I would encourage local sports clubs to make that kind of connection, but I

would be surprised if many of them have not done so already.

Tourist Information (Wick)

4. Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it can take to ensure that a staffed tourist information centre is opened in Wick to replace the staffed centre that was closed in 2004. (S2O-10065)

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson): VisitScotland has provided a tourist information service in Wick since 2004 under a partnership working arrangement with a local business. The partnership opportunity was re-advertised in the spring of this year, and the two proposals that were received are being evaluated. VisitScotland is confident that a suitable partnership agreement will be reached, and staff at the partner business will be provided with training in order to provide visitors with a good service.

Mr Stone: The point that I want to make to the minister is that it was not VisitScotland but the Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board that shut the Wick office in 2004. What we have felt in the east side of Caithness is the lack of a human voice—a real person who can answer questions. There is anecdotal evidence that people in Wick have rung up an answering service or suchlike in the central belt and been told, for example, “I don’t know where the Castle of Mey is.” We want a human face behind a desk in Wick. If the minister can help me to ensure that that happens with VisitScotland, whichever way we do it, I would be grateful.

Patricia Ferguson: I understand Mr Stone’s point, but it does not tie in with what I understand the current situation to be. There is a staffed opportunity in Wick for people who want access to the kind of information that he mentioned. That is the opportunity to which I referred, which VisitScotland has been operating and which will continue. As I said, the staff of any business that takes the opportunity to be part of that partnership will be fully trained by VisitScotland staff to ensure that they have the expertise to which Mr Stone rightly referred.

However, I point out that nowadays a great deal of business is done over the phone and through the internet, so we must be able to respond to all the ways in which tourists and people from our own country who want to go on visits around the country want to access information. VisitScotland is conscious of that aim and is working hard to achieve it.

Humanitarian Health Fund

5. Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when it will reopen the humanitarian health fund to new applications. (S2O-10030)

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson): I have previously announced that the scheme will run annually. The current round of awards was announced last week, and eight applicants successfully received grants in relation to on-going work in Malawi. I am currently considering when to reopen the scheme for next year.

Karen Gillon: I am sure that the minister learned during her visit last week just how important the fund is to Malawi and to those who work there. I therefore encourage her to consider, as quickly as possible, when the fund can be reopened to applications. I also encourage her to use her influence with the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform and the First Minister to try to secure additional funds to offer much needed support to Malawi.

Patricia Ferguson: I am grateful to Ms Gillon for her support for our on-going project, and for her interest in the work that is going on in Malawi. I was pleased to be in Malawi last week to see for myself much of the work that is being undertaken by people with a connection to Scotland.

I will very soon be making a decision on when the scheme will reopen. I can say from my experience that the important thing about the scheme is that the money is being very well spent. It is being directed towards areas of great priority and need. At the end of the day, that is the most important thing that we can do.

The Presiding Officer: Jamie McGrigor.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Oh. Has the minister, like me, encountered a degree of scepticism about the performance of visitscotland.com? Does she agree—

The Presiding Officer: No—I think that you are ahead of the chamber, Mr McGrigor. Your turn will come.

visitscotland.com

6. Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it is satisfied with the performance of the official VisitScotland website, visitscotland.com. (S2O-10009)

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson): Visitscotland.com is performing well and is generating significant business for the tourism industry in Scotland. Since its inception, it has generated more than

£46 million of business for tourism establishments across the whole of Scotland. VisitScotland.com acts as a very effective shop window for Scottish tourism and is a highly popular source of information for our visitors.

Alex Fergusson: I take it that that is the same answer that the minister has lined up for question 9 as well.

Does the minister know about staff numbers in the VisitScotland call centre being cut? Such a cut is the only explanation that I can come up with to explain the current delay—often of between five and 10 minutes—before calls are answered. Does she agree that visitScotland.com's claim that 65 per cent of online bookings are for the bed and breakfast sector signals a major problem? Hotel beds in Scotland outnumber bed and breakfast beds by about five to one, and bed and breakfast bookings offer visitScotland.com a very low profit margin. Does that not signal—when taken together with what I suspect is the cut in staff numbers—that all is far from well with the company?

Patricia Ferguson: I will say first that Mr Fergusson perhaps calls into question my creativity—which I hope to display when we get to question 9.

I do not recognise the picture that Mr Fergusson paints, and I am certainly not aware of a reduction in staff at visitScotland.com. However, I will check that out and will respond to him with my findings.

It is important to remember that the businesses promoted on visitScotland.com are those that choose to register with visitScotland.com. It may well be that some hotels choose not to operate in that way—especially if they are part of a larger chain that does its own promotion and marketing in this country or overseas. It is interesting to note that, when we compare the first four months of this year with the first four months of last year, we see an increase in bookings of some 222 per cent in the area that Mr Fergusson represents.

The Presiding Officer: Right, Mr McGrigor. This is question 6 on visitScotland.com and it is your turn.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): My question is question 9, Presiding Officer, but I thank the minister for her reply. Does she agree that if visitScotland.com is to be of value, it must make a substantial difference to the small establishments that are the backbone of the industry? Does she believe that the fact that only 15 per cent of inquiries to visitScotland.com last year actually generated bookings represents good value for money?

Patricia Ferguson: Presiding Officer, I presume that Mr McGrigor is actually asking a

supplementary to Mr Fergusson's question, and not asking his own question, which will come later?

Mr McGrigor: That is right.

The Presiding Officer: Mr McGrigor confirms that, minister.

Patricia Ferguson: I say to Mr McGrigor, in response to his supplementary question, that visitScotland.com is a shop window for tourism in Scotland. Many people will access that website to find out preliminary information about what is available in our country. That does not mean to say that they are tied to making their bookings through visitScotland.com, and I do not think that any of us would want that to be the case. Tourists who come to our country and people who want to use our accommodation must have the opportunity to make their own calls, if that is what they choose to do, or to contact premises directly through the website. Much of the activity on visitScotland.com takes place in such a scenario.

Sure Start

7. Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it intends to assess the success of the sure start programme. (S2O-10051)

The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Robert Brown): A robust mapping exercise, which was published in December 2005, provided a detailed picture of the expansion of sure start Scotland services and their positive impact on children and families. The Scottish Executive is seeking to learn transferable lessons from the evaluation of sure start in England prior to any formal assessment of sure start Scotland. The Executive expects local authorities to evaluate local programmes.

Dr Murray: The minister will probably be aware of the concerns that have been raised about the English sure start project, which has been formally assessed. There is anecdotal evidence that it has been successful, but although parents of children who are from moderately disadvantaged backgrounds seem to have gained some advantages from it, parents of children who are from the most deprived sections of society do not seem to have benefited from it. It also seems that children have not derived any particular benefits and that parents have benefited to a greater extent than children have done. Will the minister examine the results from the English sure start programme to check that we are not obtaining similar results in Scotland?

Robert Brown: The English sure start programme has not been fully evaluated yet. A £16 million evaluation process will take place over a number of years. However, there have been

some early results for particular sections of society, such as ethnic minority groups and certain family groups.

I had not detected the point to which Elaine Murray has referred, but sure start includes both universal provision for resource-based services, such as bookstart, and targeted provision for the most vulnerable children, such as those who have special needs and those in families who are affected by drug misuse. There is no single model of provision—the programme tends to build on existing networks. We will take on board the lessons that emerge from the English evaluation, our own mapping reports and the local assessments of local authorities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): Does the minister agree that the effect of the targeting of more funding at early years education has to some degree been mitigated by the absence of a co-ordinated funding strategy? Will he assure the Parliament that he will endeavour to streamline and simplify early years funding and to provide a co-ordinated strategy for under-fives?

Robert Brown: Lord James Douglas-Hamilton raises a valid point, because although early years operations have expanded significantly over recent years and achievements have been made in nursery school provision, progress has been somewhat ad hoc. As the deputy convener of the Education Committee, he will know that, like the committee, the Executive has been examining that issue. It is certainly one of the Executive's targets to streamline and reduce the number of funding streams, not just in early years learning, but across the board, to make them more effective.

Finance and Public Services and Communities

Local Income Tax

1. John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will undertake an assessment of the efficacy and fairness of a local income tax system. (S20-10033)

The Deputy Minister for Finance, Public Service Reform and Parliamentary Business (George Lyon): The examination of local income tax, along with other models of local taxation, is within the remit of the independent local government finance review committee, which is chaired by Sir Peter Burt. The committee has said that it expects to report by the end of October this year.

John Home Robertson: Will the minister take the opportunity to distance the Executive from the position of certain opportunistic minority parties?

There can be no doubt that the council tax system needs to be reformed and that there is no such thing as a popular tax, but will he face up to the fact that a local income tax would be shot full of anomalies, depending on income patterns in particular areas, would give Scotland the highest income tax in the United Kingdom and would mean that ordinary, hard-working families in Scotland would have to pay more tax? Alternatively, does he agree with the Lib Dem candidate in Livingston who said that a fireman and a nurse are

“a rich family who can afford to pay more”?

George Lyon: As the member will be aware—I have stated this many times during debates on the matter—there is a difference of view on those matters within the coalition. The Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats have submitted their views on the appropriate way forward in ensuring the future of local government taxation in Scotland. Until the independent local government finance review committee reports, I am not in a position to second-guess the outcome.

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): I offer the minister reassuring support from the SNP benches. In resisting the ill-judged, ill-considered and hostile remarks in his coalition partner's question on local income tax, I assure him that there is strong support on this side of the chamber for the values and policies that he supports on the idea of a local income tax. In coming to his judgment about the efficacy and fairness of a local income tax, will he reflect on the fact that one of the principal fig leaves of the council tax is the fact that its fairness is delivered by an effective council tax rebate system? Does he share my concern that 44 per cent of pensioners in Scotland who are eligible for council tax benefit currently do not claim that? If that is something of which Mr Home Robertson is proud, perhaps the minister should look for other friends in the future.

George Lyon: I am unsure which way to turn, given some of the comments that are being made; however, I take some succour from Mr Swinney's comments on the matter.

As I stated in the debate that we had on the subject some weeks ago, the issue that Mr Swinney highlights is one on which significant representations have been made to the local government finance review committee, which I am sure will look extensively at the concerns that have been raised. I am confident that the committee will make recommendations on the appropriate way forward, and I look forward to that with interest.

Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab): Does the minister recognise that one of the impacts of a local income tax would be that people in some of the poorer parts of cities such as Glasgow and

Dundee would be likely to have to pay higher levels of income tax than people in the affluent suburbs? Can the minister advise the chamber whether he believes that that would be fair?

George Lyon: As I have stated, all the issues will be examined by the local government finance review committee. I am confident that the committee will take account of all the submissions that have been made to it by all the parties in the Parliament and that it will come to a conclusion that will provide an appropriate way forward on the matter.

Homelessness (Temporary Accommodation)

2. Mr Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will take action under the terms of the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 to prevent homeless persons from being placed in temporary accommodation outwith relevant local authority areas, with inadequate support and without the agreement of the local authorities for the areas in which the temporary accommodation is located. (S2O-10032)

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Johann Lamont): The order already prevents households with children or pregnant women from being placed outwith the relevant local authority areas unless an exceptional circumstance applies. In addition, we have given guidance on the issue in the code of guidance. We know, however, that the practice causes problems. It is primarily an issue for the few local authorities that are involved to resolve through working together. We are considering amending the order to prevent the routine out-of-area placement of other groups of vulnerable people unless an exceptional circumstance applies, as defined in the order. We intend to consult all local authorities before making any changes to the order.

Mr Gordon: In welcoming the minister's answer, I ask whether she is aware that dozens of homeless people from local authority areas outside Glasgow are being placed—if not dumped—in one particular establishment in my constituency without adequate support and that, consequently, Strathclyde police attribute most of the local crime to those people? Surely, that is not best practice; surely, it is unacceptable practice.

Johann Lamont: The member obviously has specific concerns about how the actions of one local authority, in carrying out its duties and responsibilities regarding homeless persons, are impacting on his constituency. He must first—as I am sure that he will have done—contact Glasgow City Council about the matter. I am in regular contact with the council about how that practice is affecting it. We recognise the needs of homeless people, who themselves require fit support: they

ought not to be dumped and we ought not to make assumptions about how they behave when they are living in certain places. However, it is critical that homeless people are housed where they can be supported. Glasgow City Council and neighbouring authorities have a protocol in place to ensure communication; however, we are happy to consult local authorities further to see how we can prevent the practice from being abused.

I remind Charlie Gordon that the guidance that we have already issued states:

“As a general rule a local authority should always rehouse a homeless household within its own area, particularly where temporary accommodation is being provided.”

That is in the interests of the homeless person from that local authority area, but it is also in the interests of a council such as Glasgow City Council in trying to carry out its responsibilities to the homeless people to whom it has a duty of care.

Draft Budget 2006-07

3. Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive how it ensures that its departments and the broader public sector contribute to meeting the objectives and targets set out in the draft budget 2006-07. (S2O-10008)

The Deputy Minister for Finance, Public Service Reform and Parliamentary Business (George Lyon): Departments are responsible for the monitoring and delivery of the spending review 2004 targets, as published in the draft budget 2006-07. All targets have associated technical notes, which set out the key milestones and monitoring mechanisms, and those have been published on the Scottish Executive website.

Derek Brownlee: Does the minister agree that one way of assisting the Executive in meeting its targets would be to make absolutely sure that every public sector employee was contributing to achieving them? In that context, and in the context of the Executive's number 1 priority, could he tell us how many public sector employees in Scotland are currently assessed, as part of their performance appraisal process, on their contribution to meeting the target for growing the Scottish economy?

George Lyon: We hope that all public services contribute to the targets set by the Executive. I would be happy to respond in writing to Derek Brownlee's detailed question, setting out the information that he seeks.

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP): Given the economic growth priority that Derek Brownlee mentioned, will the minister undertake to ensure that the Scottish Environment Protection Agency moves quickly to revise its current

prohibition on the use of septic tanks in many rural areas? That prohibition, which I am sure he knows about from his own area, is seriously hindering development and is deleterious to the economy.

George Lyon: I will certainly undertake to pass that request across to my colleague Ross Finnie, the Minister for Environment and Rural Development. I am aware of concern about that issue throughout Scotland, and I am also aware that SEPA carried out a consultation on the matter and that a great many responses were received from Argyll and Bute. I suspect that the same is true of other parts of rural Scotland that are confronted by the same problem.

“Planning for Micro Renewables”

4. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive how it intends to measure the effectiveness of its new planning advice note, “Planning for Micro Renewables”, in promoting the adoption of micro-renewables across Scotland. (S2O-10069)

The Minister for Communities (Malcolm Chisholm): We will monitor the effectiveness of the advice through regular contact with key stakeholders, including planning authorities and the renewables industry.

Patrick Harvie: Given the current problems that exist for people who are looking to install micro-renewable technology—I cite the example of one Glasgow-based micro-wind entrepreneur who has been told not even to bother submitting a planning application to install a wind turbine on his own home, because the local authority fully intends to turn it down—will the Executive give some indication of how much increased uptake it expects will be seen as a result of its planning advice note initiative, and when we can expect to see that increase?

Malcolm Chisholm: There is no cap to our ambitions on micro-renewables, or indeed on renewable energy more generally. I would be deeply concerned if the advice that Mr Harvie quotes is being given frequently, because we are very keen indeed to promote micro-renewables. That was the whole purpose of the planning advice note, which gives advice on the various micro-renewable technologies and provides good practice guidance in relation to developing them. A whole range of policies in planning, and in energy policy more generally, are geared towards promoting as vigorously as we can all renewables, and, in the context of Mr Harvie’s question, micro-renewables as part of that drive.

There have been significant funding announcements in relation to renewable energy in the past week or two, including the £3 million for the Scottish communities and householder

renewables initiative and, more generally, the £7.5 million announced last week to support the biomass action plan and the £8 million to support marine renewable development. We are absolutely determined to increase the amount of energy in Scotland that is generated from renewables, and although 40 per cent by 2010 is our target, there is no cap to our ambitions and I am sure that we will reach well beyond that.

Holistic Community Regeneration

5. Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how the holistic approach to community regeneration developed in Raploch, with the establishment of an urban regeneration company, will be rolled out to other areas of the Stirling constituency, such as Culterhove and Cornton, and to other parts of Scotland. (S2O-10035)

The Minister for Communities (Malcolm Chisholm): Part of the Executive’s approach to supporting Raploch URC is to put in place arrangements to monitor and evaluate the way that the initiative is taken forward and to learn lessons and consider whether the approach could be taken in other areas. Stirling Council has received an allocation of £1.242 million from the community regeneration fund, a significant proportion of which will be used to support the renewal of Cornton and Culterhove. In addition, a funding allocation of £15 million from the community ownership early action programme should further support the holistic approach to the renewal of those communities.

Dr Jackson: What monitoring arrangements will the Scottish Executive put in place to ensure that measures will be taken by the other public agencies involved in regeneration projects to provide adequate social infrastructure to complement new housing developments?

Malcolm Chisholm: I will address the two aspects identified in Sylvia Jackson’s initial question. First, urban regeneration companies must produce regeneration outcomes as part of their business plan. Those are strategically linked to the community planning partnerships’ regeneration outcome agreements. That is all monitored by Communities Scotland.

Secondly, there is significant new build in Culterhove and Cornton. Castle Rock Edinvar is building 91 new properties in Cornton and 75 in Culterhove. The various partners in those areas of Stirling are keen to ensure that regeneration is about far more than bricks and mortar. Housing Stirling is working with Castle Rock Edinvar, the local communities and other potential partners to explore and identify mechanisms for creating jobs, improving training and education, improving health and enhancing local amenities. Communities

Scotland will not only be involved in monitoring progress, but has had initial discussions with Castle Rock Edinvar about potential community activities that may be funded through the wider role fund for housing associations. A great deal of money is going into the various initiatives in Stirling. Those initiatives will be carried forward in partnership and will be monitored.

Green Spaces

6. Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it is satisfied with the findings of the "Minimum Standards for Open Space" research report on the progress of local authorities in auditing their public green spaces or whether it intends to update this research. (S2O-10073)

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Johann Lamont): The information contained in the independent research report was a snapshot from 2004. The research has been used to inform discussions, including those on any requirements for monitoring, on the review of national planning policy on open space. Any proposals for the monitoring of open space will be contained in the draft Scottish planning policy 11, which will be published soon for consultation.

Robin Harper: I look forward to something serious being done in that planning policy, because there is currently a bit of a guddle. There is no consistency in the approach taken by councils. Would it be possible for the Executive at least to require councils to achieve some consistency of approach in developing their open space audits?

Johann Lamont: Our proposals in the Planning etc (Scotland) Bill, which is currently going through Parliament, offer a huge opportunity for consistency through a plan-led system and a rigorous and thorough debate about what we want our local communities and the open space within them to be like. I hope that, on that basis, the Greens will welcome the proposals in the planning policy.

It is clear that many local authorities take their responsibilities in this regard seriously. In my community, land is being reclaimed for recreation and for open space. There is a clear recognition of the importance of sports and recreation for the well-being of our young people. The review of Scottish planning policy 11 gives us the opportunity to take that further and to encourage local authorities to plan ahead.

Land Ownership (Supermarkets)

7. Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive how much land not currently built on, or for which planning

applications have been submitted, is owned by supermarkets. (S2O-10071)

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Johann Lamont): The information requested is not held by the Scottish Executive.

Eleanor Scott: I thank the minister for that answer, which I kind of expected.

The minister will be aware that the deadline for contributing to the Competition Commission's inquiry into the grocery market, following the Office of Fair Trading's findings, is next week. The OFT believes that the supermarkets are using large land banks to stop rival retailers from opening new outlets. The issue is, of course, a planning issue, which makes it one of the devolved issues that the Competition Commission will be covering, although there are others. Has the Executive made, or will it make, a submission to the Competition Commission's inquiry? If so, what points will the Executive make?

Johann Lamont: The Executive position on the OFT paper is that our planning policy looks to enhance the viability and vitality of town centres and makes a clear commitment to their enhancement and protection. We also recognise that it is not for the planning system to restrict competition, preserve existing commercial rights or prevent innovation. We are currently considering responses to the consultation draft of SPP 8, on town centres. We recognise the importance of our town centres. We also recognise the discussion around the way in which retail development should be permitted. We will take account of those considerations as we take forward these matters.

Architecture

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-4477, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on architecture.

15:01

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson): Today's debate on architecture, as I am sure everyone in the chamber knows, has been rescheduled from earlier this year. That is because, back in March, shortly before the debate was due to begin, we had what I will call a little local difficulty and it had to be postponed. I am in the chamber today to talk about the importance and wider benefits of architecture to Scotland, not to discuss one building—or, for that matter, one beam.

In 2001, Scotland became the first part of the United Kingdom to develop a formal policy on architecture; we should all be proud of that development. Our policy demonstrates that Scotland values its architecture and recognises it as a key element of its contemporary culture and cultural heritage. I therefore very much welcome the opportunity to open this debate and to talk about the ways in which, over the past five years, we have taken forward the many commitments that we made in our policy on architecture.

In the policy, we undertook periodically to review our priorities and assess the effectiveness of the actions that we have taken. Following on from that commitment, I launched a public consultation at the beginning of May. I am particularly pleased therefore to have the debate today and to hear the views of colleagues in the chamber on the future priorities for architecture policy.

A growing number of our European neighbours have also developed policies on architecture. Like us, they recognise that the quality of the built environment is vital to the social, economic and cultural life of a nation. A network for co-operation between the different member states of the European Union on questions of architecture has been in place for some time now. Last year, we hosted the forum meeting here in Scotland as part of the UK presidency of the EU. It was gratifying to see representatives of many other Governments enthused and impressed by our approach to policy.

There are two main strands to our policy on architecture, the first of which has a strong aspirational and cultural component. It is essential that we have a robust vision for the kind of country that we want Scotland to be and that we are clear on the ways in which we wish to see it develop in the future. The built environment must be central

to that vision. However, we are also concerned about the practical measures that will improve the quality of our physical environment. The second strand of policy therefore concerns initiatives to effect real change on the ground; change that will have a positive effect on our quality of life.

I believe that we have already made an impact in both these areas. I will say a few words on our cultural strand. When we began to develop policy, there was already evidence of an increasing interest in architecture in Scotland. Since devolution, we have seen a new wave of talent emerge as well as a significant number of new, high-quality buildings. By a pleasant coincidence, I had the great pleasure of being at this morning's opening of the Scottish Storytelling Centre on the High Street, just a little way away from the Parliament. It too is a wonderful and iconic building that also has a good and strong use.

We have built on the rising interest in architecture in Scotland and have developed a wide range of initiatives, underpinned by partnerships, to stimulate public interest and debate. Over the past five years, we have provided £1.5 million in funding for a national programme on architecture, which is delivered by the Lighthouse, Scotland's national centre for architecture. By means of touring exhibitions, seminars, education programmes, a national website and a biennial review, we have tried to ensure that our initiatives reach a wide public audience throughout Scotland.

The website ScottishArchitecture.com was launched in 2002. It has proven remarkably successful and is now the central on-line resource on architecture in Scotland. The Lighthouse has established itself as an important hub for the creative industries in Scotland since its opening in 1999 and has succeeded in raising the profile of Scottish architecture at home and overseas. It is a dynamic cultural centre; to date, it has attracted more than 2 million visitors, almost a third of whom were from abroad.

In the recent past, our best new architecture has been exhibited at a variety of high-profile events throughout Europe—Scottish architecture was represented separately at the Venice Biennale for the first time in 2004. The strength of Scotland's creative industries and the new focus on our cities and their connected regions provide us with new opportunities to promote and celebrate our design talent. Therefore, we have earmarked up to £3 million of funding for a six cities biennial festival of Scottish creative design that will take place in Scotland's six cities starting in 2007.

At a more fundamental level, we have recognised that, for a change in our attitude to the built environment to be effective and long term, it must start with raising awareness of the built

environment's importance among young people. That is essential if our children are to grow to care about and contribute to the shaping of the environments that they will inhabit.

The building connections initiative provides schools with extensive practical guidance on the use of the built environment as a context for learning. It is our intention to continue to support and develop that work and to build on similar initiatives by Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.

We educate our children not only through learning and teaching, but through the environment that we provide for them. A wide range of guidance material for local authorities has been produced as part of the school estates strategy. Those publications cover a wide range of issues around the procurement of school buildings and specifically include guidance for local authorities on raising design standards.

The work on raising the quality of our new school buildings forms part of the second key strand of our policy, which is to seek to effect change on the ground. We have now placed design far higher up the development process agenda. As a first step, we reviewed the role of the Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland and, following that review, established a replacement body—Architecture and Design Scotland—in 2005. That was a milestone in policy implementation, as Architecture and Design Scotland's increased funding enables it to have a much wider, more proactive role than the commission did in the promotion and advocacy of good design.

A key function of Architecture and Design Scotland is to engage with planning and procurement processes to demand excellence in development at all scales and in all parts of the country. Our architecture and planning policies are increasingly integrated or complementary in their aims. Through "Designing Places—A Policy Statement for Scotland", design is now enshrined as a material consideration in the planning process.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): Does the minister share my concern that, all over Scotland, identical estates are being built with identical brickwork and that identical fences are being put up around them, thereby losing the individual qualities that villages and towns used to have? How does that fit in with better design and better architecture?

Patricia Ferguson: We have to recognise that there will be local choice in those matters. I appreciate the point that Ms Grahame is making. We have to encourage local authorities and others

involved in the planning system to understand the importance of design and to raise it up the agenda. We should support them when they do that. That is not always an easy thing for authorities to do.

We have modernised the building standards system. In 2004, we established the Scottish Building Standards Agency. The new system provides a flexible approach to regulation, which takes Scottish building standards into the 21st century. The new system should allow more innovative approaches to building design. The Executive also recently launched its new "Construction Procurement Manual" for public sector clients, which emphasises that good design is not an alternative to value for money, but is integral to its achievement. How we address the question of sustainability in the built environment is a key policy challenge. The £1.2 million Sust initiative, which was developed by the Lighthouse, aims to help change attitudes to sustainable design and to help mainstream green thinking in the built environment.

As members might be aware, we plan to launch a new architecture policy statement in the next year. Today's debate and the public consultation that I mentioned earlier will inform that. It is my intention to integrate architecture policy further with other priorities for Government, such as those on sustainable development, health, housing and regeneration, where the built environment is fundamental to the success of initiatives.

The work of Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland is vital in developing our policy aims. We need to raise the awareness that our historical environment is one of our greatest assets. Through reinforcing local identity—I hope that I am making Ms Grahame's point—and a sense of neighbourhood pride, our historical built environment can often be the key to successful regeneration. Our regeneration policy, which we debated in the Parliament in March, makes it clear that investment in good design is an essential component of sustainable regeneration.

I will reiterate why we believe that it is so important that the momentum that has been generated through the policy on architecture is not lost and why we should continue to build on our achievements to date. The Executive's three key aims for development in Scotland until 2025 are increasing growth and competitiveness; promoting social and environmental justice; and promoting sustainable development while protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural and built environments.

The importance that we place on architecture is central to that. Although we have an increasingly vibrant architectural climate, we cannot be

complacent. If Scotland is to be the country that we wish it to be in 20 years' time, we must look for more ways to encourage interest in raising our standards of design and building quality. Architecture and the places that it creates touch on almost every aspect of our lives. Our buildings tell the story of our past and witness our aspirations for the future. They have a key role to play in meeting our environmental objectives. Buildings are instrumental in realising a wide range of economic and social objectives. Architecture should, therefore, be a matter of fundamental concern to us all.

I move,

That the Parliament appreciates the importance of architecture to many aspects of life in Scotland; recognises that both our new and historic buildings have a critical role to play in sustainable regeneration and in delivering successful urban and rural places; acknowledges the wide range of progress that has been made through partnership in implementing the commitments of the Scottish Executive's policy on architecture, and supports the Executive's intention to publish a renewed policy statement.

15:13

Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP):

As the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport said, the previous debate on this subject was unfortunately cancelled, due not to an architectural problem but to an engineering problem. I give the minister 10 out of 10 for persistence. We were long due a debate on this subject: it has been some five years since the last debate on architecture in the Parliament. If I recall correctly, that was a rather strange event: we were debating the Executive's policy on architecture before it had been published. We have made progress over the past five years, at least, in that we are now having a debate with a policy in place, and even a progress report on what has been achieved. The progress that the report indicates in a number of areas is to be welcomed.

As the minister said, we as a nation have a great architectural heritage—not only our buildings but our designers and architects. We have produced some world-class architects and designers over the years—Playfair, Craig, Thomson, Mackintosh and Adam to name but a few.

All of them have contributed to our nation's rich architectural heritage, which we have only to look around the city that we are in to see. Most of our towns and cities throughout the country have a building of significant architectural merit.

I am sure that the minister will acknowledge that debates on architecture do not tend to set the political heather on fire. People do not tend to have a view on architecture until they come across something that they do not like. That is a pity, because architecture has an important role to play

socially, culturally, environmentally and economically. Its benefits can be derived by individuals, communities and the nation as a whole.

The general apathy towards architecture was reflected in the consultation that the Executive undertook when it began to draft its policy. Of the 400-odd people who attended the nine public meetings that were held, only 10 were punters; the rest were all professionals or people with a vested interest.

The old adage is that architecture is far too important to leave to the architects. It is important that we work to protect, preserve and promote our heritage for the present generation and future generations.

I hope that the minister shares my concern about the buildings at risk register for 2006, which the Scottish Civic Trust published recently. It indicates that 82 per cent of our listed buildings are classed as at risk; that 112 buildings of national and international importance are at risk; and that of the more than 1,000 buildings on the register, more than half are classed as at high risk of falling down, through disrepair.

If we are to build a good architectural policy for the future, we have to ensure that we preserve our architectural heritage. The national policy is much wider than being only about preserving what we have, but we have to acknowledge where we have come from by preserving significant buildings.

The social benefits of architecture are key. It is ironic that a country with such a rich architectural heritage, which has produced so many world-class designers and architects, has some blooming awful examples of bad architecture, most of which were built in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Basil Spence might have got it right with Coventry cathedral, but he got it wrong when he was designing the Gorbals; we are still addressing the legacy of that poor design. Costs and design were often higher priorities than was meeting social needs. Many communities experience the legacy of such designs.

It is important that we have a national policy on architecture, but we must ensure that the people who will be affected by architecture, directly or indirectly, play a central role in the architectural process. That is why I believe that community involvement in the design process is important. We must ensure that in modern architecture there is a greater focus on the needs of the people it serves.

It is important not only to have a national policy but to encourage local authorities to develop their own architecture policies, which reflect what is in the national policy, to ensure that they carry down to communities that same standard.

As the minister said in her response to Christine Grahame, if the aim is to drive up standards in architecture, particularly locally, it is important that local policies are in place.

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): Although community councils in Scotland are already statutory consultees in planning matters, does the member think that they should play an increased role in planning?

Michael Matheson: It is important that community councils play an increased role.

I offer an example with which I have been involved: North Lanarkshire Council wants to build an ultra-new building right at the heart of Cumbernauld village, which is a conservation village. The proposal has drawn opposition from the community and from Historic Scotland, but the council intends to push ahead without recognising what the community feels or the heritage of the local area. That is why the Executive's architectural policy must be pushed down to the local level. If we can do that, we will be able to continue to build buildings for future generations.

I move amendment S2M-4477.2, to leave out from "both" to end and insert:

"our buildings have a critical role to play in maintaining and enhancing the quality of Scotland's urban and rural communities; notes the progress made to date on the Scottish Executive's policy on architecture; acknowledges the important role that local authorities have in promoting good architectural design, and believes that future national architectural policy should place greater emphasis on local authorities developing their own local architectural policy."

15:21

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): A few months ago, one of the remaining high-rise blocks of flats in the Gorbals was blown up, laying to rest another part of the era of 1960s jerry-build. Some 123 flats became 125,000 tonnes of rubble in an instant to make way for 100 new flats to be built in the area. I hope that past experience will teach planners and architects to build homes that complement rather than experiment with people's lives, as the 1960s high-rise projects certainly did. I hope that no one will have to throw jeely pieces from 20-storey flats any more.

We can learn a lot from the past. Architecture should not just be governed by a policy of contemporary design for the future; it is also about making the most of fine existing buildings and remembering that today's architecture is tomorrow's building stock. It is disappointing to note that there seems to be very little in the Executive's document about existing housing stock or the importance of our architectural heritage; it is all about designs for the future. The

centre of Edinburgh, for example, is a world heritage site of huge importance to the rest of the world, but there is little mention of the future guardianship of such a jewel. The document is very light on that.

The whole country is pretty famous for special buildings. There are architectural gems all over Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen, which all have fine examples of civic architecture. Many wonderful houses were destroyed after the '45 throughout the Highlands and Islands, but there are still many fascinating historic castles and houses that should be treated as cultural and tourism assets. It seems only right that, wherever possible, those buildings should be alive rather than dead, employed in an active role and allowed to earn their keep.

That is not happening in some keeps—in Castle Tioram in the Highlands or Rowallan Castle in the south of Scotland, for example. It appears that those two buildings, both of which should be salvaged and renovated, are being left to die because of Historic Scotland's refusal to grant scheduled monument consent or to relinquish guardianship.

Patricia Ferguson: I want to make a factual correction: Rowallan Castle is open to the public, as it should be.

Mr McGrigor: I am glad to hear that there has been some movement on that situation. I am, however, surprised to hear it because Historic Scotland normally gets things right.

Perhaps the Scottish Executive is in the driving seat. Nothing has happened at Castle Tioram whose owner would like to put his historic building to use for himself and the local community instead of leaving it to fall into further ruin. I recently visited Acharacle, where Castle Tioram is located, and found that the majority of the community around the castle are in favour of development. Why let that gem deteriorate any further when it could be salvaged and brought to life again? Is Historic Scotland bowing to Scottish Executive policy or is it, for some inexplicable reason, content to play legal games that cost both sides huge amounts of money while it continues to treat buildings as a philatelist might treat prize pieces of his personal stamp collection, hiding them away to gradually decay? I hope that Historic Scotland will change its policy, but there is little evidence that that will happen.

In the first century AD, the famous Roman architect and engineer Marcus Vitruvius, who is generally considered to be the father of architecture, described it as "commodity, firmness and delight". He meant that buildings should be functional; should be able to earn their keep; should be soundly and sustainably built; should

please the eye; and should add beauty to the surroundings. In earlier centuries, the construction industry was much more environmentally sustainable. Not only were renewable materials such as wood and thatch used; stone and slate were quarried using human labour and materials were transported by horses. Such processes were environmentally benign.

However, the production of modern materials, particularly steel, is a pollutive process. Because using processed materials such as steel, cement, plastics and glass is not environmentally benign, architectural policies must pay more attention to the economy of non-renewable materials and the use of renewable materials to construct environmentally sustainable buildings. Surely that is our duty to future generations. It is extraordinary to think that we import steel from China—indeed, did we not import some granite from China for this very building?

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): No.

Mr McGrigor: Okay, then—we did not.

On that point, I wish to congratulate the architects and builders of the National Assembly for Wales building for producing an honest building on time and the Welsh AMs for having the courage to stop the building of the Senedd and to renegotiate the contract. I have no wish to add to the criticism that has been heaped on our Parliament building. Indeed, who am I to talk when it has won the prestigious Stirling prize for architecture? However, some say that the concepts of buildability and discipline were not top of the list of criteria for those who conceived and built our Parliament. Indeed, some think that they were not on the list at all.

Last week, I attended a debate in our old chamber in the General Assembly building at the top of the Mound. I very much enjoyed the quality of the debate, although I must confess that I began to question why it was necessary to build a new Parliament when so many exceptional—and empty buildings—in Edinburgh could, with adaptation, have easily suited the purpose and followed the admirable Scottish tradition of prudence and common sense.

I move amendment S2M-4477.1, to leave out from “through partnership” to end and insert:

“in this area by independent and voluntary organisations including the Lighthouse and An Lanntair; notes the importance of the efficient use of existing building stock, and believes that a strong economy and a fair planning system are integral to a successful built environment.”

15:27

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): In response to Jamie McGrigor, I point out that the Scottish Parliament building cost less per square foot to

build than the Welsh Assembly building—so he should take tent.

I have a great deal of sympathy with the interesting points that Michael Matheson made, particularly in relation to communities; indeed, I believe that children should be involved in the design of schools. Of course, if Mr Matheson's proposal is to get anywhere, local authorities will need to employ more full-time architects to help communities in that respect.

I congratulate the Executive on the priority that it has given to architecture and design, particularly in Scottish planning policy 20, which sets out the role of Architecture and Design Scotland, and planning advice note 67. I like both documents very much. The crux of my amendment lies in my request that the Executive indicate neither soon nor in the fullness of time but in due course that it will

“move in a measured way from guidance”

on building standards to legislation that is urgently required to raise building standards.

The housing and building industry contributes well over a third of all global warming gases. Huge energy inefficiencies are embedded not only in our existing housing stock but, quite unnecessarily, in thousands of new-build houses. Given the seriousness of the situation, it is not enough to claim that we have the highest insulation standards in the UK. After all, Scotland is a northern European country, but it has the lowest thermal insulation standards in northern Europe.

Indeed, it is not enough simply to add insulation to houses. We need higher standards of airtightness and controlled passive ventilation systems. Many quarters still believe that building to high standards of energy efficiency threatens the saleability of houses, and the philosophy of investing to save does not permeate either the buying or the selling market. However, by increasing the cost of a house by a mere 5 per cent, we can produce on-going savings of 50 per cent on heating bills, with the original investment very often being paid back in less than five years. Amory Lovins built a house in the Rocky mountains that, by using mainly solar gain, is capable of exporting energy, even in winter. Schools that are built on ecological insulation and ventilation principles and are properly managed produce academic results that are up to 10 per cent better than results from comparable but less well-built and managed schools.

In Scotland, the insulation programme that is funded by the Executive is reducing fuel poverty and producing significant social and health benefits, but our average national home energy rating of 5 is not high enough to produce significant CO₂ savings.

Developers and the building industry need a clear message. Many developers already build to ecological principles and many more would like to do so. However, in a highly competitive market, they feel inhibited from adding to the soaring price of their houses, in spite of the fact that they know that the primary concern and bias in house buying is always location, location, location. Not a few developers have confided in me that all they need is a level playing field of regulation and they will be happy to build to the high standards of northern Europe.

I am not asking the Executive to bring in new regulations tomorrow. What I am suggesting is that the Executive should signal to the industry that it is consulting—I believe that it is—on what level of regulation is consistent with our Kyoto commitments and the health of the nation. The Executive should then say to the industry, “We will give you so many years to gear up and then we will consult you and introduce regulation.” I have been careful not to suggest what that timescale should be. My amendment is carefully constructed so that the Executive can accept it on the basis that doing so simply indicates its agreement that that is indeed what should happen in the future.

I will mention one other matter of concern—I have been speaking quickly so that I have time to fit it in. I mentioned it in a recent planning debate in committee room 2 and I want to repeat my concern today. There are hundreds of thousands of square feet of uninhabited, unused space in solid, older buildings in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Many of those buildings are partly used as shops and for storage but they are topped by acres of decaying, uninhabited space. The buildings are structurally sound and they have vast amounts of embodied energy within them. For the sake of keeping our city centres vibrant and alive, we should refurbish all those buildings and bring them back into use. I call on the Executive to work with the councils to remove the fiscal, financial and regulatory barriers that obstruct that process.

Mr Stone: Does Mr Harper agree that the empty space above shops in town centres, in particular, would make suitable accommodation for first-time occupiers and young couples? Their presence would add value because they could keep an eye on the street below. There are benefits to mixing the retail and residential sectors.

Robin Harper: I am glad that I accepted that intervention. What Jamie Stone suggests is not included in what I have written because I did not think that I had time to say it, but I am happy to agree with him. The idea would help to bring our city centres back to life but it also represents an efficient use of space. The young people would not have long journeys to work—

Linda Fabiani: I point out that studies have shown over and over again that many people have no interest in living above shops. The proposal might also stymie development in town and city centres because there are restrictions on the types of businesses that can be located underneath residential properties. Perhaps we should be more imaginative about the use of empty spaces above commercial ventures.

Robin Harper: I take both members' points. A good mix in our city centres would be welcome.

I hope that the Executive will support my amendment. If it does not, that will send the wrong message to the building industry. The Executive will be saying, “It's all right. We're not going to make things in the least difficult for you. Just carry on.” I ask members to support my amendment so that that does not happen.

I move amendment S2M-4477.3, to insert at end:

“; recognises the crucial role played by architectural policy in promoting environmental sustainability and social equality, and calls on the Executive to move in a measured way from guidance to regulation to provide a level playing field to encourage all constructors, developers and planning departments to work with architects to achieve the highest possible levels of sustainability, particularly in relation to procurement, refurbishment of existing buildings, energy efficiency, low-toxicity, recycling and re-use of materials and new build on a long-life, loose-fit basis.”

15:34

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): I congratulate the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport and the Executive on the progress that they have made on architecture, including the creation of the Lighthouse and Architecture and Design Scotland and the publication of the progress report on their policy. The report is a welcome contribution because, sometimes, policy documents appear and then disappear without anything much being done.

We must concentrate on the fact that architecture is for people. Architects tend to forget that; they forgot it in the past when they built high-rise flats and other buildings. Many places are architectural concepts rather than people-centred concepts.

Users must be consulted more. The designers of blocks of council flats, for example, should speak to the people who will move into them. That happens a bit now, but it never used to happen and it still does not as much as it should. We must think about people rather than trendy designs.

We must design not just single houses but communities. That involves a combination of planning and architecture. I understand that many continental countries have disciplines whereby

university students learn a combination of planning and architecture that assists them to design communities better than we do. Related to that is the fact that we must train our planners to understand architecture more and that, as has been said, we must attract more architects to work for councils. Planning and architecture should be a double-headed thing.

John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab):

The member blames much on architects and planners, but what about the role of developers, who are the clients? Does he share the concern that has been expressed about the Soviet approach to planning that many big developers take by constructing identical housing units in every community in the United Kingdom, which is rather depressing?

Donald Gorrie: I accept that developers may have a lot to account for. Planning should be a partnership between the developer, planning officials and the community, which can produce a better solution together. The whole world's ills do not arise purely from planners and architects, but the system does not encourage co-operation and people-centred work.

Education is important; members have mentioned it and it is in the relevant papers. We need to teach people about better design. Many such issues are matters of opinion. Many people think that the Parliament building is the greatest thing possible and a lot of other people think that it is terrible. We will never get those people to agree. However, we can discuss the concept of design not just of houses but of furniture, cutlery or anything else, because good design is important. We used to be good at design—that is one reason why we led in the industrial revolution—but we have rather lost sight of that. Teaching good design is important.

I was concerned to receive a wee piece of paper about a leak that alleges that the Westminster Government will

“allow some of the country's top listed buildings to be demolished to generate money for the Treasury”.

I do not know whether that leak is true or false, but I hope that the minister will not go down that route. As other members have said, we must look after our listed buildings and our neglected city-centre buildings, whether they are above shops or anywhere else.

As other members have said, we must get councils to develop local styles of architecture, so that we do not just have a standard development by Barratt or whoever it is everywhere. East Lothian and Argyll have different types of houses and new developments should reflect that. We want to encourage councils to speak to community

councils and to consult local people more on how they envisage their communities.

We talk about sustainability a lot, but the Parliament building, for example, has failed to use great opportunities for energy conservation or micro-renewables. Every now and then, examples appear in the press of local planning departments refusing people permission to install double glazing or a thing on a roof that would be seen only by a passing seagull because they say that it would spoil the view. We must take sustainability, energy conservation and micro-renewables seriously. That could fit in much better with design. At the moment, sustainability is not pursued.

In the past, people made a feature of chimneys because chimneys and fires were a big thing. Let us have rows and rows of wee windmills, which could become a positive feature rather than something that people are worried about.

There are many good things to work on. The Executive has made a good start, but we must all try to keep it up to the mark.

15:40

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): I am pleased to be able to speak in the debate. One thing that members can agree about is that architecture is important in ensuring that Scotland continues to be recognised as an exceptional place to live in, to work in and to visit. I welcome the Executive's intention to publish a renewed policy statement later this year following consultation and the establishment of Architecture and Design Scotland. It is crucial that Architecture and Design Scotland develop strong links with all its stakeholders.

I am particularly interested in the debate because of three roles that I have: first, I am convener of the Scottish Parliament cross-party group on construction; secondly, I am the Equal Opportunities Committee's disability reporter; and thirdly, I am a member of the Dysart regeneration forum, which considers the sustainable regeneration of Dysart in my constituency.

Architecture in towns and cities has and will continue to have a vital role in conserving our historic buildings as well as in the design of new buildings. Fife Historic Buildings Trust—of which my colleague Christine May is a trustee—has made a significant contribution to the built environment. A recent example of best practice can be seen in the historic Merchant's House, part of which was recently opened by the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport as a local tourist information centre. The building has major historical significance for Kirkcaldy, and its conservation is vital for current and future

generations. There have been similar initiatives in the Wemyss villages and Burntisland.

In my constituency, there is much more concern about the community's old buildings and how they are conserved. On the down side, I point to the redevelopment and conservation of our townscapes. Kirkcaldy and Burntisland have introduced innovative plans for development and conservation of their high streets, but both projects face funding and bureaucratic barriers. Our townscapes are crucial if we want to turn our aspirations for our built environment into reality. I ask for the minister's help with, and support for, those projects.

The motion in the minister's name recognises architecture's vital role in many aspects of life in Scotland—it refers to sustainable regeneration in particular. Sustainable regeneration is particularly recognisable in my constituency. Dysart is a designated regeneration area. Part of that regeneration consists of the development of the built environment so that it exists anew. Dysart has many historic buildings, including St Serf's Tower, the Tolbooth, the Town House and the Harbourmaster's House. Discussions about proposals for those buildings have allowed us to consider their use, their benefits to the community and the sustainable regeneration of the town. We have seen the restoration of an A-frame winding-gear structure, which is the only structure of its kind in the country and is crucial to our mining heritage. After a long and sustained campaign, we managed to save it. The official opening of the Harbourmaster's House—which is a valuable and beautiful community asset—will take place later this year.

Consulting and involving the community have been vital. The projects that I have mentioned can be taken as exemplars of best practice. Through involving the community, sustainable results will be achieved that the community will accept. Policies are making, and will make, real change on the ground. Sustainable development must play a central role in any local or national policy.

As convener of the Scottish Parliament cross-party group on construction, I want to point out a concern that we have about skills shortages and the lack of training opportunities to acquire skills such as dry-stane dyking and stonemasonry. We are concerned that such skills are becoming things of the past. I point that out to the minister as something that must be taken on board.

On access, the Equal Opportunities Committee is coming to the end of its year-long disability inquiry. As part of the inquiry, the committee recently took evidence from the Scottish Building Standards Agency, the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland and the Scottish Society of Directors of Planning. I will draw to the minister's

attention concerns that disabled people have raised in evidence to the committee.

Adequate consultation early in the planning and development of new buildings and the redevelopment of existing buildings could help to eradicate many problems and barriers that disabled people face. There is a lack of understanding of the wide range of disabilities and, although it is accepted that not every need can be met, there is still much room for improvement. The minimum standard of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 is causing major concern—the standard does not, for example, include provision for visually impaired people, so there is no requirement to provide aids such as contrasting colours on door handles, which would allow visually impaired people to recognise which room they are entering.

I am sure that the minister will agree that if we can get appropriate access that is fit for purpose for disabled people, access for everyone will improve. Grant Gordon from RIAS said in evidence:

"A plethora of information is available on design for disabled access. Although the regulations are extremely helpful, they cover only a small part of what is required to allow access for disabled people. The DDA focuses on what is reasonable, so a whole bin of information is available to designers on making both existing buildings and new buildings accessible. The challenge that we face lies in making the distinction between what is mandatory and what is reasonable."

I hope that we can take those views on board in any new policy.

Richard Hartland, from the SSDP, in response to a question from Cathy Peattie on how clear the various laws, regulations and guidance on accessibility to the built environment are, said:

"there is not much point in our trying to answer the question without asking ourselves whether we understand the nature and problems of disability. That is a fundamental question, and there is work to be done on that as well."—*[Official Report, Equal Opportunities Committee, 16 May 2006; c 1805-06.]*

I ask the minister to ensure that the review of policy that will be announced later this year will take on board the issues that have been raised in the disability inquiry. I believe that through better design a well-built and accessible environment can be created that will benefit all in our communities.

15:47

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): As the minister said, we are not just talking about bricks and mortar in this debate because buildings and the built environment have overt and covert impacts on all our lives. There are buildings, spaces and places that uplift, that are

friendly and that inspire, which are at the heart of local and national history, and which are cherished by communities. However, there are also buildings and spaces that depress our spirits, where our footfall becomes slower and wearier as we pass through them—as we hope we will.

There are grandiose buildings, such as the Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh; quirky and idiosyncratic buildings, such as Sir Walter Scott's Abbotsford; imposing and impressive designs, such as the new town in Edinburgh; and, in fairness to Glasgow, there are wonderful buildings that arose from Glasgow's commercial prosperity.

There are lovely places in Scotland. There are villages such as Earlston in the Borders, which has the 1700s feel and layout that many small Scottish towns have. There are places such as Penicuik, which was once industrial and which has its original square anchored to its town hall. I shall refer to both places later.

Someone once referred to a building as "a carbuncle"; we have, as I have alluded to, many such buildings in Scotland. There are wastelands of housing schemes, in which the design of the houses and the scheme was destined to fail the people who struggle to this day to make the best of their environment. In addition, bland and identikit private housing estates that are in no way sensitive to local design and materials have been built throughout Scotland.

Buildings are living and breathing things. Penicuik once thrived because of mining and paper mills, but it is now fighting to retain its individuality by means of its local development trust. Its town centre, like many town centres, is under threat from a large supermarket development. Many buildings are closed, but there is still the town hall, which anchors the community. I will give members a little bit of the history of that building, because it is typical of many buildings in Scotland that are connected to beneficiaries.

Alexander Cowan, the paper maker, instructed his wife and family that on his death they should use what was left of his fortune for the benefit of the people of Penicuik. As a result, the town hall was built. Its features match many of those of Moray House—Moray House was once the Cowans' long-term residence—and the Canongate Tolbooth on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh. What was the town hall used for? It was used for the community. It was built using stone brought on carts from the Moat quarry and the foundation stone was laid in 1893. The building had—it still has—a large hall that can hold 600 people. It had a library—in those days people had no other way of educating themselves. It had reading rooms, a gymnasium and rooms for other recreational purposes.

In 1900, when many homes in Penicuik did not have their own baths, three baths were installed in the town hall. It is interesting to note that they were reserved for women on Mondays and Thursdays and for men on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. One must presume that the men were working in the pits—if not, they were the pits. The cost was tuppence for those who brought their own towel, and thruppence for those who did not.

Over the years, the building has evolved; it has been a living building. It has been a venue for concerts, dances, flower shows and so on, and it has been the scene of meetings, romances, marriages and—no doubt—impending divorces. The building grew and is still growing. However, like many town halls, it is now under threat. It has passed from the people to the local authority, and the local authority says, "We're making cutbacks and we're going to close it." The people are fighting for their town hall, just as so many others are fighting for their town centres.

Across the constituency is another wee place: Earlston, which I have already mentioned. Earlston has a reading room—what a term from the past that is—which was built in the 1800s for obvious purposes. Members will not know—as somebody else once said,

"Not a lot of people know that"—

that Earlston was the heart of gingham production in Scotland.

Linda Fabiani: Oh?

Christine Grahame: I knew that that would catch members' interest. There is no gingham production any more, but the point is that that building, too, is in disrepair. Again, the community is pulling together to try to do something about it. The people want to set up a museum containing local artefacts, including those relating to gingham production, in order to bring life and heart back to the town. The building would be the centre of a heritage trail.

I have given two examples. Members who are not in the chamber today—and are probably not even listening to the debate—could give examples from all over their constituencies. I come back to my point: grand buildings matter—I take Michael Matheson's point about the number of buildings that are under threat, which is a cause for great concern—but a lot of wee buildings are under threat too, as are a lot of village and town centres. Communities are fighting on their own—often not knowing what tools to use in the battle.

I fully support the amendment in my colleague Michael Matheson's name. We must get local authorities to develop architectural policies so that we do not have modern carbuncles. I have no

doubt that I will now get bad letters from some builders, but some buildings are horrendous. At the same time as we are fighting off the bland buildings, we have to protect the interesting and quirky buildings—often given by benefactors—that people consider precious and want to keep. Local authorities have to do something about them.

Whoever becomes the minister for culture after the election next year—I turn to Michael Matheson—he alone will not be able to protect all the buildings that are under threat.

15:53

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

It would be remiss of me, as a Conservative, not to take the opportunity to make a comment that Conservative spokesmen have made in the past on issues of culture and architecture: we must remember that some of the finest examples of architecture—as with some of the finest examples of other culture in Scotland—evolved in an unregulated creative atmosphere. For that reason, whatever policy we decide to apply to architecture, architecture must never be so strongly affected as to prevent creativity.

There are no better examples, I suppose, than places such as Arbroath Abbey—which I have mentioned in the chamber before and have mentioned directly to the minister. I mention it again now, and the campaign to achieve world heritage site status for it, so as to pre-empt my colleague Ted Brocklebank, who has a debate on his particular project later in the day.

When we talk about architecture, we must question whether it is still genuinely an art, or whether it is now engineering. If form and function are to be reflected in the buildings that will be constructed in Scotland in the years to come, art and engineering must both be considered. A number of members have mentioned energy efficiency and microgeneration, both of which will be key elements of new buildings in years to come. Architects face the great challenge of ensuring that those elements are properly incorporated in buildings without creating the negative views that some such proposals create.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):

Does the member agree that if we stick with a market approach, people will tend to buy cheaper houses rather than slightly more expensive ones that have the green credentials that the member wants? How will the free market solve the problem of allowing us to have greener houses?

Alex Johnstone: The member has pre-empted the remarks that I was about to make. I will proceed to them, in the hope that we can develop the debate.

Among the amendments is a particularly good amendment in the name of Robin Harper, but I will not support it at decision time. I will explain why. My concern is to ensure that energy efficiency and opportunities for microgeneration are incorporated in the buildings that we build in the future, but it would be remiss of all of us if we did not at the same time address the affordability of housing. There are too many areas in Scotland in which, if the full cost is passed on, even if it can be deferred over time, some people will be excluded from the opportunity to own or to rent a house simply because others will find the cost more affordable.

Linda Fabiani: Will the member give way?

Alex Johnstone: Let me move on for a moment.

The main reason why I am concerned about Robin Harper's amendment is that it says all the right things, but then asks the minister to consider regulating to enforce developments of the nature that Robin Harper advocates. Ultimately, it may be necessary for the appropriate minister to take that route—I agree with Christine Grahame that that person will not be the present minister—but, at this stage, it is essential for the Government in Scotland to address affordability. Unless we develop ways of properly deferring cost and making it possible to incorporate in houses that are genuinely affordable innovative designs to deal with the opportunities that energy efficiency and microgeneration offer us, we cannot afford to go down the road that Robin Harper suggests.

I ask the Government in Scotland and whichever minister takes responsibility for the issue to consider carefully how that cost can be deferred and what grants might be made available in the future. Ultimately, we must ensure that by adding cost, regardless of how effective the measures that are incorporated as a result may be, we do not make housing exclusive.

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green):

Does not Alex Johnstone accept that the people about whom he is talking—those who are least able to afford housing—are even less able to afford the heating bills that are concomitant on badly insulated housing?

Alex Johnstone: Absolutely—but the people who are in the greatest fuel poverty in Scotland are those who cannot afford the measures that we are talking about. That is why I ask the appropriate minister to consider how the cost of those measures will be dealt with and what can be done to assist people in meeting them before any regulatory requirement to incorporate advanced designs is imposed. Those two approaches must proceed hand in hand. We cannot afford to put the cart before the horse; if we do, people in Scotland

will not be able to afford housing at the bottom end of the market. Ultimately, that will disadvantage all of us.

15:59

Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP): I will begin by responding to Alex Johnstone. When he talked about a climate of unregulated creativity, he was talking about a climate in which the rich had the right to have grand buildings while the poor were guaranteed slums. As someone who grew up in the Gorbals and who saw the slums being demolished, I know that only too well. I lived in a flat that was built in a climate of regulated creativity by Glasgow City Council's predecessor. I have to say that, regardless of how uniform it was, a flat with a bathroom was much preferable to the overcrowding of some of the slums in the Gorbals. That said, a great deal of decent fabric that could have been refurbished was unnecessarily demolished.

Unfortunately, we have not learned from that and we still see situations in which cost is put before the need to preserve communities and individuality. That concerns me especially in relation to schools and the impact of private finance initiatives on schools. Kit schools are being built in preference to the refurbishing of landmark buildings in communities such as Strathaven. The communities would prefer refurbishment but, because of the restrictions of the PFI contract, it is cheaper for the consortia—and their profit margins are bigger—if they demolish the old landmark schools and put kit schools in their place.

Linda Fabiani: Does Carolyn Leckie agree that it is not the construction of kit schools that is the problem, but the uniformity of the kits, which is dictated by the developer-led nature of the projects?

Carolyn Leckie: I do not disagree with that.

I cite the example of St Kevin's primary school in Bargeddie. The community there is attempting to get involved in the design of the new school, but it is being restricted and prevented from becoming involved because the consortium has already concluded the deal with the local authority and has dictated what the school will look like. That will have a direct impact on the children's education.

There is currently a big debate around the value of open-plan classrooms, but the nature of the PFI contract has dictated that there will be open-plan classrooms, and the community has had absolutely no say. The only reason why open-plan classrooms have been chosen is that walls are dearer than no walls. Absolutely no consideration has been given to the impact on the children's education.

I agree that we need less uniformity and more individuality and creativity in the design of housing and social housing. However, individuality, uniqueness and creativity should not be things that people can buy; they should be the right of every community. I am very concerned about the number of unique former public buildings that are being snapped up by big developers to be converted into housing that only people on high incomes can buy. I would like the Executive's policies to enable local authorities to snap up those public buildings and develop them for social housing and public spaces. What we are seeing is the privatisation of space, which I find entirely unacceptable. It would be a really radical policy if some of our old fire stations and churches were developed for social housing. I am not opposed to the odd church being turned into a pub, but I would like some to be used for the benefit of the people who do not enjoy a wee drink now and again.

People need genuine democratic control over their environment, but that is not happening. The needs of developers are being put ahead of the needs of communities. The planning legislation is directly relevant to architectural policy, and it should put the communities first, ahead of big developers and big government. Certainly, double standards need to be obliterated. There is an example of double standards right outside this building, with big developers being granted permission to change completely the character of Edinburgh's old town while, for decades, people who live in the social housing in the Royal Mile—I have a friend who lives in one of the flats—have been prevented from installing double glazing because they live in listed buildings. It is unacceptable to have people freezing for decades because they live in a listed building but then, at the snapping of fingers, to allow developers to bulldoze their way through an historic old town. That is absolutely unacceptable.

Although I agree with much of what has been said—especially by Christine Grahame, Michael Matheson and Robin Harper—I disagree completely with the Tories, as usual. In particular, I disagree with Jamie McGrigor, who stuck up for the old castle owners. If castle owners are unable to maintain their properties, it is time for us to issue compulsory purchase orders and to turn them into social housing.

16:05

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab): I am intrigued by Carolyn Leckie's metaphor about turning churches into places of entertainment. Given the recent events in the Scottish Socialist Party, I presume that the pub will be called "Hellfire and Damnation" and that the

proprietor will be Carolyn herself. It will certainly not be called "Tommy's".

I welcome the debate on architecture in Scotland. Architecture will never be a dominant policy issue for the elector, but buildings play a critical part in people's lives and experiences, individually and as members of the communities in which they live, work or play. How we shape, design, consult on and create new buildings, and how we preserve, protect and cherish older buildings, is the nub of this afternoon's debate.

One of the most frustrating aspects of the discussion is that areas can often be caricatured and stereotyped. The constituency that I represent—Glasgow Shettleston—has the great misfortune to be divided by an important arterial part of the River Clyde, so people in the north and south of the area have different perspectives on living there. Coming from a family in which my father was from the south side of the river and my mother was from the north side, I can testify to the passionate divisions that those local identities can often create.

Even in Glasgow Shettleston, it is important to recognise how we are shaped and influenced by our past when we consider how we can create a modern and constructive future for the inhabitants of such neighbourhoods. In the east end and south side of Glasgow, much of the city's historic development has been related to its economy. Carolyn Leckie illustrated the economic power that those with major wealth and privilege would have. There is no doubt that the incredible buildings around the Glasgow green area were developed through the prosperity of the tobacco lords, but they are now being reinvented as rented and owner-occupied accommodation because those old buildings were preserved and because there has been a strategy for renewal. In a sense, we can take what might have been economically negative and turn it into something positive for the current inhabitants.

The development of industrial working-class housing was a feature of what happened in the Gorbals and in other parts of the inner east end, and it has shaped the city dramatically. A number of members have mentioned the experience of the Gorbals; I want to touch on that later in my speech.

I have three major messages. One is that, where we have partnerships, we can make a real difference and we can try to meet the aspirations that everyone who has taken part in the debate so far has expressed. At Parkhead Cross, for example, the street-level vision was pretty negative, both for the residents and for any visitors to the neighbourhood, and the above-street-level vision and the quality of the buildings at Parkhead Cross—not just the bank buildings but some of the

working-class housing—showed that investment had not been a priority for the neighbourhoods. The role that the local housing association has played in pulling together a Heritage Lottery Fund commitment has resulted not only in two or three important pieces of architecture being further developed, but in local church buildings that needed investment becoming part of that process.

The same is true of the success of St Andrews in the Square in the Saltmarket, the homes for the future and the inner-city regeneration that we want for the Calton area. However, the absence of a strategic local plan in that area is something that I am actively working to remedy with local elected members and the community. We have recently established a forum in the Calton area to develop such a plan.

I want to touch on something that many people have experienced in the Gorbals, which probably offers the best example of the history of architecture in the city of Glasgow. We have seen there the industrial working-class housing that had to be demolished in the 1960s, and the ambition and vision for what would replace it, irrespective of the consequences of the decisions that were taken. I understand the comments that have been made by local residents about Sir Basil Spence, but he had ambition for what he tried to create in the Gorbals. He tried to create a building that should have served as a repository for a workable ideal, but it did not work. That is the reality of architecture. Sometimes things might not work, but the real aspiration is in continuing to reinvent and reimagine, and in how we can make a difference in our cities.

The ambition to have a workable ideal strikes me as being an important metaphor for the Gorbals, and if anybody looks now at the rear of the Citizens Theatre in Gorbals Street they will see the incredible success of the Crown Street regeneration project, which has been a success for three or four reasons. First, a locally based housing association has driven forward much of the agenda. Secondly, when we have been able to involve the community, its involvement has been central in the early design stages and in the creation of the new housing. Thirdly, and most important, people do not know what is social rented housing, what is private rented housing or what is owner-occupied housing. People are hard pushed to identify which is which. That is one of the incredible achievements of Crown Street.

When a person goes from Crown Street through to the Citizens Theatre in the Gorbals they can look across the road to what someone once described to me—the Gorbals folk are quite poetic—as the "Corbusian austerity" of the flats at Laurieston. That comment was made to me in a local pub in the recent past. The flats are

unpopular, unattractive and in desperate need of removal. It is interesting that between those two is what is known as Frank's bank. That is not my bank: Frank McElhone used to own the greengrocer there. It is the last remaining tenement of the industrial working-class type in the Gorbals. One of the challenges as we regenerate the Laurieston area—that regeneration will include demolition of the Laurieston flats—is how to reinvent the old buildings and create a new community. The development must be of high quality and we must ensure that the people who want to stay in the Gorbals can do so. That is the challenge that faces us all. The regeneration will be an important legacy.

I have a personal testimony to share. Eighty years ago my granddad John came off the boat from County Cavan and arrived to live in the Gorbals. Forty years ago my parents went to live there in the early years of their marriage. Our challenge is to leave a contemporary legacy that leaves a mark and allows us to hold on to what has been shaped by our antecedents, but which also draws on the modern and the universal.

A great German philosopher once said that when he looked at German buildings, he thought that

"we ought to thank God for being able to proclaim aloud ... This is German architecture ... our architecture."

I would not go that far, and when I hear a German say that, I worry occasionally. However, I would say that whatever the architecture is, however it manifests itself in the contemporary age and whatever the architecture says about Scotland as it is now, we must leave a legacy such that future generations who debate the issue in this Parliament 40 or 50 years from now can look back to the early part of the 21st century and say that we created landmark buildings, not only on landed estates but in ordinary communities where ordinary people resided, and that we made a difference to their lives. It is important that, as we have the development and design debate on architecture in Scotland over the next few years, we take into account people's experiences in the past so that we leave a legacy that is genuinely worth preserving in the future.

16:12

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Architecture is a guide to the history of a country, to its confidence and to the influences upon it. I will take us through some of the historical influences that have created our buildings, to the kind of buildings that we are creating today, both in the cities and in the countryside.

Scotland is not an exception when we say that architecture is a guide to the history of a country.

We can see the influences in, for example, the Franco-Renaissance style of the 15th and 16th centuries or in the pantiles from our relationship with the low countries. We also have the later examples of the fantastic architecture in booming Glasgow—the second city of the British empire—from architects such as Greek Thompson and Charles Rennie Mackintosh. With such examples that show that confidence was high and the country felt that it had to make statements through its buildings, we find a way in which each generation can mark the progress of our country. In far too many places—as other members have said—there are too many small and unremarkable boxes in which people now live. Those are often sited next to retail parks, which are joined up by roundabouts and open spaces that are no person's land. If that kind of town architecture—which is being fostered because the town centres have been destroyed and building has taken place on the outskirts—is to continue, a large part of the heritage that we pass on will not be as memorable as some of the examples that I have given from the past.

If the new architecture is going to be imaginative and forward thinking, it must also be affordable. If any heritage will be worth passing on, it is the affordable housing that we are designing now. The Homes for Scotland meeting that took place at lunch time today was about large developers who make the kind of boxes that I mentioned. Our building regulations and planning system may be the best in Britain, but they are not the best in northern Europe, as Robin Harper mentioned. Our regulations and standards need to be tightened up considerably. I disagree fundamentally with Alex Johnstone that we do not need regulations. We need them because they allow us to have the kind of architecture that will take us forward.

Alex Johnstone: Will Rob Gibson accept that that is not what I said? Rather, I said that we need regulation, but cannot allow it to impose additional costs without first addressing how the costs will be met.

Rob Gibson: We need to ensure that we get into the position where people cannot build substandard buildings. The people who do so should be penalised—not those who try to build high-standard buildings. Regulation can stop people from giving us such low standards.

Architects and builders have to work together. In saying that, I am, of course, referring to the planning context. A wider-ranging approach needs to be taken in planning; one that involves master planning and public participation. Those are the techniques that allow core values to be spread to and from the community councils and so on. There are many examples that we can take from other countries of how that should be done in Scotland.

We look to the Government to incorporate more of those values in the architectural briefs that it is drawing up, not only in terms of the Planning etc (Scotland) Bill, but elsewhere.

A building that I have mentioned previously in this context is the award-winning house that was built for the artist Lotte Glob on the side of Loch Eriboll. During the last RIAS competition, it won the public prize. The house, which is made of wood and other locally sourced materials, cost £70,000 to build. It is not only much better insulated than the artist's previous house, but it is built on a sloping site. That is the kind of land that is not so useful for agriculture; it is the kind of land on which many rural buildings should be built. Lotte Glob's house is the kind of example that we want to encourage.

Frank McAveety talked about his grandparents coming to the Gorbals from County Cavan. During that part of the 19th century, when the famine had taken hold in Ireland and, indeed, when the clearances were taking place in Scotland, people began to build more dispersed settlements. However, in order to get affordable housing in the countryside, we know that we have to build houses in clusters. I am talking about houses being built not cheek by jowl in the "Brookside" fashion, but in communities. The kind of planning that allows for community development therefore needs to be built into the thoughts of architects and their way of working.

I turn to the point about the local authorities that we make in our amendment. Far too often, local authorities are involved in trying to perpetuate a view of the countryside as being a place where only small white-painted houses can be located; houses that look beautiful but which are totally out of place nowadays. The situation of architects having to design houses that look like the houses that were built in the 18th century but which have a 21st century interior is desperate. The Scottish National Party expects local authorities to be more imaginative on the issue.

I can think of far too many examples in which a proposal to build the kind of wooden house that I referred to earlier meets vast resistance at local government level. That is why I echo the argument that many more architects should be involved in planning departments and that such a development should be funded from the centre, which would ensure that progressive architectural values were taken on board.

The type of housing that we build is our legacy for the future. If Scotland is to be seen as a progressive country, our housing has to be seen to be the hallmark of the nation. If the people of Scotland live in houses that offer a message of hope to them, it would serve as a true benchmark that Scotland is moving forward into the future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):
We move to closing speeches.

16:19

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green):
First, I will pick up on the closing remark that Rob Gibson made. The importance of having architects within planning departments cannot be overstated.

The debate has been interesting. For me, three strong strands have come out of it: the need to conserve our heritage, the need to mainstream green thinking and the need to build for the future.

Several members have expressed a certain amount of regret at the lack of mention of and emphasis on heritage in the Executive's motion. As Michael Matheson said, 82 per cent of our listed buildings are currently listed as being at risk. That is a frightening statistic and it must be addressed. Jamie McGrigor commented on the lack of mention of heritage, and Marilyn Livingstone focused on the importance of conserving local high streets.

Patricia Ferguson: I point out that, last month, we had a debate about the Scottish historic environment policy documents that Historic Scotland published then. The two debates are complementary, but the earlier one was the place to have a full discussion about our environmental and architectural heritage. I hope that Chris Ballance takes that information in the spirit in which I give it.

Chris Ballance: That is a fair point, but there are two sides to architecture: conserving what we have and building for the future. Conserving what we have is particularly relevant at the moment, as communities are suffering architectural losses. In the Borders, communities have been fighting a strong battle for the past two years to retain the old textile college in Galashiels and prevent it from becoming a car park for Tesco, but current planning law has not been able to support that fight. On the other hand, we have communities—sometimes the same people—opposing the siting of new housing settlements in inappropriate lands, settlements that they feel will be, in the words of the song,

"Little boxes on the hillside ...
And they're all made out of ticky-tacky
And they all look just the same."

That is the sort of development that planning policies and architectural policies must try to prevent.

The minister made the point that we need to mainstream green thinking. Members would expect me to be thoroughly behind that. I am, and I welcome the fact that we have an architectural policy, but it must be backed up by planning

policies and, to be frank, SPP 3 marginalises green thinking. It specifically says:

“Proposals for sustainable residential development using innovative, energy-efficient technologies with particularly low impacts on the environment may be acceptable at locations where more conventional buildings would not.”

That is the mention of low-impact housing. People who are trying to build low-impact housing settlements, which are sometimes called eco-villages, are struggling to get such developments through the planning system because it is simply not geared up for them. I have been working with a group—the Tweed Valley eco-village group—that has been working for eight or nine years to try to establish such a settlement in the Borders, but the planning system simply does not enable it.

The third strand is the need to build for the future. On that, too, community involvement—housing for people—is the important point. We have heard from Donald Gorrie, Frank McAveety, Christine Grahame and Carolyn Leckie of the need to place the community’s needs over developers’ needs. To be frank, as I go round the South of Scotland region, I find that people do not believe that the planning system works for people rather than for large developers.

We also need to build to conserve for the future. I find Alex Johnstone’s call for short-term short cuts and cost cutting to avoid conserving for the future simply extraordinary. We need to build buildings that last and are geared for the future. That means employing innovations such as high insulation standards. I draw members’ attention to the bill that my colleague Shiona Baird will introduce in two or three weeks’ time—the home energy efficiency targets bill—which is intended to improve domestic energy efficiency. I hope that it will get members’ support, because it is crucial. In a world where oil prices are starting to hit the ceiling and are about to go through the roof, it is important that we insulate that roof and that we protect people for the future, using the riches that we have at the moment to conserve for the future. I find it extraordinary that the Conservative party does not accept that argument.

Robin Harper’s amendment is very measured. It asks not for immediate regulation or instant legislation, but for consultations, possibilities to be explored, aims to be moved towards and improvements to be made in a slow, measured way. Indeed, it uses the word “measured”. It calls for slow, thoughtful improvements. I hope that the Parliament will be able to support that.

16:25

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): As I suspect my colleague and friend, Linda Fabiani, will agree, what a great pleasure it is to take part in this debate in this

building, which won the Stirling prize, and which has now received its rightful acclaim the length and breadth of this land and internationally.

Reference has been made to how architecture in our communities gives us signposts to the past. Thinking of my own home town—and this is not a press release, I can assure members—

Members: Ah!

Mr Stone: No, it is not. I would be very surprised if this gets into the *Ross-shire Journal*. The tollbooth in my home town of Tain was designed by Alexander Stronach and completed in 1733. People might not know much about the history of the building, but they love it. It is close to people’s hearts. Christine Grahame expressed that sentiment eloquently. The minister said that the built environment is of great importance to the lives of people. Although I did but one year of history of art at university, one thing that my lecturers taught me that I came to see as being absolutely true was that buildings really do govern the way in which people move and work.

I will tell a short story about the time I went to Rome to meet my intended, now my wife, who was coming back from far away in the east. I had arranged to meet her anywhere in Europe. I got a telegram.

Christine Grahame: This is very romantic.

Mr Stone: It was romantic. I waited on the steps of St Peter’s, with a box of chocolates and a bottle of Asti Spumante—because I was a student. The lady, who I subsequently married, was five days late, and I waited for those five days. I ate the chocolates. Better than Frank McAveety, I am a black protestant. Anyway, I waited on the steps of the holy see, and I saw how the architecture and Michelangelo’s great crescent-shaped colonnades focused the way in which people moved. We could see that with our own eyes. I had not believed my tutor at St Andrews, but what he said was absolutely correct. Surely this building is a living example of a good environment and of how architecture really affects people’s lives.

Michael Matheson correctly referred to the register of buildings at risk and other members also made points about that. We need to keep our eyes on that. Jamie McGrigor is not with us now, but I think that he made similar remarks, although I got slightly lost in his hyperbole. Robin Harper—on a subject close to my heart—referred to the unused space in our town centres. I accept that there is a debate to be had on access and the sorts of shops above which people live, and why, but I believe that the mixture of residential and commercial retail can be beneficial for town centres. I suspect that the minister will respond on that. The day when living and working people flee our community and town centres will be a sad one

indeed.

Donald Gorrie rightly referred to the importance not just of architecture but of the whole of the community around that architecture, and to the unwisdom of pickling in aspic—if I correctly caught what he said—one particular style of architecture. We should remember that. We might talk about little white boxes or white crofts or whatever, but we cannot freeze-frame architecture. That is what Rob Gibson was suggesting. We must move with the times.

Rob Gibson was especially right to refer to the lack of affordable housing in some rural areas. In our constituency, work is being carried out by the forestry authorities, which are building wooden houses at Bettyhill. That is sustainable, and it could very much be something for the future.

I was slightly unsure about the connection that Alex Johnstone made between what I interpret as laissez-faire economics and good architecture, but I am prepared to be persuaded of that.

Christine Grahame was right to refer to the almost magnetic polarisation effect that a supermarket development on the outskirts of a community can have. We must consider carefully—perhaps in the context of the Planning etc (Scotland) Bill—how such developments affect communities.

Carolyn Leckie made an interesting contribution, to which I listened with great interest. I do not wish to make any jokes about churches and pubs, but she is correct that some parts of our heritage can be used for the future.

Frank McAveety talked about the interesting concept—a new one to me—of blurring what is private and what is public. His point was thoughtful and we would do well to reflect on it, as it related to our getting away from ghettoisation and the wretched structure of society that can be so damnable.

I will finish with an argument that is hard to develop in the 40 seconds that I have left. Some buildings are beautiful in their own right, by virtue of their proportion—this building is a good example. I wish that John Swinney were with us, because in his constituency—this will mean something to those of us who travel the A9—just by Blair Atholl, near a quarry, there is a late 18th or early 19th century farmhouse that is missing its gable. However, the front elevation of the farmhouse is absolutely perfect, given when it was designed, which shows that there is an intrinsic beauty in perfect dimensions. Enric Miralles got that absolutely right with this building. We must always use it as the measure against which to hold up buildings from the past and buildings of the future.

Fantastic work can be done in the future, but the aesthetic benefits must always be considered. Let us not have buildings that we put up only to tear down again. I think that Mr McGrigor hinted at that point.

I hope that members could make sense of my speech. I support the motion in the name of the minister.

16:32

Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife)
(Con): I declare an interest as a life member of the St Andrews Preservation Trust and member of the local green belt forum.

When I stroll around the back streets of the old and new towns of Edinburgh—or indeed the streets of many of Scotland's historical market towns—I never fail to be impressed by the sheer quality of the architecture. I think that Carolyn Leckie has left the chamber—[*Interruption.*] Sorry, she is still here—I am getting old and did not see her. Despite what she said, there is excellently designed tenement property in Glasgow, Edinburgh and elsewhere.

I happen to believe that the high-water mark of Scottish architecture was probably reached towards the end of the 17th century, with another surge towards the end of the 18th century. The new town of Edinburgh is a Georgian gem, thanks in major part to the genius of the Adam brothers from Fife. As Christine Grahame, Rob Gibson and others reminded us, Glasgow is, architecturally, the finest Victorian city left in Britain. I would say that that is thanks largely to the far-sighted and public-spirited merchants of the time.

There is no rule that dictates that for good architecture to thrive, a Government policy must be in place. What is required is a strong economy, a confident society and a fair planning system. It is worth noting that Scotland has usually produced its best architecture when the country is at its most confident.

I have no doubt that the Executive's architecture policy is well intentioned, but most of us can tell a good building from a bad one. That is as true for a council housing scheme as it is for a new Parliament building.

Much of the architecture that was inflicted on us in the 1950s and 1960s, which is now, thankfully, being torn down, was the legacy of the Town and Country Planning Act 1947. The people needed houses after the war, but did they need the mind-numbing conformity and low building standards that were imposed on them by the centralisation of a major national building industry? I do not exempt the private housing sector from responsibility. The emergence of a cosy club of big housebuilders did

absolutely nothing to drive up the quality of housing in the 1950s and 1960s. Donald Gorrie was right that architecture is for people, but that does not mean that it cannot also be well designed.

In many European countries with a similar density per square mile, such as Germany and Switzerland, spacious homes in green, well-landscaped areas are the affordable norm. Despite what Patricia Ferguson said, sadly that is still not the case here in Scotland. Many of the problems originate in the planning system. Planning is controlled much more locally in many other European countries where communities have clear incentives to develop organically or at a rate with which they are comfortable. All too often, that is not the case here.

Against the wishes of local community councils, Fife Council is currently driving a housing policy for the kingdom that aims to increase the population by 5 per cent. The council claims that it intends 60 per cent of the new housing to be in central Fife. Nonetheless, there are plans to build nearly 7,000 new houses in the north-east part of the county. That is not organic growth—it does not spring from local needs; that housing is being imposed on that part of the county arbitrarily. Instead of being driven by jobs, which would be the right way round, the demand appears to be developer led. That is where the involvement of planners at local and national levels is essential.

Of course we have responsibilities to local young people to ensure that they are housed and to ensure that our communities remain vibrant, but it is not nimbyism for local communities to try to protect for future generations the qualities of environment, lifestyle and housing density that they have fought so hard to maintain.

Mr Stone: With reference to a debate some months ago, does Mr Brocklebank think that young people on low incomes from St Andrews should be housed there, or should they be forced to move to some other part of Fife?

Mr Brocklebank: Mr Stone has posed that question many times in the chamber. The hard fact is that although I am a local of St Andrews, I was forced to leave the town as a youngster because housing density simply could not accommodate all local young people. That was sad, but if Mr Stone suggests that we should destroy towns such as St Andrews by imposing on them blanket, uniform, badly designed housing schemes, my answer is that I would rather wait longer for people to come back.

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Mr Brocklebank: No, I have already given way and I have more to get through.

Although the Government has a role in promoting good architecture and design, it also has a role in encouraging greater community involvement to protect the existing built heritage and to ensure that new buildings of any sort are well designed, carefully planned and built of quality materials.

I look forward to the six cities initiative and the biennial celebration of good architecture in those cities that Patricia Ferguson announced today, but could that initiative also be about condemning bad architecture? For example, can we accept that it was an appalling mistake to site St Nicholas House next to Marischal College in Aberdeen? Can we accept that county towns such as Perth, Inverness and Ayr have all had their centres desecrated by unsightly shopping malls? When buildings such as St Nicholas House are pulled down, does the minister believe that architects might be confident enough to build something rather better in their wake?

I hope that in 20 years the Scotland for which we all strive will experience a new enlightenment in which some of the finest buildings by architects such as the Adam brothers, Playfair and the rest are still standing. I am not looking for pastiche; I do not suggest that modern Scottish architecture should be turreted or baronial. Although Charles Rennie Macintosh's Hill House in Helensburgh, built in 1907, was unashamedly influenced by Scottish architecture, it was gloriously modern and confident in design. Why cannot we do that kind of building today? I believe that we can; we just need to find the confidence again.

That brings us back to the Parliament and the Executive and how they will achieve that new architectural enlightenment for Scotland.

16:39

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): I find it difficult to know where to start my speech because there is so much that I would like to say. First of all, I inform the chamber that I do not seek local press releases because I would like to talk about the Executive's architecture and design policy.

The debate is about so much more than houses and boxes; it is about architecture and design. I believe that Jamie Stone has been the only person to mention the beauty of our surroundings. There is absolutely nothing wrong with creating something beautiful. We Scots with our Calvinist streak sometimes think that everything must be functional and must have a reason to exist. No—sometimes it is nice to be surrounded by and to appreciate beautiful things. As far as architecture and design are concerned, beauty should come towards the top of our list of criteria, while

acknowledging that certain elements must be functional. We can then use that approach to focus on aspects such as architecture for communities and housing.

Public art also comes into this matter. In that respect, Carolyn Leckie and Frank McAveety mentioned the Gorbals. As an aside, I agree that what has happened with architecture in that part of Glasgow has been disastrous, but the problem stems as much from the social conditions that were imposed at the time as from the design of homes. After all, high rises work in many places, especially for people with lots of money, because they can be beautiful and functional and can provide all the necessary facilities. They do not work when people are forced into them by social conditions. Similarly, garden cities and new towns are wonderful concepts, but other problems can make such places not quite as lovely as the architects and designers first imagined.

Returning to public art in the Gorbals, I cannot remember what the piece is called—I am sure that Carolyn Leckie or Frank McAveety will tell me later—but I think that the angels on the buildings in Crown Gardens are absolutely fantastic. When the proposal was first reported in the newspapers, people laughed at it. Now the piece has been accepted as part of the surroundings. When everyone takes good design and architecture for granted—and, indeed, expects them as their due—we will be able to move on.

Tricia Marwick: Will the member give way?

Linda Fabiani: Of course. I see that the member has moved from the Conservative benches.

Tricia Marwick: Indeed—I have moved back to the right side of the chamber.

Does the member agree that one of the successes of new towns was the introduction of town art? For example, Glenrothes had a town artist who made public sculptures of hippopotamuses and an old couple on a bench. Does she think that other towns should acquire such artists in order to beautify them?

Linda Fabiani: We are getting well carried away now. We will have not only architects working wonders in every local authority but artists beautifying towns. Perhaps we should also have musicians and street performers. Indeed, why should we not aspire to such things?

Architecture in Scotland is not just a matter of the past. Just now, some fabulous Scottish architects, designers and engineers are creating wonderful designs. However, as members have pointed out, not all the design work that is being carried out is wonderful. Carolyn Leckie mentioned the schools project as an example of that. I know

that members have previously discussed ecoschools. If we gave design its proper place, instead of having standard-construction PPP buildings, we could have wonderful schools that are conducive to learning and hospitals that are conducive to healing.

We should not just look backwards. Jamie McGrigor and Alex Johnstone talked about the Scottish vernacular style. In Argyll, which Mr McGrigor represents, I have seen some wonderful new examples of that style—as well as some bad examples of the little boxes that Rob Gibson mentioned.

We do not have to go back to centuries-old design to make things of beauty. Rob Gibson referred to the award-winning house on Loch Eriboll, which shows that it is possible for new and innovative design to fit in with the surroundings. No one has mentioned Architecture and Design Scotland's travelling exhibition on rural housing, which I found fascinating. At this point, I must congratulate the minister on establishing Architecture and Design Scotland. Although the agency has not really entered the psyche of people in Scotland, I believe that it represents a way forward.

I will quote something that John Richards wrote in 1994. I had huge respect for him when I worked in housing associations and I think that he is absolutely right. He wrote:

"There are many examples of new buildings which interact successfully with their older neighbours without attempting to copy past styles. Even within a group, design unity does not require uniformity. New houses should not normally be expected to look as like old houses as possible, but care should be taken in their design that they do not spoil, but enhance, the public's enjoyment of neighbouring buildings."

That is extremely important as a way to move forward.

Members talked about community involvement in design. I saw the importance of that during my years of working in housing associations, when I also worked with some fantastic architects. I have concerns about the time when design and build came in and schemes started to become developer led. That led to some uniformity, because capital costs rather than innovation and design were all-important. However, I believe that we are starting to break away from that.

An interesting example of progress is the building in Rothesay that won lots of awards. When I worked in Rothesay, I was involved in the feasibility study for the Foley House site. At that time, the feasibility study had to be about refurbishing the old building on the site and trying to cram as many box-like new houses as possible on to it. That approach was required due to the restrictions and the financial constraints under

regulation from the party that does not believe in regulation. It was impossible to achieve because the unit costs were too high. The building that is on the site now is much better. It is a fantastic, new, beautifully designed building that is gaining plaudits from all over the world and it is making local people very happy.

I am rabbiting on because I have so much to say. Have I got a wee bit longer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer *indicated agreement.*

Linda Fabiani: I refer to the summary version of the “Survey of the Building Design Professions’ Attitudes to the Policy on Architecture”, which was published by the Scottish Executive in July 2005. It contains some interesting things, although there is a long way to go with the architecture and design policy. The document states:

“there is also reluctance among other professionals for the public to be involved in the design process without first educating and raising the levels of public understanding.”

That is not about elitism or snobbery, of which building design professionals are often accused. People have been faced with some horrendous housing and public buildings in Scotland, particularly in the past century. If they do not know what to aspire to or what is possible, it is difficult for them to know what they can have. The document also states that most building design professionals

“would like the Executive to work more closely with schools to make young people more aware of their environment and encourage more interest and community involvement in matters affecting the built environment.”

So there are two strands to the issue, and it is a long-term issue. We are not going to change things overnight, but people have to know what is possible and what can be achieved. We should all work together to help to achieve that.

16:48

Patricia Ferguson: Today has provided me with my first opportunity to enter into a full debate on architecture and to discuss the challenges for our policy. As we have heard today, the quality of our architecture affects a wide range of interests. It impacts on issues of sustainability, heritage, culture, education, health, procurement and local government, and that is far from being an exhaustive list. The built environment affects almost every aspect of our existence and architecture has a great power to improve our experience of both work and leisure.

It is the responsibility of Government to strive to ensure that the benefits of a well-designed and pleasing built environment are shared throughout society. Buildings and the places that they create

are instrumental in realising the Government’s social objective of a fair, democratic and inclusive society. As we have discussed, a concern for the design of individual buildings is not enough. It is vital to support the creation and regeneration of neighbourhoods and communities.

In the time that I have, I am not sure that I will be able to respond to all the points that have been made, but I will try. I begin with Michael Matheson, whom I thank for his speech. I share his concern that the public are perhaps not as inspired by architecture and design issues as they should be. Linda Fabiani also made that point. I point them to the work of the Lighthouse on our behalf to address that issue, particularly with schoolchildren.

If it does anything, good architecture raises the bar and encourages debate. We may not all agree about the status, beauty or aesthetics of a building, but we can have the debate and use the lessons that result from it. If we cannot raise the debate and speak about architecture, how can we expect others to do so? This afternoon’s debate has been encouraging.

I share Michael Matheson’s interest in our heritage and our built environment. That is why I was so keen to have the debate on the Scottish historic environment policy documents last month—speaking of which, I wondered whether Jamie McGrigor was responding to that debate today. I lived for many of my—shall we say—more youthful years on the 21st floor of multistorey flats and I say to him that the joy of throwing pieces—jeelie or any other kind—from any window is somewhat overrated.

To be serious, I point out to Jamie McGrigor that an interesting fact about the Gorbals project is that it was an award-winning architectural project. Frank McAveety’s explanation of what happened in the Gorbals was correct. What is wonderful is that the Gorbals has now regenerated itself. From what I have seen of it, I think that it will be a place in which people will want to live and will enjoy living.

I was interested in Robin Harper’s amendment and speech, and I have much sympathy with many of the points that he made. I hope that he accepts that I am committed—as is the Executive—to sustainability and to considering how we green our policies. I point out that we regulate not through our architectural policy but through the Scottish Building Standards Agency, which is responsible for setting standards. A key priority of the agency’s three-year corporate plan is to fulfil our partnership agreement commitment to

“strengthen building standards to ensure that energy conservation levels improve to high and effective levels and consult on ways to ensure that new homes and public

buildings increasingly incorporate solar power or other renewable energy sources.”

As I am sure Robin Harper is aware, the agency’s consultation on energy has just closed. The resulting document, which will be published next May, will give Scotland standards and requirements that are far more onerous than those anywhere else in the UK. I hope that he realises that that is how we will progress the agenda.

Chris Ballance: Will the minister give way?

Patricia Ferguson: I have quite a lot to go through. I will respond to Chris Ballance’s speech, too.

Donald Gorrie is right about community involvement. I hope that he acknowledges that the Planning etc (Scotland) Bill recognises the need for community involvement. Initial work is under way on a planning advice note on how best to develop community engagement.

Marilyn Livingstone made several interesting points. She and Christine Grahame shared the idea that not only houses but factories and other industrial buildings matter. I was taken by Marilyn Livingstone’s point about the failure to encourage older trades to be practised, which means that we might be losing skill bases. However, Historic Scotland is doing much work on that. It has worked with the Scottish Lime Centre Trust to ensure that many such skills are retained.

We believe that accessibility is an important aspect of good architecture. Through good design and sensitive approaches that subtly integrate the provision of assistance, accessibility issues can be managed in ways that do not isolate people who may require more help. Good architectural design can of itself promote inclusiveness.

I agree with what Christine Grahame said about the need to conserve our old buildings as well as to build good new buildings. However, much of Scotland’s best new architecture can be seen in reused and regenerated buildings. I will give only two examples: the wonderful example of Dance Base in Edinburgh and, of course, the Lighthouse in Glasgow.

Carolyn Leckie spoke about PFI and PPP initiatives and how schools are built under PFI and PPP contracts. I point out to her that many PFI schemes have involved old schools being refurbished. I point to East Dunbartonshire as an example of where there have been such schemes and where extensive consultation has helped to inform the debate. We have been keen to get the message across that a PPP or PFI process should not be a bar to good design or consultation.

On Chris Ballance’s comments, among the proposed changes to the energy section of the building regulations is an expansion of the

guidance on heating systems to cover a broader range of systems, including certain low and zero-carbon energy-generating technologies. We are working hard to take forward that agenda.

Frank McAveety spoke about what was important in the Gorbals. The point that I took from what he said—which applies throughout the country—is that partnership, genuine consultation and inclusion matter. It is more than likely that the views and ideas of communities will have been taken into account where buildings and places are successful.

Linda Fabiani said that she had been encouraged by the provision of “The Gatekeeper” of the Gorbals. However, what has happened there is not confined to that arts project—in fact, the entire Gorbals redevelopment has required developers to devote 1 per cent of their building costs to art. There are several new arts projects in the Gorbals. I agree with Linda Fabiani that they very much enhance the place and community that new Gorbals now is.

It is important for us to address the issue of public art, which I look forward to doing in the next phase of developing our policy. We have considered and discussed public art and will progress the matter. It is also important to remember that architecture is a key cross-cutting issue and that our policy must influence the quality not only of houses but of schools, hospitals and other public buildings. I welcome Linda Fabiani’s support for Architecture and Design Scotland, which can make a significant contribution to the debate in Scotland and to the practical realities of policies on the ground. I think that it has begun to make such a contribution.

People require places that bring an improved quality of life and provide a stimulating and healthy environment. They require places that encourage and foster social interaction, that are sustainable, that are easily maintained and that can adapt over time. One of the greatest challenges for Government in providing such environments lies in getting many of our policies—such as our architecture, planning, regeneration, procurement, sustainability and historic environment policies—to interact with and complement one another.

Good design in architecture is not simply a matter of good looks—it also makes buildings and places function well. Good architecture is an essential part of creating a sustainable future. We must continue to consider both the promotional and practical aspects in developing policy and we must continue to advocate the benefits of well-designed buildings, encourage debate and seek greater community participation in development matters.

Not long ago, there was little awareness abroad of what was happening in Scottish architecture. The quality of what is happening here is now very well known and there is widely evident interest in and enthusiasm for Scotland's new architecture. We are now perceived as a dynamic place with a concern for our environment and an emerging architecture that commands respect. Let us not lose that respect, and let us live up to the image. Let us ensure that we cherish the qualities for which we are valued abroad.

The First Minister said in his St Andrew's day speech:

"For years, our culture, along with some of our most talented people, has been Scotland's great gift to the world. It is important that today, the world continues to see how successful a contemporary country and culture we are."

In our policy, we refer to Scotland as a

"place of imagination, creativity and innovation".

Historically, that is undeniable, but if it is to continue to be the case, we must value and nurture our immense resource in creative skills and we must foster a climate in which our children learn to care about our built environment from the earliest age.

The quality of our built environment is important not only to our own quality of life but to the perception of our country abroad as an outstanding place to live, work and visit. It is important that we maintain our momentum and that we build upon the many achievements of the first years of our policy. The creation of our new policy on architecture statement will be the next step forward.

As Michael Matheson rightly said, it has often been remarked that good architecture is too important to trust to architects alone. I agree. If we truly wish to improve the quality of Scotland's built environment and we truly wish to add to the richness of our cultural lives, Government must continue to support and show its commitment to architecture.

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):

There are seven questions to be put as a result of today's business. In relation to this morning's debate on education, if the amendment in the name of Robert Brown is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Fiona Hyslop will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S2M-4464.2, in the name of Robert Brown, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4464, in the name of Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, on education, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)

Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 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)
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 67, Against 22, Abstentions 20.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: Because amendment S2M-4464.2 is agreed to, amendment S2M-4464.1, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, falls.

The next question is, that motion S2M-4464, in the name of Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, on education, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)

Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 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)
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 87, Against 22, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament applauds the fact that the Scottish education system is recognised by international benchmarking exercises as being amongst the best in the world; recognises the commitment of the Scottish Executive to sustained improvement in education and the biggest school buildings modernisation programme in our history, unprecedented stability in industrial relations and increased numbers of teachers and classroom assistants; welcomes the educational legislation which has, for example, established a more individual and supportive framework for children with additional support needs and increased the

opportunities for parental involvement in education; notes that the top performing schools in Scotland have served a wide variety of communities and congratulates all the winners of the SQA "School of the Year" Award; welcomes the measured comments of the EIS in relation to discipline policies of the Scottish Executive, and believes that the model for continued improvement for Scottish schools should build on current strength and success and tackle known challenges by fostering the leadership skills of head teachers and other teaching staff, reforming the curriculum, widening choice and reducing unnecessary paperwork, ensuring that teachers are freed up to teach, and pupils to learn, all with a view to equipping young people with the skills and values needed in the modern world.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-4477.2, in the name of Michael Matheson, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4477, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on architecture, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 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)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)

Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 48, Against 61, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-4477.1, in the name of Jamie McGrigor, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4477, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on architecture, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)

Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 16, Against 93, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-4477.3, in the name of Robin Harper, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4477, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on architecture, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)

Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 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)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)

Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahan, 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)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 33, Against 74, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S2M-4477, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on architecture, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)

Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

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

AGAINST

Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)

ABSTENTIONS

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 87, Against 1, Abstentions 21.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament appreciates the importance of architecture to many aspects of life in Scotland; recognises that both our new and historic buildings have a critical role to play in sustainable regeneration and in delivering successful urban and rural places; acknowledges the wide range of progress that has been made through partnership in implementing the commitments of the Scottish Executive's policy on architecture, and supports the Executive's intention to publish a renewed policy statement.

St Andrews

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-4344, in the name of Ted Brocklebank, on world heritage site status for St Andrews. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament supports a campaign to encourage the UK Government to obtain from UNESCO World Heritage Site status for St Andrews; recognises that St Andrews is the home of golf, the world's fastest-growing sport; further recognises that it is also the historic ecclesiastical capital of Scotland; believes that its cultural and educational contributions, in particular those of Scotland's oldest university, should be formally acknowledged; notes that St Andrews is regarded worldwide as unique, not only for its medieval town centre but also for its captivating and award-winning natural features; considers that the Scottish Executive should support St Andrews as an outstanding Scottish candidate for the UK Tentative List, and further notes that a consultation with every household in St Andrews showed 99% support for this move, as well as support from St Andrews Community Council, the University of St Andrews, the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, the St Andrews Links Trust, St Andrews Preservation Trust, Scottish Enterprise Fife, the St Andrews Green Belt Forum, Action of Churches Together in St Andrews and cross-party political support from distinguished St Andrews graduates, including Lord Alton, Lord Forsyth, Mark Lazarowicz MP, Alex Salmond MP and many others.

17:10

Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I welcome those visitors in the gallery who are from St Andrews and elsewhere in north-east Fife, who have travelled from those parts to attend the debate.

Members will know that I could bore for Scotland about St Andrews. Indeed, in the three years for which I have been in the Parliament, only Jamie Stone's shameless promotion of the cheese of Tain has provoked more groans from members than the praise that I have lavished on my native city. However, it is surely true that St Andrews is one of Scotland's places set apart. In 1975, the historian Ronald Cant, who was alarmed at overdevelopment, wrote:

"St Andrews has only one serious rival among the historic towns of Scotland, and that is Edinburgh."

He warned that

"It would be a tragedy if St Andrews loses the character that makes it unique among Scottish towns, and exceptional even in comparison with all the other historic cities of Europe."

In launching the campaign to secure world heritage site status for St Andrews, I have tried hard to be objective about the town. As some members will know, Scotland has only four world

heritage sites: the old and new towns of Edinburgh, which were awarded that status in 1996 and about which Prince Charles talked yesterday; the archaeological heart of Orkney; St Kilda off the west coast of Scotland; and New Lanark, which commemorates Scotland's industrial past.

Can we really talk about St Andrews in the same breath as the Taj Mahal, the old city of Jerusalem or the great wall of China? Is it in the same class as places in the United Kingdom such as the Roman city of Bath or the famous botanic gardens at Kew? Those are all world heritage sites. The closest comparison with St Andrews might be Durham, the cathedral and castle of which were granted world heritage status in 1986. Like St Andrews, Durham is a beautiful and ancient university city, but I submit that St Andrews has even more to offer.

Historically, St Andrews was the cradle of the nation that is called Scotland; its ancient resonance with the patron saint Andrew provides its very name. When the present capital, Edinburgh, was still a rickle of mud huts around a swamp under an extinct volcano, St Andrews was already the ecclesiastical capital of Scotland. The city's castle and cathedral formed the backdrop to some of the bloodiest episodes of the reformation, and its university, which was founded in 1411, is the oldest in Scotland. If we add to that its mix of award-winning beaches, which fringe Scotland's best-preserved walled, medieval city, we find that St Andrews already appears to satisfy the extremely high criteria that must be met to obtain world heritage site status.

However, the international importance of St Andrews lies in its undisputed title as the world's home of golf. Golf is the world's fastest growing sport and a multimillion pound business. St Andrews is the home not only of the world's most famous golf course—the Old course—but of the body that regulates the sport in every corner of the globe, except the United States of America. I understand that UNESCO, the body that is responsible for awarding world heritage site status, places increasing importance on the role of sport in its candidate selection.

St Andrews is under massive development pressure. It is understandable that the town's attractions have led to many more people wanting to live, or to site developments, there. Only this week, proposals for the building of a further 850 houses have been outlined. That comes on top of many other schemes for houses, timeshares, hotels and country clubs. There is a very great danger that the qualities that set St Andrews apart could be destroyed by competing development pressures.

It is true that world heritage site status brings no statutory planning obligations, but it is also true that it would be absurd for planners in Orkney or the designated parts of Edinburgh to promote developments that would cause UNESCO to remove that status. The right to remove the much sought-after world heritage site status is the only regulatory power that UNESCO retains, and I think that that is what Prince Charles was warning Edinburgh about in the speech that he made yesterday.

We are definitely not talking about a St Andrews that would be preserved in aspic, as it were, or straitjacketed by heritage status. The town would, I hope, continue to grow organically and appropriately. Since the campaign is for St Andrews to be granted the status in its historic medieval setting, it is to be hoped that any unsightly or inappropriate development that might mar that setting would not receive planning approval from Fife Council. To that extent, as in Edinburgh, heritage status would be an important tool to assist in the town's conservation and preservation.

So, where do we go from here? First, we need to form a prospective St Andrews world heritage foundation. That should involve bodies such as the community council, the university, the St Andrews Links Trust and the St Andrews Preservation Trust. All those bodies have been consulted and it is hoped that they might be persuaded to work together, through a steering group, to agree basic principles of public access and preservation. A number of prominent St Andreans have already indicated that they would be happy to serve on such a steering committee.

Ultimately, the bid would have to be driven by Fife Council in conjunction with Historic Scotland, and a management plan would require to be drawn up to be presented to the Scottish Executive, which is responsible for putting forward Scottish sites for the United Kingdom tentative list. Due to an increasing number of applications for heritage status, signatory nations have been restricted to making one application a year. I understand that there are around 25 sites on the UK tentative list, so getting on to the list will be far from easy, even for an outstanding candidate such as St Andrews. Nevertheless, I believe that that is well worth working towards.

Once St Andrews is on the list, it could take as long as five to 10 years to achieve heritage status. However, with the support of all who are involved at local and national levels, and with the blessing and drive of Historic Scotland and Fife Council as well as, I hope, the support of the minister, who will respond to the debate, world heritage site status is not only desirable for St Andrews, but

genuinely attainable. I have much pleasure in commending the motion in my name.

17:17

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I thank Ted Brocklebank for lodging the motion that we are debating. I may have to leave a little early, for which I apologise.

St Andrews is a remarkable and unique town, being at once the historical and the contemporary home of golf as well as having an ancient seat of learning embedded into the very fabric of the town. It is also a former ecclesiastical capital. It is interesting to note that none of the designated UK heritage sites is a site of historical academic importance, such as Oxford, although we know that that city is currently investigating a bid. So, although it would be a welcome first for St Andrews to get the accolade, it is clear that the bid would have to be competitive and, in order to impress UNESCO, would need to stress the uniqueness of the town through its twin links to academia and golf.

Some serious pulling together of partners will be required to form a St Andrews world heritage foundation and to progress things, as Ted Brocklebank outlined, to the point at which a management plan can be submitted to UNESCO with widespread backing from the town. I congratulate Ted Brocklebank on his work to start the ball rolling, but it will take a sustained, long-term effort from the civic community, with cross-party political support, to make that happen.

I am sure that St Andrews and much of north-east Fife would benefit from the increased visitor numbers that would result from its world heritage site status. However, to make that growth sustainable, we need a vision for the area that is not based on east Fife turning into a big dormitory town with no services except for growing carbuncles such as the St Andrews Bay hotel. In other words, it has to be a vision that is not based on the Fife Council draft structure plan.

Critically, the issue of how people arrive at and depart from the town needs to be addressed. The sensitive reinstatement of the rail route needs to be progressed alongside, not instead of, the reinstatement of links to Leven. Serious consideration also needs to be given to the issue of traffic management, including the possible pedestrianisation of key town centre areas.

One of the outstanding features of many of the world heritage sites that I have visited is visitors' ability to step back and enjoy the experience in a traffic-calmed environment. The Hanseatic wharves of Bergen, for example, combine successfully a busy port thoroughfare with a magical walking experience, especially at night. St

Andrews needs an environment that strikes that balance between a working town and an attractive heritage site that can be negotiated by large numbers of visitors on foot, with excellent interpretation and associated commercial opportunities.

I wish the civic groups of St Andrews—representatives of many of which have come to Parliament tonight—well in forming partnerships to push along a bid, and I offer my support to that end. However, to deliver world heritage site status for St Andrews, we must resolve issues about the long-term sustainability of the town and work to enhance the features that make it a unique and vital part of the world's heritage.

17:20

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I thank Ted Brocklebank for bringing the motion before Parliament, and I truly congratulate him on the motion and on the debate.

Where would one find a town with one of the oldest universities in Europe, a cradle of Christianity and of our own nation of Scotland, and the home of golf? If only one of those three elements were present, St Andrews would be a very special place indeed. The fact that all three elements are in place makes St Andrews unique. That is why I am happy to support the call to obtain UNESCO world heritage site status for St Andrews, or at least for part of it.

I agree that there are parts of St Andrews that should be preserved and protected, and they would have a better chance of being preserved and protected if UNESCO world heritage site status were to be granted. However, St Andrews is a living and working town too, and if we want our businesses, hotels and restaurants to be staffed, our golf courses to be manicured and the visitor services to be in place, we must ensure that there are places for people to live.

I do not think that there should be unfettered development, but nor do I believe that world heritage site status should be granted to St Andrews and all its environs to the exclusion of any other development, because that would be the death knell for St Andrews. If St Andrews has prospered over the years, it has prospered because of the people who inhabit the town. If one looks at the range of organisations that are committed to securing world heritage site status for St Andrews, one sees that they are made up of people who live in and contribute to the town, and we must ensure that the next generation has an opportunity to do the same for the town. Although I support the medieval part of St Andrews having world heritage site status, and although I also support the protection of the wonderful links, I do

not believe that the whole of St Andrews and all its borders should be preserved in aspic. Ted Brocklebank said that, too.

I call on the Executive and on Fife Council to back the proposals, as outlined in Ted Brocklebank's speech, which I thought was extremely measured and which addressed some of the points that concern me. Attaining world heritage site status will not happen quickly, but while the application is being processed the infrastructure surrounding St Andrews must be put in place. I am thinking, in particular, of transport infrastructure. When the open golf championship is being held in St Andrews, it is almost impossible for people to find their way through the town. The only people who are lucky are the ones who can afford to bring their private planes into Leuchars. The Ministry of Defence is quite happy to take private business into Leuchars to ferry the elite into St Andrews itself, but the rest of us who are in cars, vans, lorries and buses find it extremely difficult to find our way along the roads. That is not to say that I do not support the reinstatement of the railway—I do—but we desperately need adequate road links to and from St Andrews. While the proposals for the world heritage site are being processed, the Scottish Executive and Fife Council will have the opportunity to consider what is needed in St Andrews to ensure that the volume of visitors to the town can be delivered there safely, have a wonderful time and leave again.

17:24

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): I congratulate Ted Brocklebank on securing the debate.

I welcome the opportunity to extol the virtues of my constituency for the second time this week in the Scottish Parliament.

There is no doubt that St Andrews boasts many unique attractions. As Ted Brocklebank pointed out, it was for centuries the ecclesiastical centre of Scotland. Ted also mentioned that it was at the centre of some of the bloodiest events of the reformation. Its cathedral, which is now sadly in ruins, was a magnificent architectural achievement of its time, although I sometimes wonder what the views of the planning committee of St Andrews community council or St Andrews Preservation Trust would have been had they been around when it was being built. However, in keeping with the canny nature of us Fifers, as well as our commendable record for recycling, much of that magnificent building now makes up the walls of the houses of North Street, South Street and Market Street.

St Andrews is, of course, the home of the oldest university in Scotland; the university is now nearly

seven centuries old. St Andrews is internationally recognised as the home of golf. The Old course is one of the most famous sporting venues in the world and it is just one of the many golf courses on the links, which are protected by an act of Parliament as

"a place of public resort and recreation".

As St Andrews has not one but two blue flag beaches—including the magnificent west sands, which featured in the film "Chariots of Fire"—a medieval harbour and the nature reserve of the Eden estuary, there is no doubt that it can stake a realistic claim as a world-class destination.

However, I have some concerns about Ted Brocklebank's motion. I do not doubt Ted's commitment to achieving world heritage status for St Andrews, but I question whether now is the time for this debate and I fear that the wording of the motion severely overstates the current level of support in the town for the proposal. For example, the chairman of St Andrews community council has made it clear that, although the community council has agreed to participate in the steering group, it understands that the purpose of the group is to study the proposal and its viability further. The chairman stated:

"I understand that the steering group has not yet met. While the conclusion of the steering committee and of the community council may well be fully supportive, I think it sends the wrong message to assume this prematurely."

It is important to bear it in mind that many groups are participating in the steering group to test the viability of the proposal, rather than because they are committed to giving it their full support.

I am afraid that I also have to question the validity of Mr Brocklebank's survey of households, which is mentioned in the motion. By overstating the level of support for the proposal at this stage, he may be in danger of alienating some of the very people in St Andrews whose support is essential if a bid is to be successful.

Mr Brocklebank: As Iain Smith knows, members' business debates are meant to be consensual. I will not respond individually to the various charges that he makes, but I assure him that the survey that we sent out to every household in St Andrews produced the percentage response that I have indicated. I take some exception to his doubting that fact.

Iain Smith: I continue to have that doubt. Constituents who have contacted me have expressed doubt about the survey and whether it reached people. The volume of the response is the issue rather than the percentage of those who supported the proposal.

It is important that, as the local member, I state my concerns about the proposal. If the bid goes

ahead, it must be done in the right way. That is what I am trying to ensure in my speech today.

My view, which I think is shared by others such as the community council, is that the debate is premature. It would have been better to have allowed the steering group to have met first and conducted its preliminary investigations before the matter was brought to the chamber for a debate.

It is not simple and straightforward to obtain world heritage status. Before a decision is taken to prepare a bid, the residents of St Andrews need to be clear about the advantages and disadvantages of the town becoming a world heritage site, so that they can make an informed decision on whether to support a bid.

We must be realistic about the chances of success. There are four world heritage sites in Scotland and a further three are on the UK tentative list. Before it can be nominated for world heritage site status, St Andrews would have to be added to the UK tentative list. At present, 18 sites are on the UK tentative list and only one site can be nominated each year to the world heritage committee. The committee has made it clear that priority will be given to nominations from states that currently have no properties on the list, then from unrepresented or underrepresented categories. I add that 1,325 sites are on the worldwide tentative list and that last year only 25 of those were granted world heritage status. Even if a bid is submitted, it may be many years—perhaps decades—before St Andrews is nominated for and granted world heritage status. That indicates the problems that may arise.

Tricia Marwick: I appreciate that not everyone may be completely behind the proposal at the moment, but the idea is a good one. The proposal has great merit and it needs to be driven forward. Surely Iain Smith is not suggesting that, because there are 18 sites on the UK tentative list or 1,325 throughout the world, we should sit back and wait until all those sites are dealt with before we go forward with St Andrews.

Iain Smith: I am not suggesting that; I am merely trying to introduce a tone of realism into the debate. Irrespective of the support that the Parliament may or may not give to the proposal, the process will be lengthy. If it takes many years, even decades, before St Andrews is granted world heritage status, there is the issue of what happens to the intended site—for example, to the medieval town centre or the links—in the intervening years.

The UK Minister for Culture, David Lammy, has indicated that he is currently consulting the devolved Administrations on the drawing up of the criteria for assessing the potential future sites that would form the UK's revised tentative list. It would be helpful if, in her winding-up speech, the

minister could provide information on the likely timescale for that review.

There are other more pressing priorities for St Andrews at present such as the need for a new school at Madras college and a new hospital. However, I wish the St Andrews world heritage site steering group well in its investigations. I assure the group that I stand ready to provide whatever assistance I can when the time is right.

17:31

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson): I congratulate Ted Brocklebank on securing the debate this evening. I also congratulate members on their contributions.

Today has been a very interesting day for me, with some wonderful coincidences occurring. This morning, I had the pleasure of taking part in the opening of the new Scottish Storytelling Centre on the High Street, which is a wonderful example of innovative, modern architectural design that complements the older buildings in its setting. This afternoon, I took part in the debate on architecture and I am now taking part in a debate on the possibility of St Andrews being inscribed as a world heritage site. This evening, I will address the delegates to a conference of world heritage site leaders at Edinburgh Castle. Today is a rather strange but wonderful day for me.

I agree with many of the statements that have been made in the debate about the historic and cultural importance of St Andrews and about its attractiveness as a city. It could be argued that St Andrews is the most important of the smaller historic burghs, having been the centre of the pre-reformation church in Scotland and, as a consequence, the setting of our first university. The town is said to be the resting place of some relics of St Andrew, which caused it to become a centre of pilgrimage and led to the adoption of St Andrew as Scotland's patron saint.

As members said, St Andrews is universally known as the home of golf. It also enjoys an enviable landscape and coastal setting that, notwithstanding significant expansion in the 19th century and, in particular, the 20th century, remains an identifiably medieval university town in scale. The combination of those factors together with the survival of the medieval town plan and the significant intact and ruinous remains contributes to the town's national and international importance. The remains of the cathedral and associated Augustinian priory together with a substantial part of the wider precinct and a number of outlying buildings are in the care of Historic Scotland on behalf of Scottish ministers, as is St Andrews Castle. St Andrews would seem to have a good case for world heritage status.

However, a number of other sites across Scotland are considering whether world heritage listing is possible and a few of those are working actively towards nomination for inclusion on the UK tentative list. Although I have no problem in giving support in principle to the idea that the community in St Andrews should work towards consideration of such a status, it would be unfair to the other sites if the Executive were actively to support one site over any other at this point.

It is also important for us to consider the implications of world heritage status inscription. The granting of world heritage site means that a site is recognised as being of universal significance and international value. It is a great honour, which brings many benefits but also great responsibility. Because world heritage status recognises the highest importance of sites at an international level, the criteria that any site has to demonstrate are stringent. In addition, comparisons have to be made internationally with other similar sites across the world. The tests are not easy to meet.

Those tough requirements mean that a great deal of preparation needs to be done before a site can be considered for inclusion on the UK tentative list, never mind put forward to the world heritage committee for consideration for inscription. The work to secure the support of all stakeholders and to prepare the required nomination documents and management plan is not inconsiderable—I understand that Ted Brocklebank understands that.

Should a nomination be successful, the accolade brings many obligations to protect and manage the site to ensure the long-term future of the important qualities that have been recognised. It is important that that is considered as we move forward. Those who are involved in the site's management and those who own it have a responsibility to protect and enhance it so that it can continue to be appreciated by all, as befits a site that, in effect, belongs to the international community. That is not always easy, and world heritage cities throughout the UK and in other countries are constantly challenged by development proposals that may not sit comfortably with world heritage listing.

Although the care of Scotland's historic environment is a devolved issue, the nomination of bodies for inscription to the world heritage committee is reserved to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport as state party for the whole of the United Kingdom. However, as members know, the Scottish ministers, advised by Historic Scotland, propose Scottish sites for inclusion on the tentative list. As Iain Smith identified, there is a commitment to review that list over the next few years. We, along with the other

devolved Administrations, will be part of the review and will be able to influence it. The terms of the review have not yet been agreed, and it would be wrong for me to comment on the relative merits of possible sites before all interested parties have had a chance to make their case as part of the review process.

It should be remembered that, even if a site is included on the tentative list, world heritage status is by no means guaranteed. Only one site from the UK is considered per year and the final decision is made by the world heritage committee, which is keen to ensure that the nominated sites are from underrepresented areas and types. Iain Smith was also right to make that point.

I am very proud of our four world heritage sites—I am sure that we all are—and hopeful that, in due course, further ones will be added to the list. I welcome the support that the Parliament has shown for the recognition and continued protection of the historic environment in Scotland. I do not want to put too much of a damper on proceedings, but it is only fair to point out the many hurdles and pitfalls that there may be along the way. I acknowledge the work that has been done so far and look forward to further discussions in the years ahead—to be frank, I think that it will be years—with Ted Brocklebank and others who have an interest in the project. I wish them well with the work that they are undertaking.

Meeting closed at 17:38.

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